

History of the Institute

*From the village of Marlies
to expansion worldwide (1789-1907)*

Brother André LANFREY

MARIST BROTHERS

**HISTORY OF THE INSTITUTE
OF THE MARIST BROTHERS**

VOLUME 1

**From Marlies
to the world
(1789-1907)**

Brother André LANFREY

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Brother Emili Turú,
Superior General

PRESENTATION



If we, Marist brothers, are collectively what we are today, it is largely due to those who have preceded us. Therefore, we will hardly understand ourselves without studying the path that has led us to the present moment, when we are about to celebrate the 200th anniversary of our foundation.

For over a century, and due to a number of reasons, the interest for our Institute's history was apparently not among our priorities. However, there has been a significant effort over the last 50 or 60 years to study our tradition in a systematic and organized way. The numerous publications and the new appreciation of the Marist places in France are two facts that have generated a growing interest for our origins and for a scientific study of our Marist history.

The three volumes we are now publishing are somehow a humble tribute to all the brothers who – with great love and dedication at different points of our history – have helped us return to our sources in order to know and love them better.

The universal Church is celebrating the *Year of Consecrated Life* in 2015. As part of it, Pope Francis has invited us to *look at the past with gratitude*. In line with this invitation, how could we read these pages without gratitude in our hearts, not remembering the over 25 thousand brothers that preceded us in this Gospel journey since 1817? Many of these brothers' names will never appear in history books. However, they are actually the central characters of our Marist story because they gave their life beyond measure at the service of our mission in a simple and discrete way, sometimes even heroically.

I invite the reader to approach these pages *with gratitude*. This will lead us to *live the present with passion and embrace the future with hope*, following the Pope's invitation. In these early years of the 21st century, we want a *new beginning* for the Marist Institute, and we are collectively committed to this task. The testimony of those who have preceded us encourages us to live this historical moment with *passion and hope*.

For many years now, Brother André Lanfrey has studied our Marist history in a very professional way. With great patience, he has helped us understand better where we come from and, therefore, to love more deeply what we are. He now gives us the first two volumes of this *History of the Marist Institute*, which, as we can see, are written with great precision and depth. Thank you very much, Brother André, for this beautiful contribution to our spiritual heritage.

Thanks also to Brother Michael Green, who has taken on the challenge of preparing the third volume about our recent history from 1985 to the present day. Brother Michael has listened to numerous protagonists of this historical

period for many hours. I am sure that the documentary and testimonial character of this three-volume work will be a precious treasure for future generations.

It is easy to picture Father Champagnat and the first brothers sitting in the recently concluded Hermitage building. They would vividly remember the historical and anecdotal events that took place during the initial construction. What a great courage they needed to undertake that formidable task, which would have enormous consequences for the future!

Likewise, when Father Champagnat entrusted the task of collecting the early-days memories to Brother Jean-Baptiste Furet, he knew he was living and writing a story that should be handed down to posterity but, most of all, he was convinced that being part of and committing to it was worthwhile. Therefore, these volumes on the history of our Institute – first told by Furet’s book – can become a manual for living, which can help us discover what is still new in the old stories, “like a householder who brings out from his storeroom new things as well as old” (Mt 13:52). It is certainly a story we can tell today but, above all, a legacy we must receive and bestow on others.

Since the hard and happy beginnings, we have realized with gratitude that the maternal hand of Mary, *who has done everything for us*, has guided our history. We should thus never lose our confidence, for we are convinced that the future of our Institute will be a reflection of such a Good Mother’s face, and an expression of her faith journey in the footsteps of her Son.

Rome, September 8, 2015,
Feast of the Nativity of Mary

Furet: Jean

FOREWORD



THE HISTORY OF THE INSTITUTE, 1817 – 2017: the result of teamwork

In January 2004 the General Council set up a Patrimony Commission with the remit of researching the Marist story. The Commission, composed of Brothers André Lanfrey, Aureliano Brambila, Paul Sester, Ivo Strobino, Jaime Parès and Michael Green, had its first meeting in May of that year. (Subsequently, Brother Robert Teoh replaced Brother Paul Sester and Brother Henri Réocreux became Secretary to the Commission.) In June 2007, with a view to the forthcoming bicentenary of the Institute, the General Council responded to advice from the Commission and put forward “a plan for a comprehensive history linked to the Institute’s bicentenary”.

Over the course of the following years the plan was the subject of discussions, the results of which were summarised in four articles in Marist Notebook no. 30 (**February 2012**).

- Brother Michael Green: an examination of different ways of approaching the plan.
- Brother Aureliano Brambila: a methodology for a regional or Provincial study: Marist charism in Mexican territory.
- Brother André Lanfrey: an outline for a global history of the Institute.
- Brother Juan Moral: bibliography.

From the start, this was a sizeable project, involving complicated and time-consuming teamwork.

In the end, the result was a standard, more limited work: a general history in two volumes edited by a single author, Brother André Lanfrey, with the agreement, and under the direction, of the Patrimony team and the General Administration. By June 2014 the first part (1789 – 1907) was ready and undergoing translation; the second part (1907 – 2014) was at an advanced stage. However, in acknowledging that the last phase of our history (1985 – 2017) required particularly delicate editing, the Commission proposed the writing of a third volume covering the period 1985 – 2017, to be confided to Brother Michael Green.

Readers of this history of the Institute will therefore have to keep in mind that, even although the work has clearly defined authors, the project’s ‘archi-

ecture' was designed, and the resulting plan sometimes modified, by a group of some size, under the eye of the General Council.

The Patrimony Commission adds that the work of translation and proof-reading is no small affair and it warmly thanks all those, near or far, who have made their contribution.

Brothers
Eugène Kabanguka,
André Lanfrey; Allan De Castro,
Antonio Martínez Estaún,
Colin Chalmers;
Madame Heloïsa Afonso de Almeida Sousa;
Brothers Michael Green, Patricio Pino,
Spiridion Ndanga and Michel Morel.

GENERAL INTRODUCTION



Marcellin Champagnat was born on 20th May 1789, just as the Estates General was commencing in Versailles. Called together to bring about reform in France, this gathering set in train a series of events which resulted finally in the French Revolution. In July 1816, the day after his ordination to the priesthood, Marcellin, along with a dozen young priests, committed himself in a Society of Mary. On 2nd January 1817 he began the foundation of its branch of Brothers. The years 2016 – 2017 give us therefore an occasion for celebrating these two complementary events. At the same time they offer us an opportune moment to undertake an historical reflection on the two centuries of the Society of Mary and more particularly of the Marist Brothers.

From Chronologies and Annals to History

There does not exist at the present moment a truly complete history of the Marist Brothers, even though, quite early, the Institute produced works which do more or less serve as substitutes. On our earliest years we have the notes of Father Bourdin (OM2, doc. 754), which, though written in telegraphic language around 1830, provide valuable information on the years 1817 – 1826. However, it was only in 1856 that the *Life of the Founder* by Brother Jean-Baptist Furet would give a detailed account of the years 1789 – 1840, with Chapter 23, which closes the first part of the work, making rapid mention of the main events that followed between 1840 and 1856. The *Annals of the Institute* by Brother Avit, completed in 1891, present an overall chronology starting from 1775. Brother Avit brought a critical mind to this work and he took care to base it on eyewitness accounts and documents, but this resource was not published until much later: part of it in 1972, and a complete version in 1993.

In the meantime, the Institute was content with drawing up some detailed chronologies, the first in 1917 (*Circulars*, vol. 13), the second in 1976 and the third in 2011. We should also mention a History of the Institute of 1947, which was intended for use in houses of formation¹, and the very recent *Historia del Instituto de los Hermanos Maristas* published in Argentina in 2004. This latter work has the advantage of outlining our history from its origins right up to 2001².

¹ *Histoire de l'Institut des Petits Frères de Marie (1817-1947)*, Office of the Econome General of the Marist Brothers, Saint Genis-Laval, 223 pp.

² Its author, Brother Luis de Giusto, in his Foreword, clearly identifies his work as intended for use in the formation of the Brothers.

Summarising therefore, we may say that from 1856 up to the present, the publications mentioned above have only indirectly done history. Their fundamental purpose was for edification, formation or the provision of succinct information. Nevertheless, we can accord a specific place to Brother Avit, who was not content to be just a chronicler.

We should also take note of a History of the Institute (1789 to around 1960) preserved in the archives in Rome. It was written by Brother Marie-Nicet (Claude-Marie Thomas), a French Brother from Brazil. He was born in 1880 at Vervins, in Burgundy, near the sanctuary of Paray-le-Monial. After completing his scholasticate in 1896, he went to Brazil in 1898, and first taught at Congonhas. He spent his entire life in Brazil, except for six months at Grugliasco where he did his second novitiate in 1908. There he seems to have taken advantage of an opportunity to consult the archives of the Institute. His biography³ indicates that he rendered great service to the FTD printing house as the author of various geographical atlases, a *Historia universal et do Brasil*, and works on natural history. No mention is made, however, of this history of the Institute, although it seems Brother Marie-Nicet did intend it to be published.

Written in French in school exercise books, this history consists of a collection of around six thousand pages bound in six volumes, and organised on the basis of generalates – the Life of the Founder (Vol. I, 785 pages), the generalate of Brother François (Vol. II 706 pages), and so on. Brother Marie-Nicet worked on this history up to shortly before his death on December 18th 1962. In terms of methodology, this work appears to stand midway between a compilation of material drawn mostly from the official books of the Institute (Circulars, Bulletins of the Institute, and Notifications of the Deaths of Brothers) and a concern with constructing an historical framework based on broad periods of time. Even if we are not dealing here with history properly so called, a work such as this deserves recognition as the most successful attempt we have at elaborating an overarching view of the history and activity of the Institute up to the 1960's. It would merit attentive study⁴.

In the congregation, historical research properly so called began in the years 1950 – 1960 and has been illustrated since then by works of quality centred essentially on our origins. Among others we can cite the works of Pierre Zind, Gabriel Michel, Alexandre Balko, and Stephen Farrell. In addition, the publication of source material such as *Origines Maristes, Lettres de Marcellin Champagnat, Origine des Frères Maristes* (2011) and *La Regla del Fundador* (2012) has made available to researchers the essential content of the documents we possess on our origins.

Work is less advanced on the history of the Institute after 1840, although we have available much in the way of source material and partial works (histories of Provinces, biographies, and so on), which are often of excellent qual-

³ Kindly supplied by Héloïsa Afonso.

⁴ The archives at Saint Genis-Laval also possess a typewritten "*Histoire de l'institut*" in several folders dating from the 1950's.

ity. However, it is not easy to derive a pertinent overall view from these works, given the increasing complexity of a congregation which has rapidly spread worldwide. Today, as we face times of profound change, and with the story of our origins now having been relatively clearly established, our Institute needs to bring into sharper focus the period that falls between our origins and the present day, a period of continuity but also one of disruption, reinterpretations and crises. This could help us have a better understanding of our present situation.

To carry out such a task, the ideal would have been to set up a team large enough to make full use of the source materials and biographies we have at our disposal and covering all areas of our Marist history and activity. But an awareness of our realities has obliged us to opt for a history of more limited ambitions, one which will, nevertheless, seek to offer a serious interpretation of our past, while at the same time opening up avenues for further research. This present work, therefore, will not be seeking to offer an exhaustive account, nor will it be giving priority to a minutely detailed description of facts. What we will attempt to do is establish a framework within which our last 200 years can be interpreted in the light of those facts which we consider to be particularly significant.

The overall conception of this work

For this reason, therefore, this history of the Marist Brothers will not be bound by an excessively formal arrangement dividing our past, for example, into a series of generalates. Instead, it will envisage three major periods. The first (Volume I) will cover the period from 1789, the date of Marcellin Champagnat's birth, to 1907, the date on which a number of major events converge. The most important of these is clearly the suppression of the congregation in France by governmental decree in 1903. In a brutal fashion this event completed the process of the internationalisation of the membership of the Institute, which had begun in a major way in 1885 and whose effects would continue to be felt right up to 1906. The second event was the approval in 1903 of the Roman Constitutions, which established decentralised government and the appointment of superiors for fixed periods of time, thus overturning a tradition of centralised government that was almost one hundred years old. And finally, 1907 was the year of the death of Brother Theophane, Assistant to Brother Louis-Marie from 1860, and later Superior General from 1883. The date 1907 then marks the end of the Institute as an entity essentially French in character and highly centralised.

The second phase comes to an end around 1965, with the closing of Vatican Council II marking a new era in ecclesial and religious life, while decolonisation and, in the West, a socio-cultural revolution were generating a new world order. These years 1907 – 1965 are for our Institute a paradoxical time characterised by remarkable expansion in spite of revolutions, world wars and secularisation in its many different forms.

The third, and more chaotic phase (1965 – 2012), may perhaps be seen as an in-depth redefinition of the congregation of the Marist Brothers, as it was caught up in a process of worldwide deconstruction-reconstruction, the major features of which appear to be worse than they actually are, given that many of us, having lived them personally, do not as yet have the distance needed to view them objectively.

The treatment of these three periods presents varying levels of difficulty. The first is relatively easily written, as it is the best documented and is centred on one country. The second involves many countries each having its own particular, and often turbulent, history. An in-depth treatment of this period would require a good number of collaborators. In the case of the third, the profusion of interlocking events, the emergence of new currents of thought, and the lack of sufficient distance for objectivity, make the task more risky but, then again, all the more stimulating.

Having made a particularly close study of the period 1789 – 1907 and benefiting from the research carried out on our origins, I believe I am in a good position to provide a well-documented history of the first period. In the second volume, covering the periods 1907 – 1985, I cannot envisage going much further than a general outline which could be completed, if not corrected, by further work. The writing of the third volume covering the period 1985 -2017 has been confided to Brother Michael Green, whose knowledge and understanding of this phase of the history of the Institute is better than mine.

Br André Lanfrey

INTRODUCTION TO VOLUME 1



Historically speaking, the Marist Brothers came into existence in 1817, but they make no claim whatever to be content with that date as their origin. They may be somewhat reluctant to see themselves as heirs to the Consecration at Fourvière, which founded the Society of Mary in 1816, but they are much more willing to acknowledge their indebtedness to other traditions more ancient and therefore more venerable. Nothing is more significant in this regard than the Preface and Introduction to the Life of Father Champagnat, which was published in 1856.

A foundation with origins in a double tradition

With one of the aims of the *Life of Father Champagnat* being to give legitimacy to the definitive Rule, inspired by Champagnat but put into written form by the Chapter of 1852-1854, the Preface sets out to establish Champagnat in the tradition of the great founders of monastic orders, such as the Desert Fathers, Saint Benedict and the Benedictines, and Saint Francis of Assisi and the Friars Minor. It is surprising to find no mention of the Jesuits, who strongly inspired our spirituality, but this order suffered from a certain lack of legitimacy. It was not ancient enough and, even more importantly, it was an order of clerics, whereas ancient monasticism was not defined by priesthood but by asceticism. In a Nineteenth Century Church which had scarcely any room for congregations of Brothers, it was important for us to construct a prestigious identity, one founded on a charismatic ordering of priorities, the archetype of which was the monk, as opposed to one based on the priesthood, either diocesan or religious.

Clearly, the Marist Brothers had no intention of strictly following the ideal of withdrawal from the world that is proper to monasticism. This explains why in the Introduction which follows the Preface there is developed a history of Catechesis, which lays emphasis on the fact that originally Catechesis had been delivered by the Bishops and the greatest Doctors of the Church, and that after a disappointing Middle Ages, the Council of Trent had set in train a catechetical renewal whose many apostolic figures had successfully taken up the fight against the Reformation, the irreligiousness of the Eighteenth Century, and the Revolution. It is among such as these that the Marist Brothers have their place.

These two key texts seem very significant in showing the way in which, in the time after Father Champagnat, the Institute wanted to situate itself in the Nineteenth Century. It was as an order of lay religious anchored in two not easily reconciled traditions, monasticism and the catechetical apostolate.

Jesuits, dedicated laywomen, Brothers of Christian Doctrine

Only scant mention will be made of the monastic aspect of the congregation because it is all too obvious. The house constructed in 1824-25 was called "The Hermitage", and the Brothers living there followed a monastic rule of life. Its symbolic point of reference was the Trappist monastery at Aiguebelle, the place where Brother Jean-Marie had gone in 1822 and Father Courveille in 1826⁵.

Rather more necessary, it seems to me, is an understanding of the catechetical and educational tradition of the church, which Champagnat had consciously chosen to follow. First of all, the reference to the Council of Trent and to the catechetical current is not just for the sake of rhetoric, or even for its mythic value. In the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries, the Catholic world had developed new and clearly defined apostolic models: the clerics regular, exemplified by the Jesuits, consecrated to missionary activity and to colleges; congregations of women living under semi-enclosure (the Ursulines and others), who provided education to the daughters of the elite. Serving the daughters of the ordinary people we find the "fille séculière" or "sister", a laywoman dedicated to charitable or educational tasks, and living either alone or in community. For boys in the towns and cities Jean Baptiste de la Salle had founded the Brothers of the Christian Schools. The spiritual unity of this stream was largely established on the *Devotio Moderna*, that current in spirituality that was in search of a more interior and more active Christianity, the best known expression of which is *The Imitation of Christ*. Out of this movement came the model of the "dévot" (the devout person committed to action), who desired to bring about an in-depth Christianisation of society, particularly through the catechetical instruction of children on a massive scale.

Nevertheless, this Baroque period Catholicism, though generally enjoying wide acceptance in Catholic countries, was never unanimously accepted in France. Molière, in his *Tartuffe*⁶, expressed the reservations of the Catholic upper classes, and more particularly among the Jansenists, about this movement. The enlightened circles, furthermore, were often opposed to popular education. They feared it would lead to a shortage of manpower in agriculture and industry, and were mortally afraid of a social revolution. The lower classes of society, meanwhile, were chiefly concerned about their day to day survival, and had extremely little interest in any sort of education, whether religious or non-religious.⁷ It was therefore only an influential minority among the Catholic elites, clerics and notables both, who were in favour of popular education.

⁵ Rancé, the founder of La Trappe, considered the apostles to be the first monks and that monasticism was the summit of the Christian life. In addition, the Trappists were held in great esteem because of their unwavering resistance to the Revolution and because theirs was the first monastic order to re-establish itself in France afterwards.

⁶ Denouncing the false "dévot".

⁷ See R. Chartier, M.M. Compère, D. Julia, *op. cit.* pp. 37-41

This current in spirituality bore many fruits – the Marial Sodalities in Jesuit colleges for young people or adults, the AA's (*Assemblées des Amis* – Associations of Friends), and little societies of fervent seminarians, of which the Marists themselves were one in 1815-1816 at the Seminary of Saint Irénée in Lyon. Finally, there was the famous Company of the Blessed Sacrament, composed of both laity and priests⁸, whose members visited prisons and hospitals, distributed charitable help to the poor, taught catechism, and campaigned against the drinking houses and public immorality. They played an important role in the establishment of general hospitals, and supported many kinds of good works, among them schools. The educational establishment founded by Charles Démia was one of the creations of this Company⁹.

This “devout” model did not, however, reach all levels of society. True, the colleges and seminaries were providing widespread education for the elite, but at the level of the general population, and more particularly in the countryside, the vast majority of schools were in the hands of a whole collection of semi-clerics, men of widely varying competence and morality, who served in the parishes as sacristans, cantors, occasional gravediggers, public letter-writers and school teachers. Their status as assistants to the clergy, however, bestowed a certain respectability on what was really neither a profession nor a vocation, but a sort of multi-function public service operating at the local level. Clearly, there was a lack of suitably trained and organised personnel¹⁰.

In 1688, in order to solve this problem, a priest from Lyons, Charles Démia,¹¹ established in that city a seminary for teachers. But his seminary of St Charles rapidly became a seminary just like any other. Jean-Baptiste de la Salle¹² succeeded in creating an enduring model but only in part. Indeed, his original plan envisaged not only communities of Brothers for the towns, but also establishments where teachers would be trained for the rural areas, plus a society of priests to provide spiritual direction for the whole enterprise. The only part to succeed was that of the Brothers, created in 1686, with the Brothers of the Christian Schools developing in the towns an innovative pedagogy based on the Simultaneous Method of teaching, which had as its ‘bible’ *The Conduct of the Christian Schools*¹³ drawn up in 1706. By 1792 they numbered 800 religious. In 1725 Pope Benedict XIII recognised their status as lay teaching religious, distinct from the Confraternities and Associations of Christian Doctrine.¹⁴ Another

⁸ Alain Tallon, *La Compagnie du Saint Sacrement*, Cerf, 1990.

⁹ Georges Guigue (published by), *Les papiers des dévots de Lyon*, Lyon, Librairie ancienne, 1922.

¹⁰ Martine Sonnet, *L'éducation des filles à temps des Lumières*, Cerf, 1987, Bernard Groperrin, *Les petites écoles sous l'Ancien-Régime*, Ouest-France université, 1984, Jean de Viguierie, *L'institution des enfants. L'éducation en France, 16^e-18^e siècles*, Calmann-Lévy, 1978.

¹¹ Roger Gilbert, *Charles Démia. 1637-1689, Fondateur lyonnais des petites écoles des pauvres*, Editions E. Robert, Lyon, 1989.

¹² Yves Poutet, *Le XVII^e siècle et les origines lasalliennes*, Rennes, 1970.

¹³ Cahiers lasalliens n 24: *Conduite des écoles chrétiennes*, Avignon 1720, (Reproduction), Rome.

¹⁴ P. Zind, *op. cit.*, p. 44.

successful foundation of Brothers was that of the Tabourin Brothers, founded in the Faubourg Saint Antoine in Paris by Charles Tabourin, a notorious Jansenist. By 1757, his Brothers were at work in some fifteen schools in that quarter of the city¹⁵. They even spread as far as Orléans, Auxerre, and Eu in Normandy. By 1781, there were around 60 Tabourin Brothers teaching in 32 schools.

On the feminine side, there were similar, though more successful, initiatives. One of the best known examples of a seminary for women is that of the Ladies of Instruction founded in Le Puy by Anne-Marie Martel (1644-1673) in 1667-1668.¹⁶ These ladies, whose number was fixed at nine, through courses they gave which lasted some months, trained hundreds of young girls and widows, not only for their own diocese but also for the dioceses of Viviers, Montpellier, Rodez, Clermont, Lyons, Vienne, and Mende, that is to say, a vast area covering a large part of the Massif-Central, the Rhone valley, and extending as far as the Mediterranean. These 'Teaching Ladies', established afterwards in villages and hamlets, and known as 'Béates' by the general population, ran centres where women and girls were taught lacemaking and ribbon-making, as well as their prayers and catechism, and how to read.

This whole world of "sisters", "lay ladies", "devout ladies", "régentes" (teachers), "béates", and brothers of Christian Doctrine, constituted a complex universe which went only part way towards meeting the educational needs of the people, especially in the rural areas. Nevertheless, by requiring of their members a vocation, a formation and a lifelong commitment, these congregations created the modern teacher, whose activity was founded, not on monetary considerations or on clergy activities of a lower order, but on vocation, competence and esprit de corps. Champagnat then was heir to this stream, and he would work hard to extend it into the rural areas, which up to this time had largely been neglected. And the Marist Brothers would be among those protagonists of an up to date approach to the task of Christian evangelisation, which would at first triumph, and then later come to know its limits in the France of the Nineteenth Century.

This drive towards a modern educational approach was linked equally with the concern to reduce the incidence of poverty and vagrancy, for reasons that were at once economic, social and religious. The new schools of the Brothers and Sisters were called "charity schools" because, since they did not charge fees, they were intended principally for children whose parents could not afford to send them to the "little schools", the small fee-paying primary schools. There is therefore a strong connection between the hospital and the school, with both of them addressing in part the needs of the same clientele. Brother Yves Poutet has shown clearly that the Brothers of the Christian Schools had their origins

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Odile Robert, "De la dentelle et des âmes. Les « Demoiselles de L'Instruction du Puy » (XVIIe-XVIIIe siècles) » in *La religion de ma mère. Le rôle des femmes dans la transmission de la foi*, under the direction of Jean Delumeau, Cerf, 1992.

in the hospital in Rouen where Adrien Nyel, the man who inspired Jean-Baptiste de la Salle¹⁷, was exercising his profession. In fact, education was considered to be one of the works of mercy because it was concerned not only with the welfare of the body, but also of the mind and the soul.

Between the Ancien-Régime and the Empire (1790-1815)¹⁸

Little by little the word “congregation” took on a more restricted meaning and came to refer to groups of celibate men or women, living in community, wearing a uniform dress, copying the monastic way of life but engaging in apostolic activity. They were not religious in the canonical sense of the word since they did not ever take solemn vows. In some instances they took private vows or made simple promises, but the greater number did not make any type of commitment at all. They stood between the lay state and the religious state. This is why the French Revolution, which suppressed the religious orders, had hardly any effect on them. Indeed, during the Nineteenth Century, these Brothers and Sisters were to organise themselves into powerful congregations like the Daughters of Charity, who were founded under the Ancien-Régime and who passed through the upheavals of the period from 1789 to 1800 without any great harm. It was these congregations of Sisters, headed by a Superior General, who would be at the heart of the development of women’s apostolic activity in the Nineteenth Century, above all in the areas of education and health care.

Among the men the situation was far from being as brilliant. Nevertheless, Brother Frumence, Superior of the Brothers of the Christian Schools in Italy, installed himself in Lyon on 19 November 1804 and some sixty Brothers, who had survived the Revolution, acknowledged his authority. Finally, the Decree of 17 March 1808 organising the University, integrated them into its structure. At the fall of the Empire in 1815, apart from some 300 - 400 Brothers of the Christian Schools, elementary education for boys was in the hands of a multitude of teachers of all kinds of backgrounds and levels of competence. The Brothers of the Christian Schools, however, had a trump card. Public opinion had been very much divided on the subject of the Jesuits, with some heartily detesting them and others lauding them to the skies, but a very favourable memory had remained of their educational activity. The Jesuit model therefore became one which numerous clerics and lay persons dreamed of imitating once a less despotic government would permit freer initiatives to be taken in the matter of religious associations.

All the same, the situation evolved only slowly. Witness to this is the use of the terms “Sister” or “Brother” to describe any layperson acting as an assistant

¹⁷ Yves Poutet, *op. cit.*, p. 494

¹⁸ Claude Langlois, *op. cit.*

to the priest or engaged in charitable activity. The housekeeper to the parish priest or the village schoolmistress was, in the Nineteenth Century, still referred to as “Sister” without being a member of any community. Less frequently the word “Brother” was used to designate the teacher-cantor-sacristan who assisted the priest. In hospitals the nursing “Brothers” were laymen without vows and the “Sisters” the same. By the middle of the Nineteenth Century, however, the words “Brother” or “Sister” came to be restricted to members of religious congregations. We have a beautiful example of this evolution in the *Annals of the Institute of the Marist Brothers*¹⁹ in the year 1851:

“A naïve Parish Priest from the diocese of Dijon, requested a brother, not married, for his small parish. This brother would be required to carry out the functions of school teacher, town clerk, cantor, sacristan, bell ringer and gravedigger! [...] The naivety of this request was the occasion for much laughter at the Hermitage”...

In fact this Parish Priest still had the traditional idea of the Brother whilst among the Marist Brothers the memory of this meaning had been lost. The historian therefore needs to be careful when he encounters the words “Brother” or “Sister”, and not too quickly decide that this means members of religious congregations in the present day sense of the word.

This drive for forming religious groups and associations, so characteristic of the ‘devout’ tradition in spirituality, constitutes one of the more powerful movements in modern Catholicism. In the Nineteenth Century it was expressed almost uniquely in the founding of religious congregations, with their numbers expanding rapidly into vast constellations with hundreds of congregations and tens of thousands of members. Thus Claude Langlois can speak of a congregational “trend”.²⁰ It was in fact the modern era’s first expression of a laity committed to the active apostolate.

Towards 1815, then, just as the elites were becoming aware of the enormous educational deprivation existing among the popular masses in France, there was already in existence a proven and successful model which could respond to that need, and a multitude of initiatives which had emerged from the devout stream of Catholicism and the Catholic resistance to the Revolution. It is in this tradition that we must situate one of the Nineteenth Century’s most dynamic initiatives in popular education, namely, the Little Brothers of Mary. Before going on to recount this story, however, it is only fitting that we present in some detail just how and by whom the traditions we have been speaking about came to be incarnated in a new religious body.

¹⁹ Brother Avit, *Annals of the Institute*.2, the Year 1851 #90, Rome, 1993.

²⁰ (Translator’s note) The French text uses here the English word “trend”. In his footnote 20 the author goes on to explain its meaning in French.

History of the Institute



FIRST PART

1789-1840

Resisting and Rebuilding

The Estates General, called together to begin the reform of the Kingdom of France, but in fact the first event in a Revolution that was to turn Europe upside down, opened on 5th May 1789. Marcellin Champagnat was born a few days later, on 20th May. When Bonaparte seized power in France on 18th Brumaire (9th November 1799), Marcellin was ten years old. At the signing of the Concordat which officially re-established the Church in France on 15 July 1801, he was twelve, and 26 when Napoleon was defeated at Waterloo on 18th June 1815. Ordained a priest on 22nd July 1816, he was one of those new priests, already older than usual, whose formation had been made complicated by the upheavals of the period. He would know revolution once more in July 1830 at the age of 41, ten years before his death. He was a man, therefore, who from a very young age, had had to learn to make his way in life with a lively awareness of the fragility of the world around him. As Marcellin saw it, his only truly dependable means of support were to be found in God and Mary.

- 1.** In the previous page: the solemn proclamation of the Concordat of 1802.

1.

MARCELLIN CHAMPAGNAT'S CHILDHOOD AND YOUTH UNDER THE REVOLUTION AND THE EMPIRE (1789-1816)

Marcellin was a native of le Rozet, a hamlet of Marlhes (Loire),²¹ situated at an altitude of 1000 metres. Marlhes was an important rural Commune on the western extremity of the Diocese of Le Puy,²² and only 23 km south of the industrial town of St Etienne. A document entitled "State of the Population of Marlhes for the year 1790",²³ drawn up by the parish priest Father Alliot, gives exceptional evidence on the religious, social, demographic and economic life of this parish of more than 2,700 inhabitants, which took in the village itself and some 75 hamlets. Its population consisted of 205 'landowners', in effect comfortably off peasant farmers; 125 moderately well off 'householders'; 112 'tenants' living in poverty; and 82 'grangers' or 'farmers', their status depending on the kind of farm they were running. Father Alliot also listed 186 domestic servants, most of them young, and sixteen ribbon-makers both male and female. Ribbon making was also an activity carried out by large numbers of women in their own homes.

Marlhes itself, with its population of some 320 to 330 inhabitants, presented quite a diverse range of activities: 8 sabot-makers (wooden shoes), 8 male ribbon-makers, 3 makers of soft furnishings, but also three notaries²⁴, 2 baker's assistants, 3 carpenter's assistants, 1 tailor and his 2 assistants; the parish priest and his assistant priest, but also an elderly priest, a blacksmith, 1 mason, 1 shoemaker, 1 rural tax collector and 1 sub-collector²⁵, 1 employee and 20 domestic servants²⁶. Resid-

²¹ A half hour's walk from the main village.

²² Under the Ancien-Régime the parish was part of the Diocese of Le Puy.

²³ Departmental Archives of the Haute Loire, Convers papers, 18 J 194. Published by the Association of the Friends of Marlhes in 2004 under the title of "State of the Population of the Parish of Marlhes in 1790".

²⁴ One of whom, because of advanced age, no longer practised his profession.

²⁵ Responsible for collecting farm taxes.

²⁶ The Association of the Friends of Marlhes instances a record of the town's population at the same period, carried out on 219 inhabitants. It indicates 6 sabot-makers, 2 shoemakers, 4 innkeepers, 2 carters, 1 clockmaker, 2 bakers, 1 maker of knife handles, a ribbon-maker, 1 wool carder, 4 tailors, a lace-maker, 3 makers of soft furnishings, 1 maker of woollen stockings, 1 mason, 1 carpenter, 2 blacksmiths, and only 3 servants and 3 day labourers.

ing in the convent of the “Congregation of the Sisters of Saint Joseph” were nine Sisters, among them Jeanne Champagnat, 66, and Therese Champagnat, 37, aunts of Marcellin Champagnat. There is no mention of a school master but one Pierre Moine, married but without children to Jeanne Bonnefoi and a property owner, aged 32 years, seems to be the Barthélemy Moine identified among Marist sources, who was to be Marcellin Champagnat’s teacher for a period of time.²⁷ Marlhes was therefore a parish typical of rural France at the end of the Eighteenth Century, with its main village offering tertiary services and some small scale trades, while in the hamlets the principal occupation was agriculture.

As for the hamlet of Le Rozet, where in 1790 Marcellin was just one year old, it consisted of 10 “hearths” (households) and 65 persons. There we find 4 landowners, 4 householders, 2 tenants and 1 granger. Two families attract our attention, Charles Frapa who employed at least four servants and the Champagnats, who had two. As was frequently the case, in two of the households, one of them being the Champagnats, a widower or widow shared the family home.

The following is a complete list of the members of the Champagnat family.

NAME AND SURNAME	AGE	COMMUNION	CONFIRMATION	MARITAL STATUS	SOCIAL STATUS
Marianne Ducros	61	+	+	Widow	
Jean-Baptiste	47 ²⁸	+	+	Husband	Landowner
Marie Thérèse Chirat	42 ²⁹	+	+	Wife	
Marie Anne	14	+			
Barthélemy	13				
Anne Marie	12				
Jean-Baptiste	10				
Marguerite Rose	6				
Jean Pierre	3				
Marcelin ³⁰	2				
Joseph Benoît ³¹					
Jean Pochon		+	+		Servant*
B(arthélem)y Bouvier	24	+	+		Servant*

* (Translator’s note) Since they are both male, the word may also indicate a farmhand or other type of outdoor employee

²⁷ It is to be expected that the Parish Priest would make no mention of the activities of the Sisters or of the schoolmaster. These were not economic activities, but works of charity.

²⁸ In fact, having been born in 1755, he was only 35 years of age.

²⁹ Born in 1746, she was 44 years of age.

³⁰ This is the correct spelling. The doubling of the “l” is illogical because it results in the sound “el” in the middle of the name. It has, however, become the accepted spelling.

³¹ This name was added later.

On the religious side, it can be seen that the age for First Communion was late, after 13 years of age. Confirmation was a sacrament reserved for adult age. Marlhes then appears to be an area where the Catholic faith was actively practised, as was the case in many other areas in Eighteenth Century France, where historians note the success of the Catholic Reformation in bringing about a level of religious instruction and sacramental practice never attained in the past.

Although it was a difficult place to reach, and had a harsh climate and an essentially rural economy, Marlhes was administratively and economically well set up, and was a not insignificant staging post on the main route between St Etienne and Le Puy.

Nevertheless, in this world so totally Catholic and with such a widely dispersed population, it is surprising not to find any chapels in the hamlets and only two priests to see to the pastoral care required by the parish, which would certainly have been a heavy load. They had not only to celebrate Mass, but also visit the sick, minister to the dying, and baptise and catechise the children. It is true that in the village itself the Sisters of St Joseph took the children for catechism and cared for the needy. The hamlets of Lallier³², Le Monteuil, Montaron, Prélager benefited from the presence of a Béate, a pious single lady with the title of "Sister", who dedicated herself to the instruction of the girls and small boys of the neighbourhood while also teaching them how to make ribbons and lace. Outside this relatively organised pastoral system the inhabitants in the hamlets themselves engaged in all kinds of trades (milling grain, cutting and dressing timber, and so on) and even provided elementary instruction in such matters as prayers and basic catechism. But what was Sunday practice like in a population of at least 1500 "communicants" most of whom lived a long way from the village? It can be supposed that distance, bad weather, and the need to look after the farms, would have made it difficult for many to attend Sunday Masses.



2. House of the Béates in Marlhes, small village of Lallier.

³² The houses of the Béates were surmounted by a small belltower which served to call the people together. At Lallier there still exists a house called "the house of the Béates". We are much obliged to Br Lucien Brosse for this information.

A family not quite in the traditional mould

Jean-Baptiste Champagnat, Marcellin's father, was born in 1755. He was a merchant,³³ and in 1775 married the daughter of a merchant, Marie-Thérèse Chirat, born in 1746, and from the same hamlet as himself. His level of education was above average: he had a reasonably good grasp of spelling, wrote a fine hand and could speak in public.³⁴ In 1790 he is mentioned by the parish priest as a landowner. He also operated a small watermill.³⁵ Like his wife, he was a member of the Penitents of the Blessed Sacrament³⁶ and, in that capacity, intervened to sort out matters when there were disputes over property inheritance. The couple would have ten children, seven of whom would reach adulthood. The table of entries in the Baptismal Register (all the children were baptised on the day of their birth) gives us some interesting details on the family's culture.

NAME	DATE	GODFATHER	GODMOTHER
1. Marie-Anne	11.12.1775	Charles Chirat, grandfather, undersigned	Marianne Bonnfoy, illiterate
2. Jean-Barthélemy	12.03.1777	Barthélemy Chirat, uncle, undersigned	Madeleine Champagnat, aunt, undersigned
3. Anne-Marie	20.02.1779	Charles Chirat, first cousin, undersigned	Anne-Marie Vachier, milkmade, aunt by marriage, illiterate
4. Jean-Baptiste	11.09.1780	Jean-Baptiste Ducros, great uncle, undersigned	Marguerite Chirat, undersigned
5. Marguerite-Rose	20.02.1782	Jean-Pierre Ducros great uncle, undersigned	Marguerite-Rose Courbon, aunt by marriage, undersigned
6. Marguerite-Rose, 2 nd of that name	01.08.1784	Pierre Ducros paternal uncle of the father	Marguerite Chirat, maternal aunt
7. Anne-Marie, 2 nd of that name	25.07.1786	Jean-Barthélemy, brother of the baptised, cannot sign	Marianne Champagnat, hermana de la bautizada, illiterate
8. Jean-Pierre	26.12.1787	Jean-Pierre Ducros, undersigned	Marianne Champagnat, illiterate
9. Marcellin-Joseph-Benoît	20.05.1789	Marcellin Chirat, his uncle	Marguerite Chatelard, cousin by marriage
10. Joseph-Benoît	27.10.1790	Jean-Baptiste Champagnat his brother cannot sign	Anne-Marie Champagnat, his sister, cannot sign

³³ His Marriage Certificate reproduced in AA. Vol. I, p. 4 indicates that he was a 'marchand', a merchant.

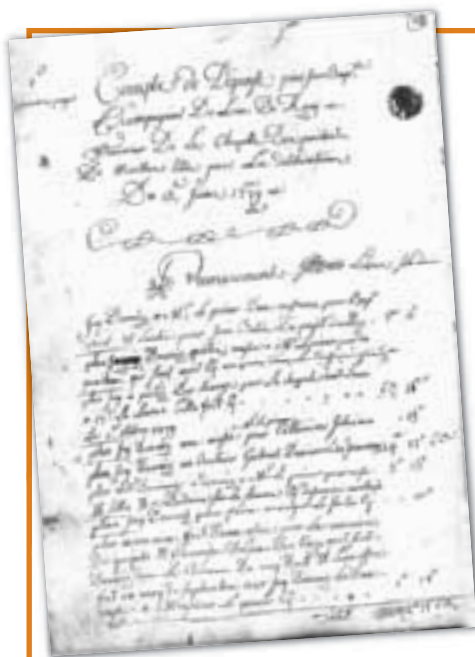
³⁴ Br Gabriel Michel, "The hidden years of Marcellin Champagnat", in *The Bulletin of the Institute of the Marist Brothers*, Vol. 26 p. 466, January 1965.

³⁵ In the *Abrégé des Annales* p. 6 the Baptismal records designate him as a "ploughman".

³⁶ Pierre Zind, *Bienheureux M. Champagnat. Son œuvre scolaire dans son contexte historique*, Roma, 1991, pp. 177-178. In the Convers Papers (cote 18 J 194) in Departmental Archives in Le Puy, the register of the Penitents of Marlhes mentions that he was "received on 21 June 1778 and his son Jean-Barthelemy, the 16 October 1803". The list of the catalogue of Penitents mentions "Marie-Therese received on 3 October 1787".

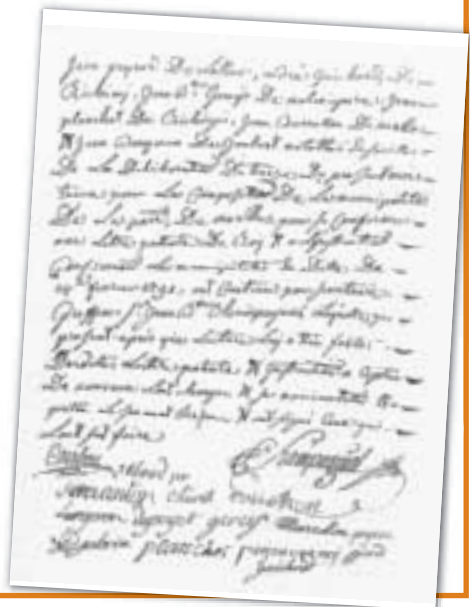
Of the ten godfathers, six certainly signed their names and in two other cases the signature is likely to be theirs. As for the two godfathers unable to record their signature, they are brothers of the child being baptised, aged respectively 9 and 10 years. Among the godmothers, three only could sign their names.³⁷ So it seems that the Champagnat family was one of those innumerable French families, faithful practising Catholics, having their children baptised immediately after birth, teaching them their catechism or sending them to catechism classes, and with the men more able to read and write than the women. The learning of writing, when done at all, came later.

The father's abilities and level of education allowed him, once the Revolution had begun, to play a role in politics. In 1791 he was appointed town clerk of the commune, then he was elected a Colonel in the National Guard for the Canton of Marlhès. In 1793 he was placed in charge of the confiscation of property belonging to the "rebels" in Lyon,³⁸ and he featured as a witness at the "burning" of the feudal titles. He seems also to have been a preacher for the new religion of the Goddess of Reason, when in 1794 the church at Marlhès was turned into a Temple for the Tenth Day worship service prescribed by the revolutionaries' new Decimal Calendar. He was, however, thought to be too lukewarm by the authorities of the Terror, and so was given as his assistant his



3. Register of expenses of J. Baptiste Champagnat Treasurer of the Chapel of the Penitents of Marlhès

4. Page of the Acts of the deliberations of the Municipal Council of Marlhès. June 2, 1791. The writing is that of J. Baptiste Champagnat, Marcellin's father, municipal secretary



³⁷ This list of Baptismal Registrations figures in *Abrégé des Annales*. Vol. I pp. 5-7

³⁸ The city had revolted against Paris and had been subjected to a severe siege.

more radical cousin Ducros, who, having been imprisoned after the fall of Robespierre, was assassinated by a gang of Royalists in June 1795. After a period on the margins of political life, Jean-Baptiste resumed his activities shortly after the coup d'état of Fructidor (4th September 1797) which set in train a new reign of terror. On 29th December 1797 he was appointed President of the municipal administration of the Canton of Marllhes, a post he accepted, with reluctance, only in February 1798. We could risk the somewhat contradictory epithet of a 'moderate Jacobin' in his regard, because this involvement with the most extreme revolutionaries did not stop him from offering shelter to his sister Louise,³⁹ a former Sister of St Joseph driven out of her convent, nor did it stop him from turning a blind eye to the clandestine Masses being celebrated in the territories under his jurisdiction, territories which were, moreover, a prey to banditry and royalist intrigues. In any case, the parish priest, Father Alliot, remained in his parish during the whole of the Revolution and was only replaced in 1822.

The situation in Marllhes seems close to that described by Maurice Agulhon in *Pénitents et Franc-Maçons de l'ancienne Provence*⁴⁰ (Penitents and Freemasons in Ancient Provence), where he shows that the revolutionary cadres had often emerged from the confraternities of penitents, where men socialising together found themselves caught up in a process of political evolution. We are also present at the beginnings of a phenomenon, so typical of Nineteenth Century French Catholicism, namely, a widening gulf between men and women, with men taking up political roles and shaking off the influence of the Church, while the women display steadfast loyalty to their religious faith and practice.

According to his *Life*, Marcellin began his schooling late and would remain at the school for only a very short time because of the brutality of the schoolmaster Barthélemy Moine, who used the individual method, combining laissez-faire with brutality, as did most schoolmasters in those days. In fact, Marcellin attended school long enough to acquire a good knowledge of his catechism before making his First Communion⁴¹, while at the same time learning to read and also no doubt being initiated into writing. Marcellin's refusal to continue going to school can only be situated in the period after his First Communion during the winters of 1802-1803 and 1803-1804.

The Church as a path to social advancement

Marcellin's destiny was altered by the consequences of the Concordat of 1801. Cardinal Fesch, uncle of Napoleon, who had been appointed Archbishop of Lyon, wanted to boost recruitment to the seminaries. Zealous priests, moreover, were not slow in responding. In remote areas of the Rhône and the Loire, in places like Verrières, Roche and Saint-Jodard, they set up minor seminaries, equipped in a rather

³⁹ Her baptismal name was Louise. Thérèse was her name in religion. See *Life of M. Champagnat*, note 13 p. 4.

⁴⁰ Fayard, 1968, p. 452, Republished in 2002.

⁴¹ According to tradition this would have taken place in 1800 but we have no solid documentary evidence for that date. We have noted that normal usage was rather for it to be made around 13 years of age, that is to say, in 1802.

rudimentary fashion. The students, however, did not find the conditions too difficult, and these establishments were responding to the needs of families who wanted education for their sons.⁴² The problem being to find students, the professors went out prospecting for recruits in the countryside during their holidays. Around Easter 1804, and with this purpose in mind, a priest⁴³ visited the Champagnat family and persuaded Marcellin, not necessarily to become a priest, but to take up the study of Latin.⁴⁴ This visit could not have taken place without the consent of the parish priest Father Alliot, which indicates that relations with the Champagnat family must have been quite good despite the earlier involvement of the father with the Revolution.

The visitor was therefore offering their youngest son an unexpected chance for education, at a cost the family could manage. Furthermore, there were three boys on the farm, and according to custom, the land would pass to the eldest. Whether or not he became a priest, going to the seminary meant Marcellin could prepare himself for a respectable position in society. The interests of the family and those of the Church would thus be coinciding nicely. All the same, this decision by Marcellin to change direction in life does seem fundamentally to have been his own, and was influenced by several dramatic events that had affected the family.

In fact, this visit came after the deaths of the second son, Jean-Baptiste, (aged 23) on 8th August 1803 and Joseph-Benoit (aged 13) on 20th December. Anne-Marie had got married on 8th February 1804, and this was followed by the sudden death of the father, Jean-Baptiste Champagnat, on 13th June 1804. Although the family had lost its head and several of its members, and must have been facing the financial difficulties that would have been occasioned by the payment of a dowry for Anne-Marie and the demands of creditors hastening to stake their claims, the plan for Marcellin to go to the seminary was not called into question. It may even be that these destabilising events had played a part in Marcellin leaving behind a certain youthful insouciance and moving towards a more adult maturity. Up to that stage he had not thought of anything other than a life on the land. The shock of these upheavals, then, was so profound that his resolution to take up studies would overcome every obstacle.

At the time he recommenced his education in 1804, did Marcellin already want to become a priest? His intentions were certainly less clear than that. Furthermore, the strategy of the professors at Verrières was not just to recruit for the priesthood. They also wanted to reconstitute the Catholic elites, while at the same time con-

⁴² P. Zind, *Miscellanées Champagnat* p. 157, Meximieux had been founded in 1798 at Bény. In the Department of the Rhone, Saint Martin-en-Haut and Largentière had opened around 1800 and in 1804 respectively; in that of the Loire, there were three establishments functioning: Saint Jodard begun around 1796, Roche around 1799 and last of all, Verrières in 1804.

⁴³ In OM4 p. 130 it is supposed that the recruiter was the Sulpician Jean-Jacques Cartal (1756-18400, a native of Le Puy, and at that time a professor at St Irénée. Another less likely hypothesis is Father Linossier, who knew Jean-Baptiste Champagnat. As the Constitutional priest in charge of Jonzieux, Linossier had been elected with him, on 17th August 1792, to nominate deputies to the Convention. However, he suffered from problems with his legs.

⁴⁴ In *Miscellanées Champagnat* p. 138. The account says that before talking to Champagnat the priest had questioned Jean-Barthélemy and Jean-Pierre. Now the former was 26 and the latter 16. For one of these at least the inquiry scarcely makes any sense. In fact, Marcellin, who was only 15 years old, was the only one who could consider further long studies.

ducting their battle against the lycées which Napoleon had created on 1st May 1802 for the training of administrators and army officers.⁴⁵ If Marcellin was thinking of entering the seminary, it must also mean that he had not been so long out of contact with education, or that his level of reading and writing was as poor as is reported in a certain tradition. So, when he went to study with his brother-in-law, Benoît Arnaud, it was to bring himself up to standard. Benoît Arnaud, himself a former seminarian, had a “college” at Saint Sauveur-en-Rue, where he taught Reading, Arithmetic, Geography, History and Latin to a group of a dozen or so pupils. (*Life* p. 11, note 12). In other words, the young Champagnat was taking advantage of the largely informal network of presbytery schools, “teaching centres”, and “little colleges” which worked on refining their pupils’ education before they entered the seminary itself. His father had no doubt earlier benefited from such a network.

In the *Life* of the Founder (Ch. 2 p. 11) the biographer mentions that at the end of one year Benoît Arnaud thought too little progress had been made, and that he tried to persuade the young man to give up, because of his very poor results and the risk to his family of incurring useless expenditure when they were already in debt. In her testimony at the Process for Beatification⁴⁶, Julienne Epalle, from Marlies, reports a similar but also different tradition:

“After a year of study the superior of the minor seminary thought that the lad did not have enough ability to continue, which upset Marcellin very much; but his mother roused his courage once more by saying to him: We will make a pilgrimage to La Louvesc. St Jean-François Regis will help you, and you will be accepted back again. Indeed, the Superior did accept him back, and that year he covered two years’ work in one.”

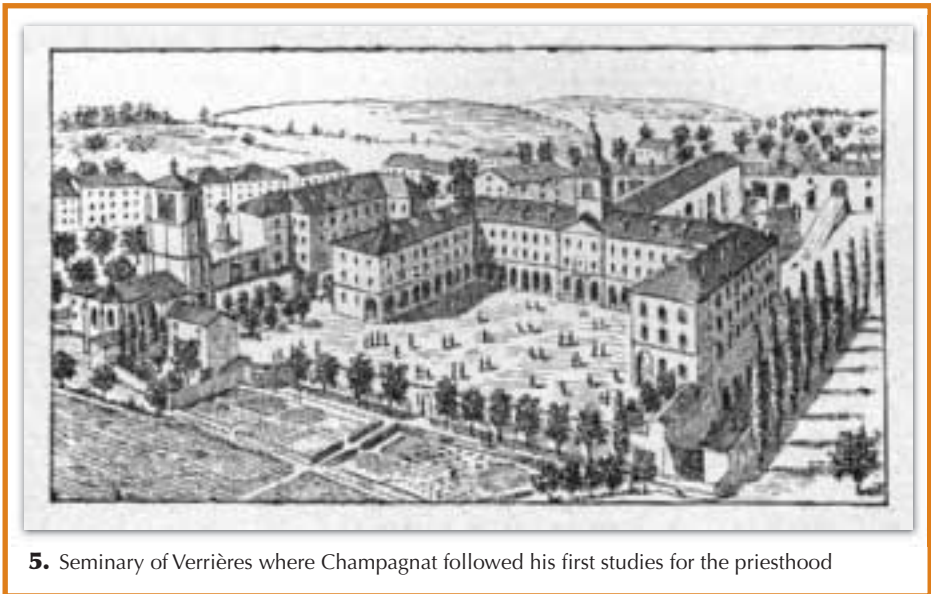
Are the two stories not really only one, with Julienne Epalle confusing the superior of the seminary with Benoît Arnaud? In any case, there is no doubt that Champagnat’s early schooling was disrupted and that, sensitive young man that he was, this initial setback marked him for life. He himself referred to it several times. Nevertheless, at Verrières, without being brilliant, he was able to follow the normal school programme. In the same period, Jean-Marie Vianney, the future Curé of Ars, had encountered in his own family and in the despotism of the Napoleonic period obstacles far more difficult to overcome.

The college-seminary at Verrières

It was only at All Saints 1805 that Marcellin entered the seminary at Verrières. Comprising some 80 to 100 seminarians, the establishment was an extension of a presbytery school that had been started in 1803 at Firminy near St Etienne, and

⁴⁵ In the account of the interview which decided on the departure of Marcellin to the seminary (*Vie de Champagnat*, Ch. 2 p. 10) Br Jean-Baptiste has tended to treat as one the priestly vocation and the study of Latin. His account, clearly intended to edify, has little historical credibility.

⁴⁶ *Témoignages sur Marcellin Champagnat. Enquête diocésaine*, Rome 1991, transcribed and presented by Br A. Carazo, testimony No. 26.



5. Seminary of Verrières where Champagnat followed his first studies for the priesthood

then moved to Verrières when its superior, Father Périer, was appointed there as parish priest. It was only in 1805, so just when Marcellin was starting there, that the Archdiocese has recognised this establishment as a minor seminary.⁴⁷ It was with his own savings that Marcellin paid for his outfit. (*Life* p. 13). The fees were not high, 120 francs per year, but the living conditions were spartan. Students slept in the attics of two houses or were lodged with local inhabitants. There was no refectory. Recreation time was spent collecting wood or working in the fields with the peasants. The professorial corps was minimal; the superior, Pierre Périer, who was at the same time the Parish Priest, was assisted by a lay professor and a tonsured cleric. It was here that, from November 1805 to 1813, Marcellin Champagnat would cover ten classes, from the beginners' class to his Logic year.⁴⁸ During his time there, however, the seminary underwent substantial transformation.

A report by Father Cabarat dated May 1808 gives a detailed and very critical report on the seminary.⁴⁹ He noted that in 1807 Fr Périer had had a three storeyed building constructed to provide for a kitchen and dormitories. Altogether the buildings could accommodate 160 to 180 seminarians⁵⁰, but the "supervision is lax. Communication with outsiders is too easy. The number of beds is only half that of the number of students enrolled.⁵¹ And furthermore, that the "fountain supplying

⁴⁷ Archdiocesan Offices Lyon, carton A II 104.

⁴⁸ P. Zind, *Miscellanées Champagnat*.

⁴⁹ Archdiocesan Offices Lyon, carton A II 104. Report by Fr Cabarat to the Archbishop. It appears that up to now this report has not been noticed by Marist researchers.

⁵⁰ At the time of the visit there were 183 in residence.

⁵¹ Which indicates that the other half were being housed with local inhabitants.

water for the house is outside in a public square opposite the main entrance". The young people are therefore placed in a situation where they are frequently leaving the house on the pretext of fetching water". As "the village of Verrières is located on a busy main thoroughfare" where "there are many drinking houses", there was need for "a closer supervision of the students when they go outside."

Father Cabarat noted further that: "Father Périer has little involvement with the studies: he is relying on the head professor for this", that is to say, on Father Antoine Linossier, aged 46, who had arrived in June 1806⁵². The latter, however, was not in good health: "he can only walk with the help of someone supporting him."⁵³ The professorial body was organised as follows⁵⁴:

NAME AND AGE	STATUS	CLASS	
A. Linossier, 46	priest	Humanities (class 3)	unwell
J.B. Nobis, 29	Tonsure. Has done his Theology	Class 4 ("called 3")	"energetic, capable and hardworking"
Chomarcac, 32	Layman. Did his Philosophy at le Puy	Class 5	"mediocre ability"
Breuil de Roche, 20	Student at St Irénée	Class 6	"capable, pious and very edifying"
M. Bachelard, 37	Layman. Has only studied Philosophy.	Class 7	"hardworking and capable"
M. Chappuis, 21	Layman	Class 8*	Left Verrières in June 1808
Jean Francois Morlier, 23	Sub-deacon	Prefect	

*Translator's note: Classes in the French system are numbered in reverse order. Class 8 is the lowest and class 3 the highest.

The professorial body was then a somewhat disparate group, as was the case in most colleges at the time. No doubt because they had little time for Father Périer, who was more wheeler-dealer than a true superior, "the professors at Verrières do not in general seem particularly fond of this establishment. The only one who is happy is Father Linossier. Monsieur Chomarcac doesn't care one way or the other. All the others are asking to withdraw".

In any case, the conclusions were severe. This seminary was badly governed and the studies left much to be desired even if, since the arrival of Father Linossier, "they have been strengthened a little". Father Cabarat did, however, acknowledge: "It must be admitted that there are some students in formation here who would be suitable

⁵² See Marist Notebooks No. 4, March 1993, the article by Br Gabriel Michel which records his chaotic career, marked first by his joining the Constitutional Church and then abandoning the priesthood. His reintegration seems to have come late.

⁵³ It therefore seems unlikely that he was the one who recruited Marcellin Champagnat.

⁵⁴ See in OM 1 doc. 9 a report which seems broadly to match up with this report.

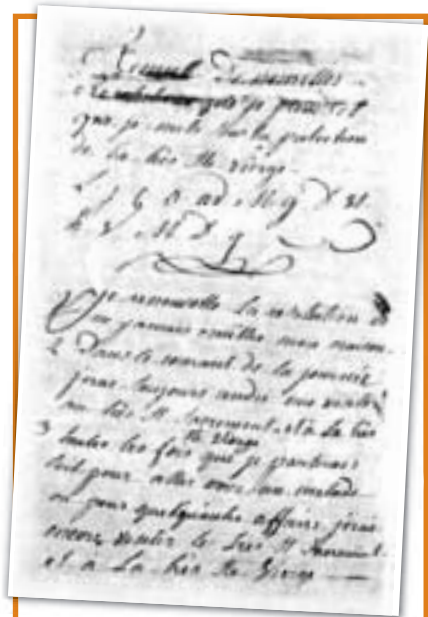
⁵⁵ The word can have two meanings: the seminarians from the region around Verrières or, more likely, those more generally from a rural background.

subjects for the ecclesiastical state, especially in the class of those native⁵⁵ to the area, among whom are to be found ones who, having originally been under the care of good parish priests, have retained their happy habits of virtue and who are, moreover, keen to put their best efforts into their work". A report on the state of the seminary dating from 1807-1808 (OM 1 p. 139) was also very critical. As for comments on Champagnat – he was in Class 6 at this stage – they are less severe: Work and Ability were judged to be ‘reasonably good’ but Conduct was only ‘average’.

An inspector’s note from a slightly later period⁵⁶ described the seminaries at Verrières and Roche as “located in barren mountains and difficult to reach” (the Mountains of Forez). “Almost all the students in these two places pay only a tiny portion of the fees, which are in themselves quite modest, 300 francs”. In fact, only 20 to 22 students out of 170 were paying the full fee.⁵⁷ But he judged that in spite of the great poverty, the studies were “quite good” at Roche, and “very good” at Verrières. The inspector praised the programme of studies of Fr Linossier, “professor of Rhetoric and very knowledgeable and talented” who, as director of studies, oversaw the teaching of the young clerics who comprised the professorial corps. This programme gave priority to the teaching of Latin from class 8; History and Geography were deficient and Mathematics was not being taught. Apart from this, the seminary had the same programme as the colleges.

The report by Father Cabarat helps us then to understand a number of things about the life of the young Champagnat at Verrières in a seminary where everything, up to around 1807, was characterised by poverty and poor organisation. This is certainly the period which the Parish Priest of La Valla, Father Bedoin, was referring to in a memorandum criticising the *Life of Champagnat* by Br Jean-Baptiste,⁵⁸ and in which he is certainly reporting the testimony of a seminary companion:

“At Verrières Father Champagnat was not at all exempt from that silliness seen among most young people and during the course of his first two years there, he figured in the contingent known as the happy crowd.⁵⁹ The sudden death of one of his fellow sem-



6. Resolutions of Marcellin

⁵⁶ It has no date, but comes after 17/09/1808 and before 15/11/1811. Paul Beaujard, op. cit. pp. 202-204.

⁵⁷ The report by Fr cabaret indicates a maximum monthly payment of 24 francs per month.

⁵⁸ AFM 151/1 No. 1-2. The series “Documents Maristes” No. 1.

⁵⁹ *Témoignages sur Marcellin Champagnat. Enquête diocésaine*, transcribed and presented by Br Agustin Carazo, Rome 1991. M. Leflon in *Vie de M. Emery*, alludes to a « bande joyeuse » (happy crowd) at the Seminary of St Sulpice a little before the revolution.

inarians and the salutary reprimand given him by Father Linossier, professor of Rhetoric, were the occasion and the cause of the solid and lasting conversion of Father Champagnat.”

In short, from 1805 to 1807 Marcellin Champagnat was living the life of a college boy and, if this document is to be believed, his decision to go on to the priesthood would be situated in 1807. Furthermore, having reached the age of 19 years in 1808, Marcellin would benefit from the exemption from military service granted to students for the priesthood (OM 1, doc. 12). Thus it was that the diocesan authorities judged him both capable and worthy of becoming a priest.

Should we link this problem of Champagnat’s frivolous conduct with what was reported by Julienne Epalle, that Fr Périer or Fr Linossier threatened to send the young scatterbrain home? This seems possible but would have to be situated during the year 1806-1807, as Father Linossier did not arrive until June 1806. There would therefore have been two problems one after the other: his difficulties with study, with the intervention by Benoît Arnaud, and then later his unsatisfactory conduct, with the threats of the Superior.

But the seminary was not just a crowd of youngsters having a good time. As was the case in a good number of colleges and seminaries there was at least one marial association where the more fervent seminarians met together. Marcellin Champagnat’s resolutions in 1810-1812;⁶⁰ not to return to the tavern without necessity, to avoid bad company and to teach catechism to the poor as well as to the rich, would reflect belonging to a group of this type.⁶¹ If, during the academic year 1812-1813, Champagnat’s report was ‘good’ with regard to Work and Character, and ‘very good’ for Conduct, in Knowledge he was still ‘weak’ (OM 1 p. 161), and in this he was far from alone⁶².

The seminary of Saint-Irénée a centre of fervour and politico-religious resistance

At All Saints 1813, Marcellin formed part of a class of 84 new students entering the Major seminary of St Irénée at la Croix Rousse, in Lyon. On 6th January 1816, as the Empire was crumbling, he received the four Minor Orders and the Subdiaconate, which committed him definitively to the ecclesiastical state. Napoleon abdicated on 6th April 1814 and King Louis XVIII entered Paris on 3rd May. The following year, Napoleon landed in France on 1st April, and re-established the Empire for 100 days, but his attempt failed when he was defeated at Waterloo on 18th June.

⁶⁰ Pierre Zind in *Bx M. Champagnat. Son œuvre scolaire* op. cit. indicates on p. 181 that his first spiritual turning point was the call by the priest in 1804 and his second turning point was these resolutions of 1812. Let us say that between 1807 and 1812 a conversion was underway that made of him a seminarian in the full sense of the term.

⁶¹ This is the first document alluding to a concern for instructing the people.

⁶² One of the causes of the intellectual weakness of the seminarians was to be found in the mediocre quality of the teaching staff, often formed of students from the major seminaries with little experience and only limited education.



7. Major Seminary of St-Ireneo, in Lyon, where Fr Champagnat followed his studies in Theology between 1813 and 1816. It was on the Square Croix-Paquet, at the foot of the hill of the “Croix-Paquet Square,” at the foot of one of the hills of Lyon

On 8th July 1815 the King returned to Paris and to a France under invasion from all sides and facing a long occupation by foreign armies. It was in this atmosphere of the Restoration and of foreign occupation that Marcellin Champagnat, along with his Marist companions, was ordained a priest on 22nd July 1816. The following day they went to Fourvière and committed themselves by an Act of Consecration to the project of the Society of Mary. The restoration of the Bourbon monarchy fulfilled the wishes of a great number of the seminarians, among them no doubt Champagnat,⁶³ and strongly influenced the very formulation of that consecration, placed as it was under the auspices of the Pope and of “our Most Christian King”. Above all, this was the end of a long struggle on the part of the Church against the despotism of the Empire, a struggle in which the Seminary of St Irénée had played a role.

Anxious to put an end to the Revolution, Bonaparte had re-established Catholic worship while at the same time being very careful not to authorise the religious orders. Subsequently, the Empire maintained a lively distrust of all spontaneous groups of a pious or apostolic nature suspected of Jesuitism. Napoleon’s distrust was by no means misplaced. During the Revolution the Catholic resistance had often received strong support from networks of secret societies emerging from the seminaries or from marial confraternities that had been in existence prior to the Revolution. Thanks to work done quite some time ago now, we have particularly good knowledge of two confraternities of this type which were created at the start of the Empire. Geoffroy de Grandmaison⁶⁴ has traced the history of the confraternity of young people that existed in Paris, a task brought to completion, also some time ago, by Canon Leflon in his biography of Father Emery, superior of the Seminary of Saint Sulpice.⁶⁵ We also have available Antoine Lestra’s history of the confraternity of young people in Lyon.⁶⁶ Another, the Order of Knights of the Faith, more political in nature and from a later date (1810), was described in 1949 by Guillaume de Bertier de Sauvigny⁶⁷.

⁶³ In his resolutions Champagnat mentions prayers “if the King returns”. (OM 1, p. 196).

⁶⁴ *La congrégation (1801-1830)*, Paris, Plon, 1889.

⁶⁵ Two volumes, Paris, Bonne presse, 1944-1946.

⁶⁶ *Histoire secrète de la congrégation de Lyon. De la clandestinité à la fondation de la propagation de la foi*, Nouvelles Editions latines, Paris, 1967.

⁶⁷ F. de Bertier et l’énigme de la congrégation, 1948.

In the time of Champagnat and the first Marists there existed at Saint-Irénée the society of the “Friends of the Cord” whose motto was taken from the second letter of St Paul to Timothy 2:3: “*Labora sicut bonus miles Christi Jesu*. (“Strive like good soldiers of Jesus Christ”). We do not know its rule but we do know that its members dedicated themselves to works of zeal (teaching catechism, visiting prisons and hospitals, and so on), and above all that on the occasion of their ordination they took resolutions signed in their own blood, which shows that membership of the society was not just for the duration of their time at the seminary but for their entire life. It may even be that the time in the seminary was regarded as a kind of novitiate, concluded or not by the taking of these resolutions, which were equivalent to entry into religious life at a time when religious congregations were prohibited by the civil power. Besides that, the Friends of the Cord planned to have regular contact with selected “friends” and especially to gather Christians together into groups for “alas, the ungodly form their coalitions, the enemies of the Church their leagues, and evildoers unite to snatch from God the souls He has saved”. This spiritual project therefore had its social and political implications.

Father Pousset, who was for a while a Marist aspirant, has left us a list of 91 names of “Friends of the Cord” covering the years 1805-1817. There we find numerous future priests of the Chartreux⁶⁸ or future Marists (Pierre Colin, Jean Cholleton), along with prelates and vicar generals (Cardinal Villecourt, Simon Cattet, and others), missionaries to America like Mathias Loras, Portier, and so on. But for all that, these groups were not watertight and the same person could participate to a varying extent in different groups. This is what Pousset shows in his autobiography:

“At the end of 1814 I went to the seminary of St Irénée in Lyon [...] There I was told about *Labora sicut b.&*, the Congregation of the Reverend Fathers of the Cross⁶⁹, and the Mariists⁷⁰. I made some commitments with the first, I was open to the second, and I wasn’t in any way negative in regard to the last.”

These societies saw themselves first and foremost as centres of resistance to “the spirit of the world”, places where their members could engage in spiritual exchanges, prayer, and charitable works. They were not, however, averse to a certain activism, their purpose being to bring about a good spirit in the seminary and in the long term to set up networks of priestly fervour.

The Imperial power could without too much trouble tolerate the clandestine resistance that was around in these circles, but all this changed with the entry of French troops into Rome at the beginning of 1808. This event opened up a new war between Clergy and Empire marked by the excommunication of the Emperor, the enforced residence of Pius VII at Savona in 1809, and a National Council 1811-1812, which Napoleon wanted to use in order to force the Papacy into submission. All these events aroused hidden opposition in Catholic circles, especially in the seminaries. The Lyon Police Bulletin of 31st October 1809⁷¹ remarked:

⁶⁸ A society of missionaries established in the buildings of the former Carthusian Monastery, known in Lyon as la Chartreuse.

⁶⁹ The Fathers of the Cross of Jesus, disciples of Vicar General Bochard, future Priests of the Chartreux.

⁷⁰ “Mariists” (French “*Mariistes*”) was the original form of the name.

⁷¹ National Archives, F7 3811 and F7 8485 No. 5213.

“A new generation is rising among the clergy which, not having had this experience⁷², could be steered away from extremism. Unfortunately it is receiving an education very little in line with the views of the government; all those being educated at the seminary in Lyon are taking back into the bosom of their families principles of a fanatical and ultramontanist character which could subsequently become very dangerous [...] it is very difficult for the civil authority to judge what is going on inside the seminary; it can only go by the results; and I must say, these are not good.”

This opinion of the Chief of Police of Lyon can only be a reflection of the view of the Government which decided to take ecclesiastical affairs in hand, notably by suppressing the Society of Saint Sulpice in June 1810, a measure which came into full effect at the end of 1811. As a result, despite the best efforts of Cardinal Fesch’s Vicar Generals, and notably Father Bochard, the loyalties of the majority of the seminarians shifted towards the politico-religious opposition. During the Hundred Days (March to June 1815) Saint-Irénée became a royalist hotbed.⁷³ When on 28th May 1815 the Cardinal went there on a visit, he was very badly received by the seminarians, one of them even writing “Long live the King” on the carriage the Cardinal was to use for his departure. Nevertheless, this support for the Bourbon monarchy needs to be nuanced, since Cardinal Fesch’s Vicar Generals remained in position and governed in his name up to 1824. Even after this date, Archbishop de Pins, as Apostolic Administrator, had to face a strong “feschist” opposition and the Sulpicians were not put back in charge of the seminary⁷⁴.

In the days of the Empire, then, the Sulpician seminaries in Paris and Lyon were not only places of learning but also, because of the presence of numerous highly fervent little groups, centres of great spiritual ferment. The Sulpicians and their successors endeavoured to advise these groups discreetly and offer them perspectives compatible with the objectives of the religious institution, while trying as far as possible to prevent them becoming too overtly political. In the years 1814-1816, however, these limits were blithely ignored by a good number.

Encountering the Marist Project (1816)

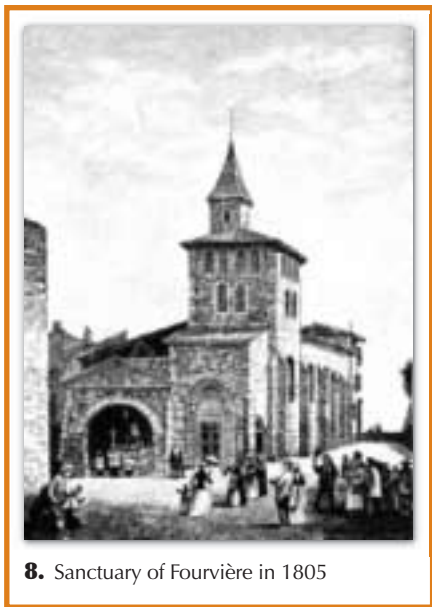
It was during this troubled period that Champagnat joined the project for the Society of Mary, which emanated from a somewhat excitable and unstable seminarian, Jean Claude Courveille. Courveille had first been a seminarian at Le Puy, and believed that, on 15th August 1812, while at prayer in the Cathedral of Le Puy, he had received the sudden inspiration to found a Society of Mary destined to take the place of the Society of Jesus.⁷⁵ He could not bring his project to fruition at Le

⁷² Of clergy under the Ancien-Regime, when the Church’s primary loyalty was to the monarchy, and only secondarily to the Pope in Rome.

⁷³ Coste and Lessard, *Origines Maristes*, Vol. 2, Rome, 1961, doc. 562. Testimony of Jean-Claude Colin on this episode and doc. 767, an extract from Lyonnet, *Vie du cardinal Fesch*, Vol 2 pp. 576-580

⁷⁴ The Superior, Father Gardette, was only an affiliated member of the Sulpicians.

⁷⁵ OM 2, doc 718/5.



8. Sanctuary of Fourvière in 1805

Puy because, as a native of the Diocese of Lyon, he had been reclaimed by the Arch-diocese. He had therefore entered Saint-Irénée in 1814.

In the course of the academic year 1815-1816, Courville gathered a dozen companions around him in a small secret society. Among them was Marcellin Champagnat. Their goal was to engage in missionary action for the regeneration of the faith, not only in France, but all over the world. It would be by means of a “tree with three branches” – priests, sisters and a third order. On 23rd July 1816, the day after their ordination, and before separating, a dozen Marist aspirants climbed the hill to Fourvière, the Marian sanctuary of Lyon, and pledged themselves “*ad majorem Dei gloriam et Mariae Genitricis Domini Jesu Christi honorem*” (to the greater glory of God and the honour of Mary the Mother

of Our Lord Jesus Christ) to found the Society of Mary, under the auspices of the Pope, the Ordinary of the Diocese (Cardinal Fesch, at that stage still in exile) and of “our Most Christian King.”

This text was clearly inspired by Saint Paul, particularly in 2 Corinthians 2:14, which exalts the apostolic ministry. It was also influenced by *The Mystical City* of Mary of Agreda, a Spanish religious from the Seventeenth Century, who envisaged Mary as the one inspiring the Apostles in the primitive Church, Mary herself being the Mystical City described by Saint John in the Apocalypse. For the Marists, their Society would be the prototype of the regenerated Church of the end times, a faithful copy of the primitive Church that had been established under the auspices of Mary.⁷⁶

The references to the Ordinary of the Diocese, the Pope and to the Most Christian King are particularly important. They demonstrate the first Marists’ willingness to obey all legitimate authority according to a descending order: Jesus Christ, the Pope, the Bishop, and the King. The legitimacy of the King was clearly to be based on peace and religion, two criteria which carried an implicit condemnation of the previous regime. So the Society envisaged by the Marists was a missionary society, ultramontanist and royalist in character, in continuity with the refractory Church that had resisted the Revolution and later the Empire. The restoration to power of the Pope and the King was for them the sign that the new age was now beginning. Louis XVIII, however, was far from the image of the Great Monarch, restorer of the Church, they had been hoping for.

⁷⁶ See Jean Coste, *Une vision mariale de l’Eglise : Jean-Claude Colin*, Maristica, Rome, 1998. The author attributes solely to Jean-Claude Colin, founder of the Marist Fathers, an eschatological vision which, it seems to me, was shared by all the first Marists.

This project connected deeply with Champagnat's sensibilities. Indeed, the first text of his resolutions from 1810-1812 (OM 1 doc. 17 pp. 154-156) is already indicative of an apostolic spirit:

"O my Lord and my God, I promise never more to offend you [...] and never to return to the tavern without necessity, to flee bad company [...] but on the contrary to give good example [...] to teach catechism to the poor as well as to the rich"...

This resolution to teach catechism is again present in his Rules for the holidays of 1814. No. 11 reads: "*I will instruct the ignorant, whether rich or poor, in all that concerns salvation*". At the time of the Process for Beatification, Julienne Epalle testified to the zeal of Marcellin the seminarian.⁷⁷ He would spend several hours each day teaching the children of the neighbours and on Sundays he would teach catechism to adults and children from the nearby hamlets. Is there a link between these fairly ordinary activities of a seminarian at home on holidays, and his insistence that the nascent Society of Mary also make provision for a branch of brothers? Yes, certainly. The earliest evidence we have for this comes from the Bourdin Memoirs (OM2/ 754) which start around 1830: "At La Valla – Branch envisaged for a long time by Father Champagnat, and then confided to him at the major seminary". The *Life* of Champagnat (1856) gives almost the same account while nevertheless emphasising that his confreres were distinctly unenthusiastic about accepting his project. These proposals by Champagnat, as reported by Father Maîtrepierrre, have the advantage of making clear a strong link between his plan and his personal history:

"I have always felt within myself a particular attraction for an establishment of Brothers; I will very willingly join forces with you and, if you judge it appropriate, I will take charge of that part. And he was given responsibility for it. 'I missed out on my early education, he said; I will be happy to help others obtain the advantages I myself was deprived of.'" (OM 2 p. 718, account by Fr Maîtrepierrre (1853).

Writing to King Louis-Philippe in 1834 to request the authorisation of his institute, Champagnat had already stated:

"Born in the canton of Saint-Genest-Malifaux, Department of the Loire, I managed only with very great difficulty to learn to read and write, because of the lack of capable teachers. From that time on I realised the urgent necessity of creating a Society which could, at minimal cost, provide for the children of the rural areas the good teaching that the Brothers of the Christian Schools provide for poor children in the towns."⁷⁸

There is therefore a strong convergence of evidence. Marcellin Champagnat had from a very early period thought of creating a society of Brothers because of the difficulties he had encountered in his own education. And he would commit himself to the Marist project on condition that his confreres recognise his vocation as one proper to a man who regretted his lack of early education and who had received only a superficial Christian formation in his family and his parish. For him, in the context of post-revolutionary France, ministry to the inhabitants of the rural areas could only benefit from Christian educators worthy of that name. This fur-

⁷⁷ Positio XXXIX Testis, fol. 624 p. 71, quoted in an annex in *The Life* pp. 35-36.

⁷⁸ OM 2, doc. 755/1, p. 757.

thermore is what is reported in the *Life* (p. 31): “We must have Brothers to teach catechism, help the missionaries and instruct the children.”

But when he was speaking of Brothers in 1815-1816, what models was he referring to? Certainly to the Brothers of the Christian Schools but he was also aware that this urban model of education could not be applied just as it was to the rural world. He could also have been inspired by the Jesuit model, where the auxiliary Brothers looked after the material side but also taught catechism. Champagnat was devoted to St François Régis, the saint who had twice conducted missions at Marllhes in the Seventeenth Century, and whose tomb he had visited several times at La Louvesc, and he seemed to want to re-establish missionary activity on the Jesuit model, as did several of his Marist confreres. Was he perhaps only thinking of an establishment where teachers could be trained, one similar to what was being done by the Ladies of Instruction of Le Puy, who were forming the Béates serving in the parishes of the Massif Central?

One thing is certain. The plan to have itinerant missionaries, so dear to most of his other Marist confreres, seemed to him incomplete without a strongly organised lay component. It seems also clear that, right from 1816, there was a certain divergence between Champagnat and his Marist confreres in the way they thought about ecclesiology.

Education - the Mutual Method versus the Simultaneous Method

Champagnat had another more immediate reason for envisaging the foundation of a branch of Brothers. It was the sudden emergence onto the popular education scene of the Mutual Method of Teaching (also known as the Pupil Teacher Method), which Carnot, the Minister for the Interior during the Hundred Days of Napoleon's return, had decided to introduce into primary schools. Inspired by two Englishmen, Lancaster and Bell, it was being advocated by “The National Society for the Propagation of Elementary Teaching in Schools for the Poor”, which had been founded by Baron de Gérando (1772-1842) (Zind p. 140).

Thanks to this method, it was thought possible to rapidly and economically make elementary instruction available to the majority of young French children for, according



9. e 10. Mutual method or Lancasterian.
One professor alone teaches a group of numerous pupils with the help of monitors

to the theory, a single teacher would suffice for several hundreds of pupils, with junior teachers, selected from among the pupils, providing instruction to groups at different levels. Books and exercise books would be replaced by slates, blackboards and printed charts. Children would learn to write at the same time as they learned to read.

Championed by Liberal circles at the start of the Restoration and supported by the Government from 1816 to 1820, the Mutual Method aroused lively enthusiasm, but also the resolute opposition of the Catholic and conservative circles, which favoured the “Method of the Brothers” and condemned a method that was both foreign and Protestant in origin. The foundation of new congregations of Brothers was in part caused by this first educational war. We will return later to the hypothesis that there was a link between Champagnat’s intention to found a group of Brothers and the birth of the Pupil Teacher Method.

Nevertheless, if a certain difference of viewpoint existed between Champagnat and his confreres with regard to the mission, his Resolutions and Rules of Conduct reflect how profoundly they were agreed on the Marial nature of the Society. Whereas in his early resolutions the piety we see expressed is typically classical in style, the resolutions he wrote on 3rd May 1815 contain words that are rather mysterious:⁷⁹

“Holy Virgin, you know that I am your slave. In truth, I am unworthy of so great a favour, but it is in this very unworthiness that your tenderness towards me will break forth. Amen.”

This is an allusion to an Act of Special Consecration,⁸⁰ which is much less a matter of devotion than evidence of a Marial mysticism. This is also evident in a prayer Champagnat made at Fourvière in 1816, as he was preparing to take up his appointment as assistant priest:

“... It is under your auspices that I wish to work for the salvation of souls. I can do nothing, O Mother of Mercy! I can do nothing, I feel it; but you can do everything by your prayers; Holy Virgin, I place all my trust in you. I offer to you, give to you and consecrate to you my person, my labours and all the actions of my life.” (Life Ch. 3, p.33)

When, therefore, in August 1816 he took up his duties in the village of La Valla, Marcellin was a man deeply imbued with a personal project (to found a society of Brothers) and also part of a collective undertaking – to bring into existence the Society of Mary. His whole life would now be spent in the pursuit of these two objectives, something his Marist confreres and his disciples would be aware of without being able to understand it in any great depth.

⁷⁹ AFM 131.2. Published in *Documents manuscripts* pp. 13-19.

⁸⁰ *Dictionnaire de Spiritualité* Vol. 10, col. 461-462, article “Marie”: This devotion first appears in Spain from 1575 in the milieux of the Franciscans of the Immaculate Conception. It spread throughout Spain, Italy, the Low countries ... and in France through Bérulle who advocated the vow of slavery. (In fact, Bérulle spoke of the vow of **servanthood**, a word that would seem less likely to cause arguments than the word “slavery”) Vol. 4 Col. 1135-1136; Vol. 8 Col. 263. See also Vol. 14 Col. 878 and Vol. 9 Col. 1076 (Louis Grignon de Montfort, *Treatise on true Devotion to the Blessed Virgin*). Champagnat was perhaps inspired by the work of Boudon, the great representative of the French school of spirituality and author of: *God alone or the Holy Slavery of the Admirable Mother of God* (Paris 1667) which conceived this slavery as a wish to make an absolute commitment to the service of Mary. At Verrières Jean-Marie Vianney was part of a Confraternity of the Holy Slavery.

2.

THE RESTORATION (1815-1830)

Collapse of a synthesis between Ancien-Régime and Revolution

The activity of the early Marists took place during the second Restoration, a particularly conflictual period in French political life, which lasted until the Revolution of the “Three Glorious Days” of 27th - 29th July 1830. As its name suggests, the political aim of this period was the restoration of the power of the Monarchy, with the Ultraroyalists regarding the Revolution as a chapter now closed. The King, however, and the wiser heads among the Royalists, understood very clearly that the new regime had to take into account the fundamental gains of the Revolution.

The Charter of 1814 – an unwelcome compromise

The Charter of 4th June 1814 is a good example of an attempt to create a compromise between the Ancien-Régime and the Revolution. Accordingly, the King guaranteed civil equality, freedom of worship, and freedom of the press. The Civil Code was retained. Property was declared inviolable, which was reassuring to all those who had acquired lands and buildings nationalised under the Revolution. It was, therefore, a liberal regime, and well calculated to allay the fears of any who had, to some extent or other, profited from collaboration with the Revolution or the Empire, which at that time was almost everyone in France.

Nevertheless, by the substitution of the name “Charter” for that of “Constitution”, it was clear that a claim was being made to continuity with the Ancien-Régime. It was dated the 19th year of the Reign, as if Louis XVIII had been reigning since the death in 1795 of Louis XVII, the young son of Louis XVI. Furthermore, this Charter was being “granted”, and so was not in any sense the outcome of a negotiation between Nation and Sovereign. The person of the King was sacred, and he enjoyed wide ranging powers. All executive power was in his hands, along with part of the legislative and judicial power. It was a limited monarchy, but not a parliamentary monarchy, even if the Parliament, elected on limited suffrage, did have real powers.

This compromise met with the vehement opposition of the Royalists. They objected to the very principle of a Constitution, even if dressed up in the fancy guise of a con-

cession granted by the King. More royalist even than the King, and under the leadership of the King's brother, the Comte d'Artois, who would become Charles X in 1824, they pursued a policy of opposition founded on an extremely coherent system of thought nourished by such great thinkers as Bonald and de Maistre⁸¹.

The Ultras based their philosophy on the natural order. Nations, like plants, grow by means of slow evolutionary processes which conform to the natural and divine order, an order that had been shattered by the revolutionaries' attempt at *tabula rasa*, sweeping everything away in order to make a totally new beginning. All the same, the Ultras were not defenders of the old system of absolute monarchy which, by diminishing the role of intermediary bodies, and principally that of the nobility, had contributed to the catastrophe of the Revolution. Their model was an idealised version of the Middle Ages, a period when a paternal and Christian royalty had reigned over the people with the benevolent assistance of the nobility and the clergy. They were therefore champions of the community (family, parish, and other intermediary bodies) over the individual, and felt they had a duty of "protection" towards the common people, whom they naively believed to be their natural allies in their struggle against a bourgeoisie corrupted by egoism, loss of religious faith, and compromise with the Revolution.

Many of those who were Ultras in the 1815-1830 period had before 1789 been adherents of the Enlightenment, but the horrors they had lived through under the Revolution (exile, the execution of family members, confiscation of their property, and so on) had brought them back to religion, either out of conviction, or because they saw the Church as a force necessary for good social order. Accordingly, the Church had to be re-established with all its former rights, dignities and property. Furthermore, because of its victorious resistance to the Revolution, its numerous martyrs, the captivity of Pope Pius VII, and other reasons besides, the Church had won back for itself considerable prestige. For Joseph de Maistre, one of the leading intellectuals among the Ultras, the Pope was the keystone in the arch of a new European order which was now taking its stand against the revolutionary subversiveness being taken up by Liberalism. As King, Louis XVIII remained a non-believer, and he made serious efforts to reduce the influence of the Ultras, but the Comte d'Artois, the future Charles X, and leader of the Ultra party, was a devout believer. In 1824 he would be anointed as King and crowned at Reims.

The Ultra party and the Church now forged a vital link, which was denounced by the Liberals in a frenzy of unscrupulous attacks. It was the "alliance of Throne and Altar", or more colloquially, "the sabre and the holy water sprinkler". Many of the clergy inhabited the same mental universe as the Ultras. Their theology and ecclesiology, founded on ideas of divine authority and hierarchy, naturally predisposed them to embrace a political philosophy that seemed eminently in keeping with the teachings of the Church.

All the same, a state of ambiguity reigned in relations between the Church and the Ultras. The Ultras may have been intent on rebuilding a political regime, but the Church's focus was on a programme of mass re-Christianisation. So, while Church and

⁸¹ René Rémond, *Les droites en France*, ch. 2 pp. 46-71, 1815-1830, L'ultracisme, extrémisme et tradition, Paris, Aubier, 1982

Ultras were allies, each was using the other to accomplish its own objectives. The clergy, furthermore, almost without exception, were steeped in the Ultra spirit, many of them still being imbued with the spirit of the Ancien-Régime. Gallican in their outlook, even Jansenist, they were the enemies of extremism, and the Liberals would be quick to highlight the differences, very often to the point of caricature, between this older moderate Gallican type clergy, and the new clergy, criticised as Ultramontanist, uneducated and rather too easily stirred up. (The Gallicans set great store by the tradition of the independence of the French Church, whereas the Ultramontanists' first loyalty was to the Pope and Rome). It is important also not to forget that many of the clergy in this period were bishops and priests who had formerly taken the Constitutional Oath.

With the passage of time an evolution would occur among many of the clergy. For example, the mysticism that imbued the first Marists of 1816 had strongly royalist overtones, but in the course of time two factors brought about a greater flexibility in their attitudes. The first was their disappointment with a regime which was less favourable towards them than they had hoped for, and the second, an increased realism which allowed them to see that the popular masses were not what the Ultras had imagined them to be. The July Monarchy, born out of the Revolution of 1830, would certainly give them little to be happy about, but already long before they had bid farewell to any hopes of an ideal royal regime. Their evolution was, so to speak, a movement from a Catholic and royalist romanticism to a missionary spirit that was able to function relatively independently of the political power.

Lastly, in spite of the despotism of the Empire, not all of the memories it had left behind were negative. One of its merits, among others, had been to dissociate the cause of the Church from that of the Monarchy. Even if, beginning in 1808 and particularly between 1811 and 1814, the Imperial regime's increasing harshness had left this policy in ruins, large sections of the ecclesiastical elite, who had seen regimes come and go in rapid succession over twenty-five years, continued to have their reservations about the royal power, given that there was so little certainty as to its stability or its support for the Church.

It is significant that in the Diocese of Lyon, one of the most senior in France, during the time when Cardinal Fesch, the Emperor's uncle, was in exile in Rome, his Vicar Generals had continued to govern the diocese in his name until 1824. It was in 1824 that manoeuvrings by clergy of the Ultra party succeeded in securing the appointment of an Apostolic Administrator, Archbishop de Pins, who would, throughout his entire administration (1824-1840), have to put up with passive resistance from a section of his clergy.

The main phases of the political game

Even though Jacobinism and the horrors of its Reign of Terror remained a hideous and unforgettable memory in a France weary of war and despotism, the Revolution did continue to enjoy great prestige among certain sections of the urban masses and the bourgeois elites. In the rural sectors, on the other hand, although the people had little inclination to glorify the Revolution, they dreaded the return of the *dîme* - the tax on their produce - and domination by the aristocracy. Finally,

among those former soldiers who had fought in the wars of the Revolution and the Empire, the spirit of the Revolution and Bonapartism was still alive and well. So it was a real nostalgia for the former regime and a distrust of the new that had allowed Napoleon to return in 1815, and accounts for the deep-seated reserve towards the new regime that lingered on afterwards. The Liberals, too, were carrying on the spirit of the Revolution. They were pro 1789 (the Rights of Man, and so on) and anti 1793 (the Terror). While the Doctrinaires' party may have viewed the Charter as an acceptable compromise, fundamentally the more radical elements in French society accepted neither the Charter nor the Bourbons, and it was they who, in 1830, would be strong enough and clever enough to thwart the attempts of the Ultras, and with the help of the Parisian masses, bring about the downfall of the regime.

The Restoration was therefore marked by a series of swings backwards and forwards between an Ultra interpretation of the Charter intent on reducing its liberal elements, and a Liberal interpretation seeking to broaden it out towards a parliamentary regime. From September 1815 to September 1816 an Ultraroyalist "Chamber of No Compromise" conducted a reactionary policy. It was the time of the "White Terror". Whilst France was under occupation by foreign troops, supporters of the Empire and the Revolution were being hunted down and even assassinated. Louis XVIII would find himself obliged to dismiss a Chamber that was unacceptably extremist in its royalism.

From 1816 to 1821, the ministries led by Richelieu and Decazes were more moderate, even liberal, but the assassination of the Duc de Berry, heir to the throne, in February 1820, gave rise to a violent anti-liberal reaction. From December 1821 to January 1824 Villèle, a moderate Ultra, conducted a conservative policy that was gradually undermined by the advent of Charles X in 1824. The Martignac ministry (January 1828 to August 1829) conducted a liberal policy, notably in the area of education where it engaged the Jesuits and the seminaries in battle, but it had to give way before a resurgence of the Ultra spirit. From August 1829 to August 1830 the Polignac ministry, formed of hardline Ultras, and with the support of the King, attempted a head-on confrontation with the Chamber of Deputies, which ended with the Liberals and Republicans staging a revolution in Paris from 27th to 29th July 1830, known also as the revolution of "The Three Glorious Days".

The long attempt at reconciliation between the monarchical principle and the nation had therefore run its course. The Revolution of July 1830 was the victory of the nation over the hereditary monarchy. The clergy, who had largely supported a regime guaranteeing the principle of authority and according the Church the status of the official religion of the State, would also pay the price of defeat. Reduced under the July Monarchy to the "religion of the majority of the French people", and after enduring a wave of popular anticlericalism, the Church would now succeed in restoring its image by means of a social and pastoral outreach which had largely begun already under the Restoration. A good many of its members would, however, remain attached to the principle of Legitimacy (the Bourbons' right to rule), which seemed to them the only regime capable of reconciling order with liberty. To many of these the victory of the Liberals in 1830 looked like a return of the Great Revolution which would once again lead the country into moral ruin.

The Religious Congregations under the Restoration

For the reasons outlined above, then, the Restoration period had been an anything but favourable time for the Church. Nevertheless, imbued as it was with Gallicanism, the regime had refrained from suppressing the University founded by Napoleon or from calling into question the Concordat of 1801. Those in power remained distrustful of the orders and religious congregations, even though they had tolerated the re-establishment of the Jesuits in 1814, and by means of legal ordinances issued between 1815 and 1816, had granted authorisation to four congregations (Sulpicians, Vincen- tians, Spiritans, and the Paris Foreign Missions Society). This was in addition to the Brothers of the Christian Schools, who had been integrated into the University in 1808. The law of 2nd January 1817 subordinated all other legal authorisations to the vote of a law, with the result that new congregations of men would have to be content with a decree of recognition as associations of public utility. For women’s congregations, the situation was much more flexible. All throughout the Nineteenth Century, a quite large number of women’s congregations came to be recognised as such. All the same, this was the period when societies of men were multiplying, among them the Marists (1816-1817), whilst older orders, such as the Jesuits, Trappists, Vincentians and others, were being re-established. The explanation for this explosion of congregations lies before all else in the dynamic energy of a Church that, thanks to the trials it had endured, was now very much stronger.



11. “Brevet” of 1812



12. "Brevet of second degree" of Br. François

The opportunity for congregations of Brothers came at the end of the Empire, when the authorities became aware that France was lagging well behind the rest of Europe in the matter of elementary education, and was obliged to make an urgent appeal for initiatives of any kind to remedy the situation. This then is why under the Restoration ten ordinances were published on primary instruction (Zind P. 218). The most important of these, and the first, was the Decree of 29th February 1816, which finally placed primary education on an organised footing (Zind p. 220).

Article 14 declared: "Every Commune will be required to see that the children living in it receive primary instruction and that children too poor to pay fees receive it free of charge." But this obligation was not accompanied by any penalties, and parents were not obliged to send their children to school. To have the right to teach, the candidate had to present to the Rector of the Academy two Certificates of Good Conduct, one from the Mayor, and the other from the Parish Priest, and, after being examined, receive a "Certificate of Capacity" (or "Brevet"). The Brevet Level 3 guaranteed that the candidate could read, write and count numbers sufficiently well to teach. Level 2 attested that the candidate had a good knowledge of Spelling, Handwriting, the four elementary operations of Arithmetic, and the Simultaneous Method of teaching. The Brevet Level 1, much rarer, presupposed a knowledge of French grammar, Arithmetic "by principles" – that is, by reasoning – the fundamentals of Geography, Surveying and Measurement, and other "useful fields of knowledge" such as Plain Chant, and Line Drawing. Although not mentioned in the decree, Catechism formed part of the examination and Article 30 specified that primary instruction was to be based on religion, respect for the law and love for the Sovereign.

Commune schools came under the authority of “The Canton Committees for Free and Charitable Education” each comprising the Parish Priest of the canton, its Justice of the Peace, and the Principal of the College if one existed. Three or four members were chosen by the Rector of the Academy, who would play a part in the appointment of teachers to the communes and could withdraw approval. Article 36 declared: “Any religious or charitable association, such as that of the Christian Schools, will be permitted, under agreed on conditions, to provide teachers to communes that may request them, provided that such associations be authorised by us.” Article 37 even made provision for these associations, and especially their novitiates, to be supported by the Ministry of Public Instruction.

These two articles were therefore an encouragement for the foundation of congregations of Brothers who would benefit from official recognition. For reasons we will outline later, the Marist Brothers would not be able to enjoy this advantage, but we may well wonder if the publication of this ordinance, just as the group of the first Marists was being established, was not one of the sources of Marcellin Champagnat’s desire to found a group of Brothers.

The Law of 10th March 1818 (the *Loi Gouvion Saint Cyr*) on recruitment to the army contributed to encouraging candidates to go into teaching. Article 15 of this law allowed for a dispensation from military service for seminarians, students in teacher training establishments and other members of the *Instruction Publique* (the Teaching Service) prepared to commit themselves to serve as teachers for ten years. This measure applied to the Brothers of the Christian Schools and to all associations of Brothers recognised by the State. For all others, it prescribed seven years of military service with selection by ballot, with those drawing a favourable number being exempt (Zind p. 234). Under the Restoration, the Marist Brothers, who did not have authorisation, avoided the ballot either by passing themselves off as Brothers of the Christian Schools - with the tacit approval of the authorities - or, if they had the *Brevet*, by signing on for the ten year commitment to teaching. Under the July Monarchy, which was less favourable to the teaching religious, Father Champagnat would send Brothers liable to conscription to stay with the Brothers of Christian Instruction of Saint-Paul-Trois-Châteaux, who did have authorisation.

At this stage the system of teacher training was still very much operating within an ecclesiastical context. Thus, under the Restoration, it was not unusual to find the civil authorities looking to set up associations of Brothers, or congregations already functioning planning to establish teacher training colleges at regional or departmental levels. When talking of teacher training, terms like “novitiate” or “teacher training college” were used fairly interchangeably. The distinction between these two would only emerge later when, under the July Monarchy, the State would consider that the provision of teacher training should become its concern.

On the other hand, within the Academies (the Rectors), and among those holding positions on the General Councils of the Departments, the religious congregations had numerous supporters, either because of ideological reasons (the Ultras) or purely out of pragmatism, since the Brothers’ congregations were regarded as

⁸² An example: Inspector Guillard in 1822 in the Academy of Lyon (*Origines Maristes*, Vol. 1 doc. 75)

producing better teachers than those trained in the secular establishments. The political circumstances prevailing at the time need also to be taken into account. Between 1821 and 1828 France was governed by the Ultras who had appointed their own men to key posts. So, either for opportunistic reasons or because of their convictions, officials at the lower levels followed the policy coming from the top.

A typology of founders of Institutes of Brothers⁸³

To sum up then, the Restoration had been able to implement an educational policy greatly favourable to popular education, which explains why almost all of the congregations of Brothers and a very large number of the congregations of Sisters came into existence between 1815 and 1830. In spite of great differences between them, their founders were steeped in a school of thought which can be set out along several broad axes:

- 1 –A refractory spirituality characterised by pessimism. The Revolution had been a period of general corruption, so what was needed for the renewal of the Church and of society, were men imbued with a great spirit of sacrifice and a zeal ready to face any trial. (The refractory priests were those who had been prepared to suffer rather than take the oath of loyalty to the Revolution).
- 2 –The Revolution had been only the last of a long series of catastrophes beginning with the Reformation and continuing with the intellectuals of the Enlightenment. For certain ones among these founders the Revolution had been a manifestation of the Antichrist and in their minds the battles of the End Times were now close. This thinking was often combined with a Marial mysticism, Mary Immaculate, victorious over the Demon, sustaining her faithful ones in the final battles.
- 3 –They saw their ministry as a continuation of the missionary tradition of the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries. They all wanted to imitate the Jesuits, with their missionary activity and their colleges, or else the Brothers of the Christian Schools, but they also wanted to adapt those models to the new times. The ancient orders were also a source of inspiration, with their branches for men and women and their third orders. From all of this there emerged complex societies aiming to reach all levels of the population.

After 1830 hardly any new foundations of congregations of Brothers were made, which is why Pierre Zind, the historian of these groups, terminates his thesis in 1830. Philosophically, these founders were traditionalists, but in their ecclesiology they were innovators, because it was through the Brothers' congregations that a greater place was being claimed for a non-ordained laity in the task of re-evangelising France. And lastly, these founders were all, at any one time and to varying degrees, charismatics, pastors and administrators, and men of politics.

⁸³ Drawn from the work of Pierre Zind – Brother Louis-Laurent, fms.

A first generation, born in the years 1759-1767, had come into the priesthood around 1783-1795. These were men who had known the Ancien-Régime. Though already ageing by the time of the Restoration, they had a wealth of experience. Their main concern was to restore old pastoral activities (confraternities, congregations, pilgrimages, missions, and so on), but they also wanted to adapt them to the new era. Among these men the charismatic aspect was less to the fore than their pastoral concern and their political nous. Father Bochard, founder of the Brothers of the Cross of Jesus in the diocese of Lyon, would be a good example of this type of man.

The second generation (1787-1799) were born more or less with the Revolution and had spent a good part of their childhood under it. For the most part its protagonists came from families who had resisted the Revolution. This was not the case with Marcellin Champagnat, but was the case, for example, with Jean-Claude Colin, his Marist companion. Their priestly formation during the time of the Empire had been a fairly patchy affair, mainly because the network of seminaries had been functioning under difficult conditions. Its improvised staffing had been by men largely characterised by the spirit of resistance to the Revolution. This generation came to ordination at the end of the Empire or the start of the Restoration. They were therefore beginning their priestly ministry just as the ancient orders were being re-established and numerous new missionary societies created. They were often first and foremost charismatics, who would later have to learn how to be administrators and men of politics. Champagnat was quite typical of this generation. Jean-Marie de Lamennais, who was born in 1780 and ordained at the start of the Empire, was the only one who bridged the gap between these two generations of founders.

Geography and the typology of Institutes of Brothers

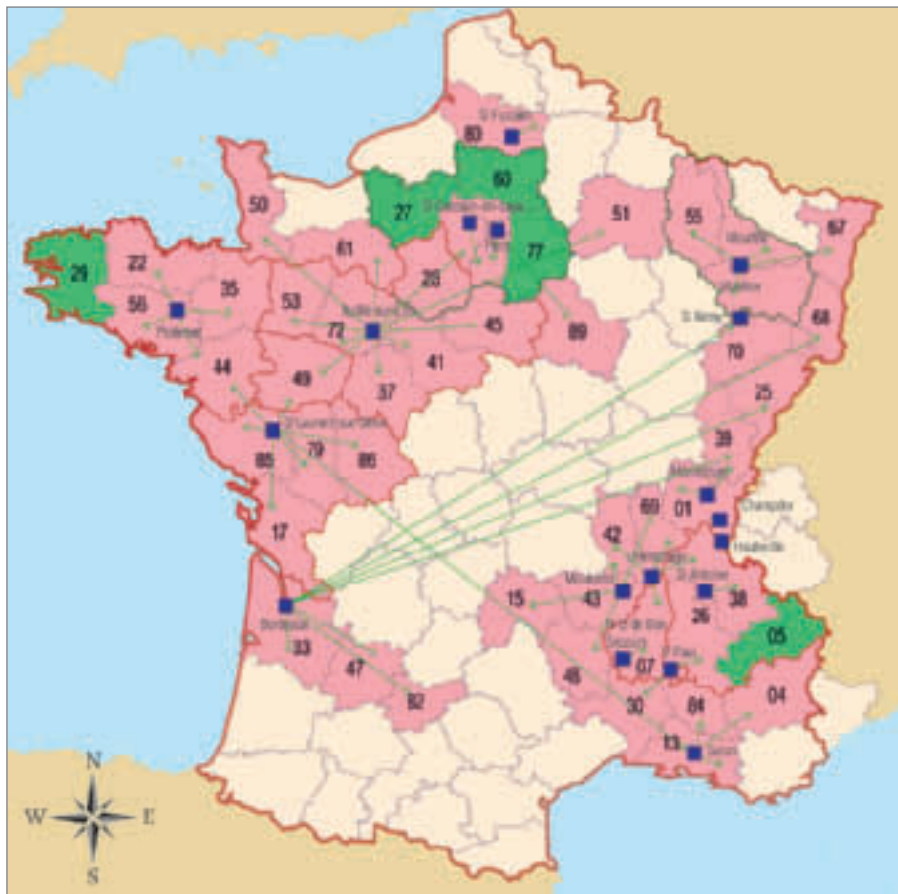
An important connection is revealed when a comparison is made between a map of the places where congregations of Brothers were founded and one showing where the bastions of massively pro-Ultra public opinion were located. Both form a grand arc around the periphery of France: Brittany, the Vendée, Aquitaine – Bordeaux had been the first city to welcome the Bourbons and their Allies in 1814 – and Provence. The edge of the Massif Central with Lyon as its capital was, somewhat like Brittany, an area where a strong Ultra party faced off against a powerful Liberal party. In the East, in Lorraine and the France-Comté, there existed minor pockets of royalist sympathisers with Ultra sensibilities.

The nature of this connection, however, was rather more cultural and religious than political. These royalist areas had at first been centres of resistance to the dechristianisation and despotism of the Empire. In addition, having been only recently annexed by France, they still retained a powerful distrust of the central power, and in 1815 Ultra style royalism seemed to them to offer a guarantee of provincial freedom against the centralising tendencies of Paris.

Pierre Zind, who made this area his specialisation, drew up a sophisticated typology of Brothers' congregations. Their numerous founders, however, all had the same goal – to reach, as quickly as possible, the greatest number of boys living in the populous areas, and most often in the rural areas, either by renewing the old formula of the cleric-layman or by seeking to transform it more radically.

Map 1. New congregations of Teaching Brothers in 1828

The Society of Mary of Bordeaux and the Brothers of the Faubourg Saint-Antoine had authorisation for the whole of France, as did the Grands Frères de J-B de La Salle



Departments 05, 27, 29, 60 and 77, assigned by ordinance to provincial congregations, did not as yet have schools staffed by Little Brothers (Petits Frères)

■ Principal novitiates

Depending on the regions and the temperaments of the founders, the congregations of Brothers leaned either towards the model of the Brothers of the Christian Schools, as did the Little Brothers of Mary, or else towards the tradition of the cleric-layman, as was the case with the Brothers of Christian Instruction of Ploërmel. Two major traits can distinguish the two tendencies. On the one hand, the functions

of parish cantor, sacristan, and organist were accepted by the more traditional ones, but rejected by the others; on the other, the innovators stipulated an independent community, whilst the traditionalists envisaged the Brother on his own, living with the Parish Priest.

By refusing to allow his Brothers to act as parish sacristans or cantors, and by having them live in autonomous communities, Champagnat belongs incontestably among the innovators, but he does not seem to have settled firmly on this model until after 1830. Besides that, plans made at the start are rapidly knocked about by experience, and in the end the congregations that were successful were those that conformed more or less to the model of the Brothers of the Christian Schools. As far as the general public, and even the civil administration, was concerned, these complexities were scarcely apparent. Any men who lived in community, wore similar looking habits (soutane, rabat, and so on), and were dedicated to the popular education of boys, were all in their mind “Brothers of Christian Doctrine”⁸⁴.

The Restoration period was therefore a time that greatly favoured a great expansion of a form of consecrated life, developed much earlier by Jean-Baptiste de la Salle, which combined the religious dimension with the pedagogical. After the 1830 Revolution, and particularly with the Guizot Law (1833), which created a college in every Department to train teachers for boys, this lack of distinction between religious associations of Brothers and lay teachers would gradually come to disappear.

So, with the alliance between Throne and Altar now broken, the State was staking its claim to have a teaching personnel of its own. At the same time, the Brothers’ congregations, strongly influenced by the monastic model, were tending to reinforce the conventual aspects of their life. The establishment of a body of men teachers, that would be lay in nature but under the control of the Church, thus partly ended in failure. In contrast to the women’s congregations, which would go on to become the principal providers of education for girls and services to the poor, the Brothers’ congregations would by and large never constitute more than a minor part of the male teaching corps and in the provision of social services.

This wave of new congregations, that had begun in the Seventeenth Century and reached its peak at the start of the Nineteenth, thus presents contrasting images between the men and the women. We can see a multitude of causes for this, the most fundamental of which could be the anthropological, women being regarded by society as “naturally” suited to charitable activity and education. As far as the clergy were concerned, the Brother did not really have a vocation, just an ill-defined auxiliary status - part cleric part layman. And, finally, in the eyes of the general public, the education of children was not yet thought of as a profession in its own right.

In short, with no clear status, with no recognition from the State other than as associations, and dedicating themselves to an activity viewed by society as relatively unimportant, the congregations of teaching Brothers suffered from an identity that was neither clear nor attracted much prestige. Although neither laymen, nor priests,

⁸⁴ The Death Certificate of Brother J.P. Martinol, first Brother to die in the Institute, who died at Boulieu on 29th March 1825, states that he was a “Brother of Christian Doctrine”. (The Mairie of Boulieu, 28th April 1825)

nor monks, their way of life nevertheless embraced elements of all three. In contrast to the Sisters, who would go on to enjoy a strong identity, the Brothers' congregations remained fragile groups whose members were constantly torn between returning to the lay state, joining the priesthood or entering a monastery

A prophetic function

This difficulty that Brothers' institutes had in setting up forms of life that were stable and able to offer some reassurance to institutions and to society, was inherent also in their fundamentally charismatic identity. Indeed, imbued as they were with a high idea of the value of the child and of the necessity of providing children with the best possible upbringing, they at first seemed out of touch in a society which did not see in the children of the masses a cause of such importance that men would consecrate their entire lives to it.

So, in the early stages, with their mission of bringing a civilising and Christian influence to the world of children, and especially that of the boys of the rural areas, the Brothers' congregations found themselves reduced to a kind of prophetic function. However, when popular education emerged as a fundamental question for society in the middle of the Nineteenth Century the situation changed, and for the Brothers' congregations it would signal both their triumph and their downfall. In the state institutions what had been for the Brothers a vocation would be turned into a profession, and their concern for the total educative formation of the child reduced to generalised instruction. Once they had been shown to be competent, society at large would come to appreciate these state trained teachers, whose lifestyle was closer to their own, and who shared in their own hopes of moving up in society. And often, in the process, the schools of the congregations would be abandoned.

APPENDIX 1, The principal founders of congregations of Brothers, pag. 356

3.

LA VALLA. FROM A PARISH MISSION TO A NETWORK OF SCHOOLS (1816-1824)

This broader historical detour has been thought necessary in order to situate Marcellin Champagnat in the context of the Restoration and among the founders of congregations of Brothers. Now we will take a look at the man himself in his irreducible originality.

After his ordination as a priest at the end of July 1816, Marcellin was appointed to La Valla, a village on the slopes of Mont Pilat, overlooking the valley of the Gier and the town of Saint Chamond, which is itself not far from Saint-Etienne. Arriving in August, he was entering the history of an area that had experienced the great upheavals of the French Revolution (1789-1800). Although at that stage these upheavals were some time back in history, they had left a deep imprint. More recently invasions by foreign troops in 1814 and 1815 had also left their mark, and France was still under military occupation at the time Champagnat took up his post.

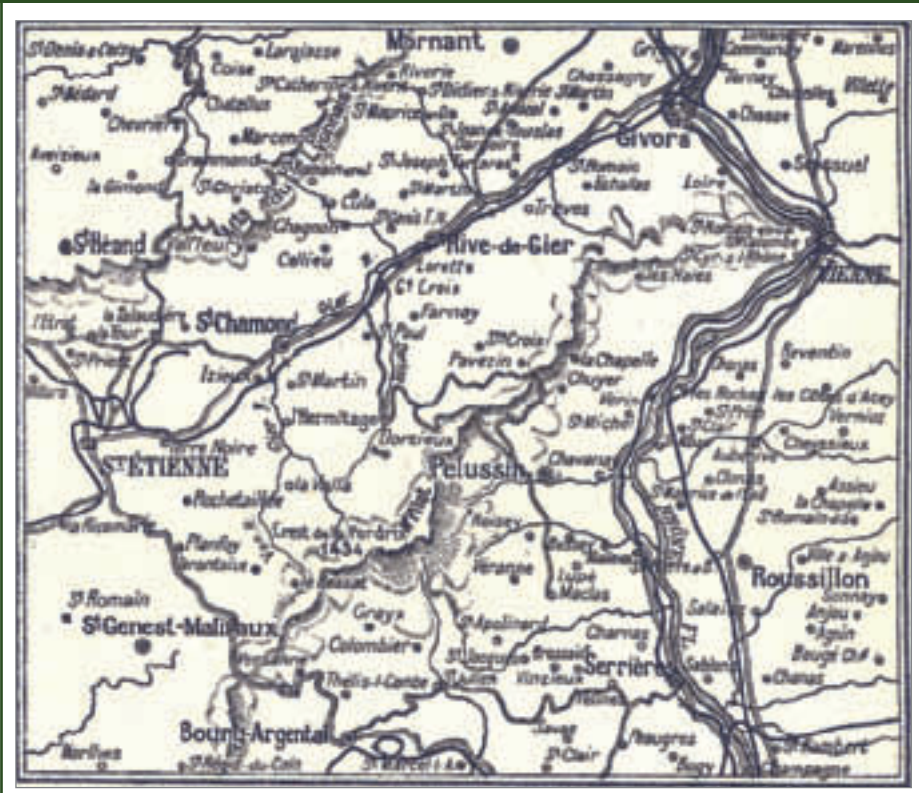
The region of Saint-Chamond under the Revolution

In 1789⁸⁵ the population of Saint-Chamond and its surrounding areas numbered 9125 inhabitants and La Valla 1675. In the town itself there was a good deal of economic activity, the principal one being the manufacture of nails. The brothers Neyrand, future benefactors of Champagnat, were the main producers. Coal deposits close to the surface produced several thousand tonnes annually, although their exploitation was small-scale and not well organised. Ribbon-making was widely practised in the town and out in the countryside. And finally, there were some ten or so mills producing silk thread.

The rural economy was less well-off. The soil was poor, and the area subject to droughts. The land around La Valla and Doizieu on the flanks of Mont Pilat sloped steeply. It produced little wheat but good quantities of rye. Pasture for cattle was

⁸⁵ The main resource for this is the work of Lucien Parizot, *La Révolution à l'oeil nu. L'exemple du Lyonnais vécu à Saint-Chamond et en Jarez*, Editions Val Jaris, Saint, 1987. Although this work is a little hasty in some of its conclusions, it does give a detailed description of this small region.

Map 2. The Valley of the Gier



plentiful on the high plateaux of the Gier, and there was potential for wealth in the great pine forests, particularly at La Valla where they were owned communally, but after years of systematic pillaging, they were yielding little at that stage.

In religious terms, Saint-Chamond was well provided for, with three parishes staffed by 21 priests, and also three religious houses, one each of Capuchins (6 priests and 9 brothers), Ursulines (34 nuns), and Minims (4 priests). The hospital was managed by a committee of ten, with its services provided by eight to ten “Sisters of Saint Joseph”. Since 1764 a hospice, “La Charité”, had taken in elderly people and destitute children. There, under the direction of ten “Sisters of Saint Joseph”, the girls wound silk thread into skeins and the boys made nails. Then there were the confraternities. In the parish of St Pierre the Penitents of the Gonfalon (a banner bearing a sacred image), and at Notre Dame the Penitents of the Blessed Sacrament were devotional groups. Both had private chapels which served as meeting places and later as clubs during the Revolution. This entire framework of religious, social and cultural relationships, which had made Saint-Chamond a veritable little religious metropolis, was largely destroyed by the Revolution and would have to be set up once again in the Nineteenth Century.

In terms of social structure, the population of Saint-Chamond comprised a high bourgeoisie, a low bourgeoisie, and an extensive urban proletariat who lived in extreme poverty. The extremists of the Revolutionary period had emerged out of this latter group. Out in the countryside, life was a little less precarious for the poor, but a bourgeois class was almost non-existent.

Map 3. From Marlihes to La Valla





13. Post card of La Valla

Even though political events on the national level did have important consequences, local disturbances came about largely because of social and economic problems. The urban poor in Saint-Chamond felt themselves to be under siege by the inhabitants of the surrounding countryside. They suspected the country people wanted to reduce them to starvation, either by not bringing to market the foodstuffs they needed for survival or by only offering them at exorbitant prices. Hence there were many armed incursions out into the country areas, and particularly against La Valla, which had the reputation of being a particularly dangerous commune and a hideout for refractory priests and army deserters. In short, Saint-Chamond was Jacobin, whilst La Valla stood accused, in part wrongly, of fomenting plots against the Revolution.

Jean-Louis Barge, who was born in La Valla on 25th August 1762, left a set of memoirs covering the years 1789 to 1814, which reveal a whole host of local events occurring during that troubled period.⁸⁶ A reasonably well educated man, and at first a strong supporter of the Revolution, he quickly became sickened by the excesses it brought in its wake. Through him we learn that La Valla was a complex society, constantly beset by conflicts of interest and clan struggles, where more general problems superimposed themselves on the local struggles. From these memoirs we are able to distinguish four periods in the history of La Valla.

⁸⁶ In March 1897 Jean-Galley, an historian of the St Etienne region at the end of the Nineteenth Century, copied two notebooks of the memoirs of Jean-Louis Barge made available by the nephew of the former notary of La Valla, Monsieur Thibaud. They give a picturesque and detailed account of the history of the village of La Valla.

From 1789 to 1793 the dominant influence was the parish priest, Father Gaumond, who refused to join the Constitutional Church. Barge depicts him as an extremist, but there was little attempt to apprehend him. The year 1793 was a time of uncertainty, with the siege of Lyon (Autumn 1793) drawing a certain number of the inhabitants into the revolutionary camp, whilst others became even more strongly identified with the politico-religious resistance. The Tardy and Rivat families appear to have been particularly active on that side. In the end a low level resistance persisted in the commune. From 1794 to 1800 the parish had to sustain a veritable war against Saint-Chamond and the government of the Terror, doing its best to resist a fanatical campaign of dechristianisation (compulsory Tenth Day worship, the pulling down of the church bells, and attacks on the chapel at L'Etrat). Father Gaumond was captured and executed at the end of 1794. From 1795, however, the religious question was less to the fore while the problem of draft dodgers and food supplies remained crucial. Barge has less to say about the period 1801 to 1814. Nevertheless, he draws attention to local political rivalries and denounces the intrigues of the parish priest, Father Rebod. Rebod had been appointed in 1812 and was trying to re-establish the authority of the Church. With the invasion of 1814, the main issue became the supplies being requisitioned for the occupying Austrian troops.

The appointment of Marcellin Champagnat to such a parish was not without its significance. To bring effective pastoral ministry to a population that had endured such severe trials, and to cope with its extensive and hilly terrain, what was needed was a vigorous man familiar with the rural world of the mountains of Pilat and the Velay. This appointment was, to a certain extent, a mark of confidence in him.

In Chapters 4 and 5 of the *Life* of Champagnat, Brother Jean-Baptiste Furet in 1856 presents us with a fairly conventional account of the state of the parish of La Valla at the time Champagnat arrived. So (p. 35) “the inhabitants of La Valla were good folk and full of faith but without sophistication or education”. A certain number no longer went to Confession and others only at Easter (Ch. 5 p. 48). The principal vices and abuses in the commune that Champagnat had to wage war against were drunkenness, dancing, nocturnal gatherings⁸⁷, blasphemous language and the reading of bad books.⁸⁸ But this judgement could have been made about almost any parish in France or even in Europe.

On the parish priest, Rebod, he corroborates the opinion of Barge: “Although a good priest [...] he was not liked” because of a speech defect which would have made it painful to listen to his sermons.⁸⁹ Barge is more direct. Rebod was regarded as authoritarian by a population of laity who had no intention of letting themselves be ruled over by the clergy as had been the case in the past. His speech defect was due to his propensity for saying things to people which they found disagreeable or offensive.

⁸⁷ Evening gatherings held during winter, which notably permitted young men and women to come into contact with one another, and often gave rise to dancing.

⁸⁸ In fact, travelling pedlars sold books of all sorts of origin to a population more capable of reading than the elites imagined.

⁸⁹ Brother Jean-Baptiste also criticised his propensity for drinking. In fact, he seems to have been a weak character subject to crises of authoritarianism.

La Valla and the Linsolas missions

Barge does not have much to say on the clandestine Catholic Church under the Revolution although he had been in contact with certain of its representatives.⁹⁰ At the same time we need to know clearly that, under the leadership of Vicar General Linsolas,⁹¹ the diocese of Lyon had developed an original and effective method of ecclesiastical organisation, in which La Valla had no doubt participated⁹².

Up to 1792 the major problem had been the Constitutional Schism. Then, in the spring of 1794, and in the face of the government policy of systematic dechristianisation, the parish system was abandoned and the territory of the diocese divided into missions. At the start, these missions were areas of 40 to 60 parishes under the leadership of a priest appointed to head the mission, who had an assistant. They directed a team of six to eight missionaries, each of whom had responsibility for six to eight parishes. The number of these missions was to grow from 12 to 25.

Each parish had a “head layman”, who presided over assemblies of the faithful in the absence of a priest, and passed on instructions coming from the diocese (Linsolas vol. 2 pp. 21-28). He also corresponded directly with the missionary priest. He was seconded by a “permanent catechist”, who visited the sick and the poor, encouraged those who were being persecuted, saw to it that the children were being taught their catechism, informed the faithful when the missionary was coming, and kept the “head layman” briefed as to the state of the parish. For example, the Saint-Chamond mission had fourteen missionaries⁹³. In 1802, as the mission system was being wound down, the priest in charge, Father Gabriel, was described as follows:

“Ex Parish Priest of St Symphorien d’Ozon, priest in charge at Saint-Chamond, aged around 60, head of the Saint-Chamond mission, worked very hard during the Revolution; talented, zealous, and devout.”⁹⁴

It was in the course of 1804 that the parish system was restored. In the canton of Saint-Chamond, as in others, the clergy were an ageing group. All the priests serving had been born between 1735 and 1763. The “*Table of Clergy*” of 1802⁹⁵ gives some interesting details on the qualities of these men – Father Julien Dervieux, the future adversary of Father Champagnat and then his friend, was considered “a good subject on all points, but weak health has an influence on his character,⁹⁶ diplomatic.” Pierre Farge is a “very good subject according to all reports, good

⁹⁰ He participated in the operation to safeguard the objects used in sacred worship and knew some members of the non-juring clergy.

⁹¹ *L’Eglise clandestine de Lyon pendant la Révolution*, Vol. 1 (1789-1794), Vol. 2 (1794-1799), Editions Lyonnaises d’art et d’histoire, collection bicentenaire de la Révolution française à Lyon, 1987.

⁹² The key work on this question is: Charles Ledré, *Le culte caché sous la Révolution. Les missions de l’abbé Linsolas*, Bonne Presse, Paris, 1947, 430 pp.

⁹³ C. Ledré, op. cit., p. 96.

⁹⁴ Archdiocese of Lyon, Tableau général des prêtres du diocèse de Lyon du 1 vendémiaire 1802 rédigé par le vicaire général Courbon.

⁹⁵ Archdiocese of Lyon, register 2 II 83*.

⁹⁶ Father Champagnat was to have bitter experience of this.

health". On the other hand Father Nolhac, priest in charge at Farnay, gets a severe assessment – an “intruder⁹⁷ at St Julien-en-Jarret [...] hot-tempered, a persecutor, frequents the taverns”. Marcelin Granjon is also a “schism(atic) jur(or)”.

As to the clandestine service of La Valla after the execution of Gaumont in 1794, in the upper area this was seen to by Pierre Abrial. He was described in 1802 as “Former assistant priest at Tarantaise, around 45 years of age, talented enough and with sufficient zeal and piety, stationed at La Valla, having worked there all through the Revolution”. The lower end of the parish was in the care of the Abbé Berne, “a native of La Valla, ordained at the start of the Revolution, with sufficient ability, zeal and piety”. He officially reopened the church on 15th November 1801 and moved into the presbytery.

As for the lay people who had supported these missionaries, we no doubt need to look among the leading families of the parish who had been particularly active in the opposition to Jacobinism, such as the Tardy from the hamlets of Le Coing and Soulages, the Rivat from Luzernod, Le Pinay, and Maisonnettes, and the Tissot, who after the siege of Lyon were looked on as aristocrats.

Finally in 1803 Abrial was named priest in charge at La Valla with an Abbé Rivory as his assistant, while Berne was sent to take charge at Planfroy. In 1806 Abrial and Rivory were removed. Barge emphasises that Mayor Tardy did not like Father Abrial “for reasons too long to expound”. As for the assistant Rivory, “a native of St Martin Acoallieux, 50 years of age”, and a former Constitutional priest, Barge accuses him of wanting to supplant his Parish Priest and to grab for himself the position of Secretary at the Mairie. It seems then that these two priests were removed because of a certain rivalry between themselves and also because of disagreements with the parishioners, perhaps caused by the fact that, since he was not receiving a salary from the government, Father Abrial must have been a charge on the finances of the commune.

On 17th April 1806 Father Bussot (Joseph-Marie), until then assistant priest at St Etienne, who had been born 3rd July 1764 and was in receipt of a salary from the government of 266 francs, succeeded Abrial in the parish of La Valla, a position which up to that point had been one “not paid by the government”.⁹⁸ He certainly had an assistant but we do not know his name.⁹⁹ The “Table of Clergy” describes Bussot as a mediocre person, a former Vincentian religious, who had taken the Constitutional oath. He was “fearful of the sacred ministry”, and ill-suited to a parish that had never had a Constitutional priest. When he resigned on 31st January 1812 he was only 48 years old and Father Rebod, aged 34 and perhaps his assistant up to then, was put in charge on 5th February 1812.¹⁰⁰ It was under his authority that Marcellin Champagnat would find himself in 1816. Rebod remained parish priest for twelve years, and with him the period of instability in the provision of priests to the parish came to an end.

The transition from the missionary Church of Linsolas to the return of a stable parish-based ecclesiastical administration had therefore been a long and laborious process. But mainly, in his vision of having catechist Brothers at La Valla, Champagnat was

⁹⁷ A priest who had taken the Constitutional oath.

⁹⁸ Ibid.

⁹⁹ The registers do not mention the names of the assistants.

¹⁰⁰ Archdiocese of Lyon, Register I 19.

placing himself in continuity with the experience of the parish under the Revolution. It seems he saw himself as the missionary priest in a territory where he could not, and should not, evangelise without the active support of committed lay assistants. Is there a connection between the pastoral ministry of Linsolas and that of Champagnat? It is a question worth asking, all the more so in that, in his childhood and during his formation for the priesthood, Champagnat would certainly have come across the itinerant missionaries and seen laymen ensuring the functioning of the Church at the local level.

A socio-economic glimpse of La Valla

What sort of society was it that Marcellin Champagnat was now being called on to evangelise? In 1815 La Valla had more than 2000 inhabitants, distributed among 434 “hearthths” (households) and 66 hamlets, varying greatly in size. We are able to analyse its socio-economic state thanks to a “Table of the Population of the Commune of La Valla. 1815”, which was being used also to calculate the quantity of supplies that could be requisitioned from the inhabitants for the Austrian troops in 1814.

We learn that the parish priest, Father Rebod, had his mother and sister living with him as well as a male servant. His assistant priest was Sieur Artaud. Sieur Jean-Louis Basson, who would become a friend of Marcellin Champagnat, was the sole bourgeois in La Valla, his income being derived from rental properties. Then came Sieur Lagnet, a retired notary, and the Mayor, Jean-Claude Ronchard. Apart from these notables the rest of the population was divided between peasants and artisans: 176 ploughmen and farmers, peasants who were relatively well off; a group of more or less equivalent size of average to poor peasants (farm workers and day labourers); a small group of some forty skilled craftsmen (masons, shoemakers, drapers, makers of soft furnishings, and others); a motley group of 134 servants; then some thirty or so poor people and widows.

Contrasts in altitude and in exposure to the sun meant that this commune was divided socially, economically and perhaps culturally, into four parts. The population of the main village was split between the well-off and the poor, with no significant middle class. The hamlets at the lower end of the commune and to the west (the valley of the Ban), facing in the direction of Saint-Chamond, were rather better off. The upper ends of the valleys on the edge of the forest were much poorer and also more violent. Finally the edge of the plateau (Le Bessat) was moderately wealthy and fairly homogeneous. It faced towards St- Etienne, the valley of the Rhone and the plateau, rather than towards Saint-Chamond. It was a part of the parish difficult to administer because it was so far away and had a spirit all of its own.

APPENDIX 2, Map of La Valla in 1815, pag. 358.

¹⁰¹ It consists of 11 pages of 36 x 24 format. Each page consists of seven columns indicating the name of the hamlet, the surnames and given names of individuals, profession and the number of male children, female children, and servants. Thus, in the hamlet of Maissonnettes, Jean-Baptiste Rivat, a ploughman, had 4 boys and 3 girls, making with his wife a household of 9 persons.

¹⁰² Throughout the Revolution they pillaged the communal forests and fought with anyone who tried to put an end to this disorder. It was also in this part of the commune that deserters from the army used to hide.

Foundational encounters (1816)

After arriving in La Valla on 12th August 1816,¹⁰³ a milieu very like his own native Marlihes, Champagnat launched his project for a branch of Brothers more quickly than he had expected. Scarcely had he arrived than he came in contact with Jean-Marie Granjon, an employee at one of the two mills in the hamlet of La Rive, at the very lowest end of the parish.¹⁰⁴ On Sunday 1st October (OM2/754 n.1) he had caught Champagnat's eye in the church because he had "behaved well". On 26th October 1816 (Chronologie mariste p.30) Jean-Marie came looking for him to minister to a sick person, and Champagnat believed he had found in the young man someone with the dispositions needed for his planned foundation. The next day he brought him a copy of "The Christian's Manual", a small compendium of doctrine and devotion. When Granjon objected that he couldn't read, "Take it anyway, you can use it to learn to read, and if you wish, I will give you some lessons myself."¹⁰⁵

Jean-Marie Granjon was no adolescent. Born on 22nd December 1794 in the hamlet of La Terrasse, in the commune of Doizieux adjacent to La Valla, he had lost his mother in 1796 and his father in 1800. On 26th October 1813, he was drafted into the Imperial Guard as a grenadier.¹⁰⁶ He had certainly been in the campaigns of 1814 and 1815. Champagnat was not yet thinking of making him a catechist Brother but, as a zealous pastor, he wanted to gather around him a group of well-disposed young men, who by learning about their religion, and learning also to read, would be able to improve themselves spiritually.¹⁰⁷

The notes written by Father Bourdin between 1828 and 1831, in large part from the testimony of Father Champagnat (OM2 doc.754 n. 28), comment thus on Champagnat's attitude following the meeting he had with Archbishop de Pins in 1824: "Back in the time of Father Bochard he had thought of setting up a little oratory, give his all to this work" ... It is clear that here the word 'oratory' is not referring to a place of prayer, but rather a centre for apostolic activity and spiritual exchange modelled on the Roman Oratory of Philip Neri.

Champagnat could have come to know of this tradition in any one of a number of ways, but one is likely, namely, "the Friends of the Cord", who had a plan to gather young men together to be a support to them in their apostolate. Here is what we read in the resolutions of Father Pouset, a member of the 'Friends', and at one time a Marist aspirant, on 28th July 1817:

"While ever I am assistant priest in a parish, I will not be in a position to set up any sort of organisation unless [...] I can find the opportunity to suggest to the men and women teachers at the school a group of this sort, which I could guide with

¹⁰³ P. Zind, *Miscellanées Champagnat*, p.189

¹⁰⁴ The Census of 1815: the hamlet had six households. Each of the mills had one employee.

¹⁰⁵ *Life*, Ch.6, p.61.

¹⁰⁶ OM1/75.

¹⁰⁷ *Life*, Ch.5, p.53: "He was responsible for the setting up of a library to provide the youth with suitable books because this enabled him to give them a word of advice, to guide their reading and keep them pious and virtuous."

my advice without appearing to be the principal agent. I could also, under the pretext of gathering some young men together to learn the liturgical chant, carefully select some whom I could train in the exercise of zeal.¹⁰⁸ [...]

What! The Church's enemies are forming their coalitions, the partisans of the world gathering in their groups, academies of learning are being established everywhere, and for God, that He may be glorified, could not some men be found, and



14. Death certificate of J.B. Montagne

¹⁰⁸ That is to say, principally the teaching of catechism.

especially not some priests, who would employ all their God-given faculties to throw up a rampart against the irreligion and the corruption of morals that are disfiguring everything and ravaging the heritage of the fathers of families”...

Fr Champagnat appears to have been employing a similar pastoral strategy, aiming in the medium term to create a fervent and secret group of disciples.

As a result of very recent research serious reservations are now held concerning a second encounter which Brother Jean-Baptiste situates in the same period:

“One day,¹⁰⁹ he was summoned to a hamlet to hear a sick boy’s confession [...] To his great surprise, the boy knew nothing about the principal mysteries and, in fact, didn’t even know of the existence of God [...] It took him two hours for the instruction and confession. It was extremely difficult to impart even the most fundamental truths, to a child who was so sick that he scarcely grasped what was being said to him”.

It is true that the Bourdin memoirs report it as well:¹¹⁰

“What made it necessary to act quickly: sick child at the foot of Pila (sic), needs means ... goes out for a moment to the neighbour’s house, comes back – dead, reflection: how many children off the path to salvation ... if instructed would know how to repent, know ...

Bourdin, however, situates the event after the setting up of the community and the creation of the school at La Valla. Furthermore, a close examination of the parish registers at La Valla and Tarentaise for the period 1816-1819 has provided convincing evidence that the encounter at Les Palais between Champagnat and Jean-Baptiste Montagne, a young man of 17, never took place. This hypothesis only dates from 1936 (*Bulletin of the Institute*, No. 103, January 1936), and only became widely accepted as fact largely after 1966 (*B.I.* No. 204). This is not to deny that there was an encounter between Champagnat and a “sick child at the foot of Pilat”, but only to say that the encounter came later, most likely in 1819.

Experiencing his encounter with Granjon as a sign from heaven, Marcellin Champagnat persuaded the young man to join him in beginning the project (*Life* p.62) and quickly found him a companion, Jean-Baptiste Audras, who had been born in 1802 and could already read.¹¹¹ On 2nd January he brought his two disciples to the village and installed them in a rented house. The parents of the young Audras had no objections (*Life* p.66), as Champagnat’s project was in line with the tradition of presbytery schools where local priests provided young boys with some preliminary education before they went on to the seminary. The Parish Priest was no doubt in agreement but, as the Bourdin memoirs note: “F(ath)e(r) Champagnat did not tell him everything; having his mission, he wanted to test the matter”. (OM2/745 n.2)

¹⁰⁹ According to P. Zind it was the next day, 28th October (*Misc. Champ.* P.96)

¹¹⁰ OM2/754, n. 6.

¹¹¹ Reading “*Think about it well*”, a popular manual of meditations on the Last Things had given him the idea of entering the Brothers of the Christian Schools, but he had been asked to wait because of his young age.

As they had to earn a living, they made nails, an activity widely practised in these villages. The metal foundry in the Gier valley provided the partly finished product, lengths of metal rod called “*verges*”. A garden and an adjoining piece of land would provide food for the table. The rest of their time was consecrated to prayer and study (*Life*, Ch. 6 p. 61). Jean-Marie Granjon may have secured the position of cantor in the church, as is suggested by some words in the Bourdin memoir which are not easy to interpret.¹¹² As the house was close to the presbytery, Champagnat could come and give lessons in reading and writing, at the times when he was not engaged in his priestly duties or out on business. In short, they were living a devout life, a life as “brothers”, that is to say, pious laymen. Around 30th March Champagnat gave his companions a habit which was not properly speaking a religious habit, but which distinguished them as laymen living apart – a knee length frockcoat in black or blue, with black trousers, a short cape and a round hat. (*Life* Ch.6 p.67)¹¹³

At Christmas 1817 they were joined by Jean-Claude Audras, the brother of Jean-Baptiste, who had been born in 1793. On 1st January 1818 came another, Antoine Couturier, a native of La Valla, aged 17 years.¹¹⁴ He had had no schooling whatever. In May 1818 the group increased once again with the arrival of another two, Barthélemy Badard, born in 1804 and the son of the sacristan at the parish church,¹¹⁵ and Gabriel Rivat from the hamlet of Maisonnettes, who had been born in 1808. We have already seen that the Rivat family had been active in the resistance to the Revolution. The eldest, Jean-Antoine, was studying for the priesthood, and now Gabriel was coming to Father Champagnat to take lessons in Latin.

In a year and a half a group had come together, varying greatly in terms of age (from 24 years of age to 10) and level of education, but all from similar backgrounds. It was an association, but with not as yet any clearly defined shape.

Schools and school teachers at La Valla

Marcellin Champagnat’s project was not being carried out in some educational desert, far from it. The work of Paul Beaujard¹¹⁶ offers us an overview of the Loire during the period when Champagnat was completing his studies. From it we learn that the area around Saint-Etienne was particularly well provided for with schools. The survey of 1807 groups teaching establishments into three categories: Institutions (consisting of secondary schools run by the communes, minor seminaries, and colleges); boarding establishments, which belonged to private teachers and offered less

¹¹² OM2/754 n.8 “The cantor died young ... We need a young man like the one you have described”. These words can be interpreted as the parish priest agreeing to a proposal from Champagnat to appoint Granjon to the post.

¹¹³ On the costume see the *Life* p.67 and Br Louis Laurent in the Bulletin of the Institute Vol. XXI p.536. The question of the colour of the habit and just when it was established remains difficult to settle.

¹¹⁴ See OM/2 p.760, note 5, on the chronology of the entries.

¹¹⁵ *Letters* of Marcellin Champagnat, Vol. 2, p. 71 gives the date as 1819.

¹¹⁶ “They were schools with a good reputation.” La politique scolaire dans le département de la Loire de 1800 à 1815, C.D.D.P. de la Loire, 1993, p.283.

advanced studies though still based on Latin; and the “little” schools (that is, primary schools) which taught reading, writing and the basics of arithmetic. (pp. 216-217).

The creation of the Imperial University brought changes to this three level system. From 1st November 1808 boarding establishments had to obtain “a Certificate of Authorisation to operate an establishment”. This cost 200 francs. In addition, institutions and boarding establishments had to pay a levy, one twentieth of the fees received from the students. Primary school teachers had to be authorised by the University, which could be done on presentation of two letters, one from the Parish Priest certifying their good character and behaviour, and the second from the Mayor stating that the school was needed by the commune.

This attempt by the University to control teaching activity and to obtain revenue from it ran into strong opposition from the numerous teachers who were not willing to declare their activities. Clandestine (that is, unauthorised) schools were therefore numerous and surveys carried out by the University greatly underestimated their actual number.¹¹⁷ Teachers operating boarding schools who were summoned to pay their dues and get themselves authorised, hastily “stopped teaching or concealed their true nature, passing off their establishments as primary schools”. (p. 251)

The Brothers of the Christian Schools, who had been operating a novitiate in Lyon from 1804, quickly established schools in Saint Etienne, Saint-Chamond, Rive-de-Gier, Saint-Galmier and Saint Bonnet-le-Château, which were very successful, but their teaching was costly for the communes and they did not teach Latin. The Sisters of Saint Joseph, re-established under the leadership of Mother Fontbonne, were providing education for girls. In 1812 they had forty or so communities in the Loire, especially in the south (p. 263). There was a community of 6 Sisters at La Valla and another of 4 at Marhles.

So, there were schoolteachers, both men and women, “sisters”, “béates”, plus itinerant teachers from the Savoy or the region of Barcelonnette, (often called “Briançonnese” or “Piedmontese”¹¹⁸), and lastly priests,¹¹⁹ all more or less doing their best to ensure that children were taught their catechism and provided with a minimal literacy. Sometimes the Parish Priest gave Latin lessons.¹²⁰ A report from Inspector Guillard from the Academy in the canton of Saint-Genest-Malifaux, dated 15th May 1820, stated that there were only two communes without an authorised teacher and that the Parish Priest at Tarantaise had 30 students doing Latin and the assistant priest 30 pupils in a primary school.¹²¹

¹¹⁷ Thus, the survey of 1807 counted 58 teachers in the area around Saint Etienne. In 1810, only 42 had applied for registration; in 1811, 48 had authorisation. At La Valla, we find a teacher in 1807, but none after that. (Table p.235)

¹¹⁸ Robert Raymond Troncot, *L'enseignement mutuel en France de 1815 à 1833*. , A typewritten and duplicated thesis, Vol. 2 p. 157: itinerant teachers taught children to read using *Dio-Roi* (Dieu et Roi), a small book printed by Rusand in Lyon. See also Vol.1 pp.11-13: the state of the academies in Grenoble and Lyon in 1815.

¹¹⁹ *Ibid.* Vol.1 pp. 11-12.

¹²⁰ Paul Beaujard, *op. cit.*, Report of the Prefect in 1806: “There are few localities where the means of learning to read and write are not to be found; in some, ministers of religion teach the basics; in many others it is done by former Sisters of Saint Joseph; elsewhere, it is done during winter only and by school teachers from outside the area, who are called back home when work resumes in the fields.”

¹²¹ *Origines Maristes*, Vol. 1 doc. 65.

The panic-stricken judgments of the elites on the situation of elementary education at the start of the Nineteenth Century need therefore to be treated with care. Specialists in the history of education in France have found that there was no decline in the level of literacy during the period of the Revolution.

As for La Valla, P. Zind tells us that, "In August 1816 Champagnat had found a teacher, Jean-Baptiste Galley, born in the parish in 1774 and now teaching in the hamlet of Sardier in the upper part of the parish, at first no doubt without a diploma, and later with a Teaching Certificate (Brevet) Level 3 issued on 12th December 1816".¹²² He was using the Individual Method. Married and looking for a position that paid well, he moved to St Julien-en-Jarez,¹²³ where the commune provided him with lodgings and guaranteed him 300 francs per year without counting fees paid by the pupils.

It is not known if before December 1816 there was a teacher working in the village of La Valla. In any case, Jean Montmartin, a married man, born in 1794 at St Genest-Malifaux, and holding a Brevet Level 2 (*Life*, Ch. 7, footnote 1, p. 71), set himself up there. He was on a fixed salary of 100 Francs plus the fees paid by 40 pupils in winter and 25 in summer.¹²⁴ However, there was no school building, which was often the case in those days.

The Bourdin memoirs,¹²⁵ in their very obscure style, report a quarrel between the parish priest Rebod and Champagnat. It was over a building to house a school and provide lodgings for the teacher. Relying perhaps on the decree of 1816, Father Champagnat wanted the parish priest to buy a building, but Father Rebod, who, as he said, had been in the parish for ten years¹²⁶ and was hoping for another post, did not want to take on any expenses. At that stage Champagnat seems to have been less concerned about getting a place for a school than about establishing an "oratory" with his first followers. Not without some difficulty, he managed to do so, securing a first deed of sale on 1st October 1817, and a second on 26th April 1818.¹²⁷ It seems that Rebod had finally relented and even participated in the purchase. "Then he helped, money given," declare the Bourdin memoirs (n.3). Whatever the case, at the time the first two Brothers moved into the Bonner house on 2nd January 1817, the premises were only being rented, and were not functioning in any way as a school.

Once Champagnat thought them sufficiently well trained, the Brothers began their activity in the parish, probably after November 1817 and, as the Bourdin Memoirs suggest (n.4), very quickly found themselves in competition with the school master:

"School teacher very devoted to him (the parish priest), gambler, drunkard – Brother Jean-Marie takes in two little boys, parents happy; everyone wants to give

¹²² P. Zind, *Miscellanées Champagnat*, p. 208.

¹²³ *Ibid.*, pp. 206, 208.

¹²⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 208.

¹²⁵ OM2/754 n. 2.

¹²⁶ Which suggests that he had arrived there as assistant priest in 1806.

¹²⁷ OM1/57-58. These two deeds of sale came about because, it seems, there had been a misunderstanding between the vendor and his son, and also because the parish priest had tried to hold up the sale.

him theirs" ... *"In the 1st year there are 3 Brothers ... They buy a bushel of potatoes, the poor eat, children, as many at the end as at the start" ...*

Translating this into clearer language is not difficult. As the school teacher, who had the support of the parish priest, had little to recommend him, the Brothers were taking in the poor children, and no doubt others who were not getting what they should have been from the teacher. Brother Jean-Baptiste gives some details, "During the first year, he had twelve poor children, whom he provided with everything necessary" (*Life* Ch. 7 p. 73). And the movement gathered momentum during the school year 1818-1819 to the great satisfaction of the parents. None of the Brothers had the Brevet but the local people were not worried about whether the Brothers were duly authorised by the University. Even Father Rebod had reason to be satisfied. His parish now had a shelter where poor children were being taken care of, and all with his authorisation. This may be why he decided to allow the definitive purchase of the house to go ahead on 26th April 1818. However, the shelter run by the Brothers was rapidly emptying the school. The Bourdin memoirs describe a new dispute between Rebod and Champagnat, certainly in 1818-1819.

"You (said the parish priest) are the reason this teacher is out on the street ... Let's go to the school (retorted Champagnat), and, if I'm the one who is putting them (the children) there, you can turn them out yourself" ...

The outcome was that by the summer of 1819, the Brothers were the only ones in the village of La Valla looking after the boys and teaching them.

When, in 1818, Jean-Baptiste Galley left the hamlet of Le Sardier where he had been teaching, he was replaced by a young man, Claude Maisonneuve, who had been with the Brothers of the Christian Schools, and was familiar with the Simultaneous Method (*Life* p.71). Pierre Zind states that he had been sent to Father Champagnat by the Abbé Jourjon, parish priest of St Victor-Malescours (Haute-Loire). Louise Duvernay and her sister testified to the existence of this school during the Process for the Beatification of Champagnat:¹²⁸

"He had a young man come, named Maisonnette or Maisonneuve, from the district around Marlhès and placed him in our hamlet which is a long way from the village but easy to reach from the hamlets nearby. He lodged with us and received all his meals free of charge from our mother. The children from round about came to class and paid a small fee. When she saw him arriving, our good mother said, "That Father Champagnat is joking: he's sending me a child; I've got enough already! (We were 6). But once she had seen him in action, she changed her tune."¹²⁹

Every month the Father Assistant came to see his beloved little school. He checked the children's progress, gave little rewards to the ones who deserved them and gently chided the ones who were not working hard enough. This did not

¹²⁸ Diocesan Process 17th session, Carazo copy p. 89, Letter of the widows Moulin and Jayet. See also p. 185.

¹²⁹ The 1815 census identifies three families of ploughmen at Le Sardier. Among them the family of Antoine Varnay had six children: 4 boys and 2 girls. Although Le Sardier had only a few inhabitants, it enjoyed in a central position among the hamlets of the upper Gier valley.

last very long, because he soon had to call the young man to the village to help him train the Brothers to teach. Very often our mother secretly supplied Father Champagnat with butter, cheese and other items of food to help him feed the Brothers and the numerous poor people he was looking after, because this good man had no resources other than the small salary he received as assistant priest."

Not having a Teaching Certificate, Maisonneuve was operating a clandestine school. Lodging with an inhabitant and teaching in what was not a proper school building, his situation was very similar to that of the itinerant teachers, the "Dauphinese" and "Briançonnese", who used to travel around the countryside in wintertime.¹³⁰ By the time Montmartin had to withdraw, which was around the feast of All Saints 1819, Maisonneuve, whose teaching abilities Champagnat had come to appreciate, had already arrived in the village and had been living in the Brothers' house from May 1819, where he was conducting classes, having by this time received the required authorisation.¹³¹

Contrary to what Brother Jean-Baptiste says, Maisonneuve probably did not have a complete understanding of the Simultaneous Method (*Life*, p.71) but it was through him that Champagnat had come to appreciate its innovative character. He did, however, know it well enough for certain Brothers, who were assisting him as monitors, and to whom he was giving additional lessons, to become familiar with modern teaching methods and to start distinguishing catechesis from teaching.

The year 1819-1820 was therefore a year of considerable change. The Brothers had become school teachers and had adopted the method of the Brothers of the Christian Schools, a method scarcely as yet in use in country areas. But the experience was not to be repeated. Maisonneuve, who was living with the Brothers and must be considered as practically one of them, was sent away for "irregular conduct and worldly attitudes" (*Life*, p. 71). Brother Jean-Marie Granjon, who by now was reasonably well prepared, took over the school at La Valla in 1820.¹³²

In the following years major transformations were to take place. The first was the establishment of a second class, accompanied by the division of the pupils "ranked according to ability" (*Life*, p.72), that is to say, a more exact application of the Simultaneous Method. As a certain number of children from the hamlets were lodging with local inhabitants, and only returned home on Saturdays to pick up some supplies, they were being left to their own devices outside school time. After some alterations to the building, these children were provided with accommodation at the school.¹³³

After 1820 some of the Brothers began to go out daily to "teach school" in the hamlets close to the village, particularly Luzernod and Chomiol (*Life*, p. 71). These two villages

¹³⁰ As there is no Maisonneuve listed among the novices of the Brothers of the Christian Schools in Lyon, it is uncertain if he was a Brother or simply a student in one of their schools. His extreme youth favours the latter hypothesis.

¹³¹ *Life* Ch. 7, footnote 1, p.70.

¹³² It seems that Brother Jean-Marie had not been authorised by the University, which could have reinforced the reputation Father Champagnat had at that time of running a clandestine school.

¹³³ It is unlikely that this boarding facility was functioning before 1825. The transfer of the Brothers' community to the Hermitage would have allowed the house to be redirected to this purpose.

were within easy reach for the children living in the hamlets half way down the valleys of the Gier and the Ban. “The Brothers went out each morning and returned in the evening.”

Teaching catechism and relieving poverty

But in focusing our immediate attention on the school, we have been losing sight of Father Champagnat’s principal aim, which was above all the teaching of catechism and the relief of poverty. He had inculcated in his first followers the catechetical method of Saint Sulpice, which he had practised during his seminary days (*Life*, p. 41). First, he would have the children learn the answers by heart, then “he would draw out the meaning by short follow-up questions”. After that he would elaborate his explanations with comparisons, parables and little anecdotes. So it was that, from All Saints 1817 most likely, the Brothers went out two by two on Sundays to teach catechism to the children and adults in the hamlets. When the Brothers felt themselves capable of taking charge of the school and asked him if they could do so, probably in 1819, he brought them back to the need for prudence and to his primary objective:

“I want the first fruits of your zeal to be dedicated to the children who are the most ignorant and deprived. My proposal, therefore, is that you go and teach in the hamlets of the parish.” (*Life*, p. 71)

The hamlet of Le Bessat (or Bessac), however, at an altitude of 1200 metres, and the most distant as well as the most populous, presented a problem. It took two hours to reach on foot. According to the Prefect of the Loire, its “population has, for more than three centuries, been sunk in state of ignorance and mindless lethargy that is truly deplorable.”

For the Archdiocese of Lyon it was a village of:

*More than 500 individuals, abandoned from time immemorial, too far from the main town and from the nearby parishes to receive the supports of religion, and living in a state of mindless lethargy resulting from their frightful isolation, the proximity of Mont Pila (sic), and the lack of religious instruction.”*¹³⁴ (*Zind, Miscellanées Champagnat*, p. 220)



15. Jules-Alexis Muenier. *La Leçon de catéchisme* - 1890

¹³⁴ Ibid., P. 220

From a religious point of view, these assertions were partly true. Le Bessat was in the most out of the way part of the parish, but economically and socially Le Bessat was an important staging-post on the route between Saint Etienne and the valley of the Rhone. Market fairs were held there.

In any case, it was Brother Laurent (Jean-Claude Audras), who from All Saints 1819, it seems, undertook the mission of catechising its inhabitants. Each Thursday he would go down to La Valla to pick up his supply of potatoes, bread and cheese. At Le Bessat he lodged with a local inhabitant and prepared his own meals. Every morning and evening, armed with his little bell, he would go back and forth through the village, just as the Brothers of Christian Doctrine had been doing in Italy since the Sixteenth Century. "When the children had gathered round, he taught them their prayers and catechism, and also how to read." On Sundays he would gather the adults in the chapel and do the same. (*Life*, p. 79)

His selflessness and devotedness mark him out as an incarnation of a Brother of that early type, men very much in the tradition of the Confraternities of Christian Doctrine. The imprint of this formation was so strong that all his life Brother Laurent seems to have given little satisfaction as a teacher and not to have attached any great importance to community life. In a letter of 1842 (quoted in *Letters* Vol. 2 P. 320), he asked to go to the Diocese of Angoulême¹³⁵ to catechise the children: "All I need is a catechism and a little bell; I seem to hear these poor children saying to me, Ah! If only we knew about this great God who has created us" ... And in the same letter he makes mention of clothing he had distributed to the poor, thus recalling another activity that had begun in La Valla in 1817-1818, the relief of poverty.

The relief of poverty was in fact a fundamental aspect of the work. Brother Jean-Baptiste¹³⁶ recalls that Champagnat's concern extended not just to poor children but also to adults living in extreme poverty. He obtained clothing for them and food and, in cases of illness "had them looked after during the night by two Brothers, or by some other charitable person." There was even the case of a Brother whose task it was to take alms to an old man, in spite of the old man's constant blaspheming and swearing. (*Life*, pp. 510-511).

Marie-Françoise Baché, who had been born in La Valla in 1828, declared that although she only had vague memories of Father Champagnat, whom she had seen during her childhood, she had heard about him from her mother, who used to help him with his charitable activity. "Thus it was that several times, for example, she removed vermin from the poor children he was taking in and teaching. Some of them became Brothers."¹³⁷ Again on 1st December 1823 Father Champagnat wrote to Brother Jean-Marie, "Here at La Valla, it seems we will have quite a few children and also poor people. God be thanked. We will do what we can to provide them with food".¹³⁸

The *Life* of Champagnat gives a quite lengthy account of the case of Jean-Baptiste Berne (pp. 512-513). He was the son of a poor woman whose last days had been alleviated by Cham-

¹³⁵ He was living at that time in the Haute-Loire, some hundreds of kilometres from the Diocese of Angoulême. The Marist Fathers had at the time taken charge of a centre of pilgrimage at Verdélais, in the Diocese of Bordeaux. Father Colin had wanted Champagnat to send some Brothers there. The Diocese of Angoulême is near that of Bordeaux.

¹³⁶ *Life*, Part II, Chapter XXII: "Marcellin's charity towards the poor."

¹³⁷ AFM, Positio, Testis, 27, folio 593, quoted in the *Life* of Champagnat, p. 517.

¹³⁸ *Letters*, of Father Champagnat, doc.1.

pagnat's charity. This nine year old boy was taken in by the Brothers (*Chronology*, 1820), but he was totally out of control. "Accustomed to living as a vagrant and following his evil inclinations without restraint, he could not stand the discipline demanded by a regular school routine [...] He ran away several times, preferring to beg for his bread and live in destitution than to curb his rebellious will and submit to the control of the school." After several years during which he tried the patience of the Brothers, the young man changed his ways, made his First Communion, and in 1825 became Brother Nilamon. He died in 1830 at the age of 21.

The young Berne was no exception. Joseph Violet, from Douzieux, born on 24th April 1807, and a boarder from the end of 1819 to 1822,¹³⁹ reported:

"While I was at the house, a band of ten young fellows arrived. Faced with the meagre fare we had, they left the following morning, all except two who stayed on, one of whom was lame."

The testimony of Joseph Violet relates too that there was a boarder with him there by the name of Tissot, from Plagny, "who was learning Latin under the direction of Father Champagnat. Father took him in hand and gave him a severe talking to, because he had been seriously neglecting his studies."

We know also that at Saint-Chamond, the Principal of the College had become worried about competition coming from Champagnat and that had reported him to the Inspector in 1820.¹⁴⁰ This would explain why Father Dervieux, who was President of the Canton Education Committee created by the Decree of 1816, was soon threatening Champagnat's establishment with closure. Again, Jean-Marie Matricon, who had been born in Le Bessat in 1803, and who had become a priest in 1828, and later in 1839 a Marist Father, was taking Latin lessons in 1821 with Philippe Arnaud, a nephew of Champagnat. (*Letters*, Vol. 2 p. 377)

Perhaps this was how Champagnat hoped to contribute to the creation of the priests' branch of the Society of Mary. When on 16th May 1818 he received the 10 year old Gabriel Rivat, who later became Brother François, and his first successor, it was not at first for Gabriel to become a Brother, but to give him lessons, notably in Latin.¹⁴¹ When Gabriel took the habit on 8th September 1819 it made him a very young Brother, but there is no doubt it was the young lad's own choice, and not because of any such desire on Champagnat's part.¹⁴²

It seems, thus, that before 1822 Champagnat's enterprise was of a composite character, with elements both traditional and innovative. His biographers would later often have a tendency to present him as a man who from 1816 had a clear vision of his project, whereas in reality he had moments of doubt, was feeling his way, and adapting to events.¹⁴³

¹³⁹ Notes on Marcellin Champagnat, transcribed by Brother Alexander Balko in FMS of January-February 1974 and transcribed a second time in "Repensons à nos origines", p. 9.

¹⁴⁰ Inspector Guillard, passing through St Genest-Malifaux on 15th May 1820 (OM1/65), notes that the assistant priest at La Valla was conducting a college.

¹⁴¹ *Life*, Ch. 6, p. 65

¹⁴² See *Life* p. 65, which, wishing to show Brother François' obedience, in fact underlines his refusal of the priesthood.

¹⁴³ Nevertheless Brother Jean-Baptiste (*Life*, Ch. 6, p. 59) mentions that he often prayed, "If this inspiration does not come from you, my God, if it is not conducive to your glory and to the salvation of souls, drive it far from me." The Bourdin memoirs (OM2/754 n. 16) say also: "Father Champagnat prayed continually: My God, make it fail (this work), if it is not from you!"

Map 4. Origins of the Institute



Besides that, the Brothers in those early years were assisting in the parish and had a variety of functions. In Chapter 5 of the *Life*, which relates how Champagnat was correcting the behaviour of his parishioners, we read of two cases (p. 52-54) where a Brother accompanied him when he went out to distant hamlets to visit the sick and especially when he went to put a stop to any dances. Brothers were certainly also carrying out the functions of cantor¹⁴⁴ because Champagnat was teaching them Plain Chant, which from the start formed part of their catechetical programme. In addition, the *Life* of Champagnat (Part II, Chapter VI, p. 327) relates that when Champagnat arrived at La Valla and found the church very dirty, he set to work and cleaned it up himself and also that he looked after the sacristy. “He continued to do these tasks until a Brother was sufficiently trained to take them over.”

It was only later, after 1830, that Champagnat decided to no longer allow the Brothers to act as cantors or sacristans. If they

carried out these functions, it could attract them to the priesthood, and it was also causing parish priests to see the Brothers, not as religious, but as teacher-cantor-sacristans of the traditional type.

In just a few years then, Champagnat’s enterprise underwent considerable evolution. At the time he brought his two young people together in January 1817, it was to take catechetical instruction out to the hamlets and the most distant parts of the parish, and not to replace the school teachers. The establishment in the village of a refuge for destitute and homeless children was perhaps due to the initiative of the Brothers. At a time when there was little distinction between conducting catechism lessons and teaching, it created what was in effect a rival educational establishment to the school operated by the commune. When Champagnat and some of the Brothers came into contact with the Simultaneous Method, it led to a repositioning of the congregation, which from now on devoted a good deal of its energy to the formation of practitioners of the art of teaching, men capable of conducting schools in the modern sense of the word. Brother Laurent, however, remains a good example of an earlier type of Brother who could not easily adapt to this new way of operating.

When Champagnat taught Latin to some of the boarders and also to some of the Brothers, he was simply continuing in the tradition of the presbytery schools, but it reinforced the impression that his was a teaching community. It was no coincidence then that, at Saint-Chamond, La Valla was regarded as a clandestine college.

¹⁴⁴ In the Bourdin memoirs, *op. cit.*, n. 8; “Cantor died young ... We need a young man like the one you have described to me.” These words of the parish priest to Champagnat seem to point to Jean-Marie Granjon.

4.

AUSTERITY, APOSTOLIC ZEAL AND A NETWORK OF SCHOOLS (1818-1822)

Up to 1820, the timeline of Champagnat's activity at Lavalla would be:

- From October 1816 to March 1817 he and his two disciples constitute a fervent group focused on catechetical and charitable work in the spirit of the Society of Mary.
- On 1st October Champagnat acquires the house where the Brothers have been living. The parish priest tries to have the deed of purchase quashed.
- Probably around All Saints Day 1817 the Brothers begin teaching catechism in the hamlets on Sundays. Brother Jean-Marie starts to take in destitute children and provide them with food and some basic instruction. The parish priest gives his approval. Two new Brothers are received into the community. The deed of purchase for the house finally goes through in April 1818. In May another two new candidates enter the novitiate.
- The third and fourth Brothers take the habit on 15th August 1818. At Le Sardier around All Saints Day 1818 Champagnat installs a young teacher named Maisonneuve, who uses the Simultaneous Method in teaching. In the village, during the school year 1818-1819, the refuge operated by the Brothers is competing with the public school run by the teacher Montmartin. This leads to an argument between Champagnat and the parish priest who is backing his teacher.
- During the summer of 1819 Montmartin withdraws and is replaced as commune teacher by Maisonneuve. Maisonneuve lives with the Brothers and teaches in their house. While teaching he is also training the Brothers in the Simultaneous Method. The Brothers continue teaching catechism in the hamlets.

The first schools are founded

At the end of 1818 two Brothers had been sent to Marlihes. Champagnat could not refuse this to his former parish priest who wanted to replace his ageing teacher,

who was 62 years old.¹⁴⁵ Brother Louis, who opened the school at Marlhès, was sixteen and his companion, Brother Antoine, eighteen (*Life*, Ch. 8, p. 81). The parish priest and his assistant thought them too uneducated and too inexperienced, but they quickly realised that, despite their young age, they were succeeding very well in training and instructing the children. The description of their activity given by Brother Jean-Baptiste stresses that the Brothers were mainly occupied with teaching prayers and catechism. He makes no mention of outside activity of the type seen at Lavalla, and it does not seem that the Brothers were using the Simultaneous Method. At Marlhès therefore they would have been working along the lines of the older model, with catechism, reading and individual instruction - like Brother Laurent at Le Bessat - and without the multiplicity of activities we see at Lavalla, and which would also be seen a little later at Saint-Sauveur and Bourg-Argental.

The school at Saint-Sauveur has quite a different history. It was founded in November 1820 by Brother Jean-François (Etienne Rouméty), who had entered the congregation in 1819.¹⁴⁶ In the *Life* (Ch. 10, pp. 106-107) the Director is described as very adept at manual work and very ardent, but with little capacity for teaching. Instead, he and a young Brother devoted themselves to all sorts of apostolic activity, collecting wheat, potatoes, butter, and so on, to provide for the poor children who boarded with them up to the time of their First Communion. They busied themselves with the destitute, visited the sick and saw to their needs, and in the evenings taught catechism to the children and the young people. The Brothers even went as far as urging the men who had not been receiving the sacraments to fulfil their duty. Inspector Guillard adds a detail: "These kinds of Brothers live with the greatest frugality and never drink wine." (OM1, doc. 75).

In fact, the Brothers at Saint-Sauveur were following what was being done at Lavalla, perhaps with an added decisiveness linked to the personality of a particularly 'ardent' Brother Director. Two distinct differences can be observed. There was no catechising in the hamlets, but rather the Brothers' activity was spilling over into areas normally reserved for priests. Their zeal was of a somewhat impromptu type, expressed in a variety of different ways, and arousing both admiration and alarm.

Brother Jean-Marie, who was in Bourg-Argental from 1822, followed in the Lavalla line but went even further:¹⁴⁷

"Brother Jean-Marie is sent [...] the whole parish admires him [...] he goes as far as giving his own clothes to the poor. These things were not forbidden in those days, for they went to visit the sick, prepare them, that's why he would leave - the same dispositions - at the crack of dawn for the church."

The translation is easy. Even though he did not have a very high level of education, Brother Jean-Marie was admired in the parish because of his very public holiness and charity.¹⁴⁸ And this testimony makes it clear that this sort of activity, very similar to what the Brothers were doing at Saint-Sauveur, was not at that stage forbidden by the rule.

¹⁴⁵ P. Zind, *Miscellanées Champagnat*, p. 209.

¹⁴⁶ See *Letters*, Vol. 2 p. 294. The date and place of his birth are not known.

¹⁴⁷ Described in the Bourdin memoirs (n. 12).

¹⁴⁸ It is not known if this text refers to Lavalla or Bourg-Argental. Probably both.

Inspector Guillard in 1822 (OM1/75 n. 3) broadly confirms this testimony: “The first Brother I saw at Bourg-Argental had been a grenadier in the Imperial Guard [...] On Holy Thursday he remained on his knees at the church from eight in the evening to eight in the morning.” He adds that the Brothers “are imitating to some degree the true Brothers of Christian Doctrine in their way of teaching and in their discipline” (OM2/754 n. 3) and that “their furniture is similar to what those Brothers have.”

Lavalla – a centre for training teachers or the beginnings of a congregation?

The question very soon arose as to who had authority over the Brothers. The Brothers at Marlhès were parish teachers, whilst at Saint-Sauveur it was an eminent layman, M. Colomb de Gaste,¹⁴⁹ who had arranged for the Brothers to come (*Life*, Ch. 8, p. 84). Similarly, at Bourg-Argental, it was the Mayor, M. de Pleyné, who had presided over their installation.¹⁵⁰ While the civil authorities recognised Father Champagnat as having a right of supervision over the Brothers, the parish priest of Marlhès considered them to be his Brothers, and Champagnat simply the one who had trained them.¹⁵¹ This accounts for the conflict that arose between the parish priest and Champagnat, when Champagnat withdrew Brother Louis in 1821. To obey Champagnat, Brother Louis had to go against the Parish Priest, who wanted to keep him. The school was closed in 1822 because it was unhealthy, says Brother Jean-Baptiste, but the deeper reason was the conflict over authority between Father Alliot and Father Champagnat.

The case of Brother Louis and his school at Marlhès highlights then an ambiguity in the work of Champagnat. Was it simply a training centre for Brother-teachers or was it a congregation with several branch houses? Since in 1820 Champagnat had no official recognition, the only authority he enjoyed came from the Brothers themselves. Inspector Guillard notes that the Brothers at Bourg-Argental called Champagnat their “Superior General” (OM1/75 n. 3) and we have seen that Brother Louis at Marlhès was acting in the same spirit. But being recognised by his followers as their Superior would not be enough for long. Champagnat would very soon need the support, unofficially at least, of the ecclesiastical authorities, who in that situation were the ones with the most authority.

Poverty and austerity

In the meantime, the primitive apostolic zeal continued and we have just seen how an independent witness, Inspector Guillard, attested to the Brothers’ austerity.

¹⁴⁹ Guillard (OM1/75 n. 6) says that M. Colomb de Gaste was “the matador (a personage of influence) of the area.”

¹⁵⁰ Inspector Guillard (OM1/75 n. 3) clearly indicates that M. du Sablon and M. du Pleyné were the principals in getting the Brothers to come but that certain notables were not happy that the previous teacher had been replaced.

¹⁵¹ This is referred to obliquely in the Bourdin memoirs (OM2/754 n. 11): “People were calling them the Brothers of Marlhès not the Brothers of Lavalla.”

In Chapter IX (p. 362) of the *Life* on Champagnat's love of poverty Brother Jean-Baptiste insists rather strongly on this point:

The food of the house was of the simplest and most frugal: coarse bread, cheese, potatoes, vegetables, and sometimes a little salted pork, and only ever water to drink."

One time when the Brothers were taking their supper the parish priest passed through the dining room and saw that the Brothers had just a little salad to share. At Bourg-Argental the Brothers refused the good quality mattresses that a charitable lady had given them and were content with using paillasses (large bags filled with straw used by the poor as mattresses).

Brother Jean-Baptiste gives various reasons for this attitude: first of all, their poverty, since at Lavalla donations, principally of food items, were "for eight years the community's main resource"; equally with it, the spirit of poverty, strongly inspired by the monastery at La Trappe, whose prestige was at that time at its peak.¹⁵² But also, since they were destined for an apostolate in the rural areas, the Brothers needed to keep their costs to the communes as low as possible.¹⁵³ Accordingly, they had to learn to do their own cooking and mend their own clothing. A carefully tended garden supplied a good part of their food needs.¹⁵⁴ As the Founder saw it, acceptance of this poverty was also a test of a candidate's vocation. Those who could not endure so much rigour did not stay.

Brother Jean-Baptiste states that this austere regime with no fresh meat and no wine lasted for some fifteen years up to 1830 (*Life*, p. 362). We need to treat this statement with some prudence since Champagnat, realising that such exacting requirements were affecting recruitment and causing health problems, decided after 1822 that the Brothers should give up their extraordinary practices of mortification as well as their multiplicity of good works. He also improved the quality of their daily fare.¹⁵⁵ From now on, the emphasis was to be on community life, teaching and obedience.

These examples we have been giving of disciples who were prominent during the early years lead us to think that in the years 1817 – 1822 the Little Brothers of Mary operated as a sort of confraternity which, after providing its members with a fairly short period of formation, based on manual work as much as on study and apostolic activity, then allowed them a good deal of liberty in terms of their apostolic action and their personal sanctification. In terms of withdrawal from the world the novitiate was a very relative affair, as much like an apprenticeship as a novitiate on the monastic model.

¹⁵² Champagnat was obviously no stranger to this spirit of mortification since it was he who had urged the Brothers to give up wine (*Life*, Part II, Ch. 11, p. 384) and had taught J-M. Granjon how to use the discipline (Ibid. p. 387).

¹⁵³ See *Life*, pp. 371-372: Champagnat quoted on the subject. Pp. 362-363: in the years 1820-1830 the three Brothers at one school spent between 350 and 450 Francs per year.

¹⁵⁴ Inspector Guillard relates (OM1/75 n. 6) that at Saint-Sauveur the Brothers, who were living in the former hospital, had just been cleaning up the old cemetery. It had been abandoned for centuries and was "in a terrible state".

¹⁵⁵ On this question, see CM 31 (March 2013) pp. 125-132.

However, the expansion of the work was engendering problems around authority which would henceforth oblige it to define itself in a more rigorous manner. A charismatic phase in the work was on the way out. The parish priest of Lavalla, on the occasion of a visit by Inspector Guillard, criticized his assistant for taking his zeal too far and making himself the superior of a congregation. This exactly formulates the problem that was arising in 1822. The priests in the parishes, very happy to have good teachers, were certainly less so when they discovered that these teachers were not entirely under their authority.

From hamlets to a town

The foundation at Bourg-Argental on 2nd January 1822 must also be seen as a major event since this commune was regarded as a town. In agreeing to send his Brothers there, Champagnat was conscious of moving away from his original plan to such an extent that on this occasion he formulated his own apostolic theory, “The charity of Jesus Christ [...] extends to everyone and [...] the children in the towns have also been redeemed at the price of his Blood.” The request from Bourg-Argental was therefore being read as a sign from Providence.

He also had a religious sociology of his own. “Religious instruction in large parishes and in the towns needs to be at a greater depth, because their spiritual needs are greater and their primary education more advanced.” Therefore, catechism and religious practices needed “to have pride of place” and the Brothers had to “bestow even greater care on the Christian education of the children, the more neglected they are, and the less their parents bother about them.” (*Life*, p. 89)

In this he was not setting up an unfavourable contrast between the good countryside and the evil town, but he saw two different worlds. The first was a world where children were left to themselves and no one bothered with them. These children needed to be lifted up out of their ignorance and uncouthness. The second was a world where culture had become disconnected from faith. In the countryside parents were ignorant; in the town they were negligent.

“The authorities, who give you charge of their school, and the parents, who can’t wait to entrust their children to you, rely on you to give those children sound secular instruction. The Church, who sends you, has loftier goals in view: she asks you to teach those same children to know, love and serve their heavenly Father, to make them into good Christians, and your school into a seedbed of saints. (Life, pp. 89-90)

Accepting a “town” school was also proof that Champagnat now thought his Brothers sufficiently well trained to take on this responsibility. What now remained to be accepted was that, with a group of ten men sufficiently solid for him to call on, this expansion to the level of a “pays”¹⁵⁶ would mean having to give up sending

¹⁵⁶ From the Latin ‘pagus’, signifying an area which in medieval times was under the authority of a Count, hence an area whose inhabitants share common geographical, economic, cultural or social interests. From Wikipedia, *Pays (France)*.

his men out to the remote corners of the parish.¹⁵⁷ In choosing the town over the hamlet, Marcellin Champagnat was modifying his original project. The Marist Brothers were not going to be the male equivalent of the Béates, and the example of Brother Laurent at Le Bessat would be just one short-lived episode.

The promise – from an association to a congregation (1817-1822)

The Institute has continued to remember the ten Brothers who joined the project during the first five years of its existence. The first six (1817-1818) were all either natives of Lavalla or had been living there. The other four (1818-1822) came from further away, in some cases a good deal further away, showing that the project, which up to that stage had been operating at a purely parish level, was expanding to a regional level. It is certain that other aspirants entered the novitiate or lived with the Brothers. We have the example of the teacher, Claude Maisonneuve (*Life*, Ch. 7, p. 71). The house at Lavalla and the Brothers' association therefore need to be seen as a fluid group, welcoming for periods long or short members who had no clearly defined status. All the same, it seems that the ten Brothers listed below were the only ones to commit themselves for five years in the association and stay long enough for their memory to remain.

NAME	DATE OF BIRTH	PLACE	NOVIATE	HABIT
J.-M. Granjon (Br Jean-Marie)	1794	Doizieu	2.1.1817	End March 1817
J.-B. Audras (Br Louis)	1802	La Valla	2.1.1817	End March 1817
J.-C. Audras (Br Laurent)	1793	La Valla	24.12.1817	15.8.1818
Antoine Couturier (Br Antoine)	1800	La Valla	1.1.1818	15.8.1818
B. Badard (Br Barthélemy)	1804	La Valla	2.5.1818	8.9.1819
Gabriel Rivat (Br François)	1808	La Valla	6.5.1818	8.9.1819
Étienne Roumézy (Br Jean-François)	?	?	1819	1820
Antoine Gratallon (Br Bernard)	1803	Izieux	1820	11.11.1822
Claude Fayol (Br Stanislas) ¹⁵⁸	1800	St. Médard-en-Forez	2.2.1822	25.10.1822
J.-P. Martinol (Br Jean-Pierre) ¹⁵⁹	1798	Burdigne	1821	1823

¹⁵⁷ There would be no more like Brother Laurent, the catechist at Le Bessat. In November 1821 the Founder sent him to Tarentaise to supervise the students studying Latin at the "college" being conducted by the parish priest Father Préher. But every Sunday, probably on his own initiative, he would go back to Le Bessat to teach catechism to the people there. (*Annals of the Institute*, Vol. 1 p. 35)

¹⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 58-73. He had been directed to Lavalla by his Parish Priest.

¹⁵⁹ *Notices biographiques de quelques frères*, Lyon, 1868, pp. 41-49. He was recruited by the Brothers and died in 1825.

When the first two Brothers took the habit in March 1817, they certainly pronounced a formula of commitment.¹⁶⁰ The archives of the Marist Brothers have preserved a formula that was used later (1826), and is probably more developed than the one used at the beginning.¹⁶¹

We, the undersigned, for the greater glory of God and the honour of the august Mary, Mother of Our Lord Jesus Christ, certify and declare that we consecrate ourselves for five years as of this day one thousand eighteen hundred and twenty six,
freely and completely voluntarily, to the pious association of those who, under the protection of the Blessed Virgin Mary, consecrate themselves to the Christian instruction of the children of the country areas.
We intend:
Firstly, to seek nothing but the glory of God, the good of His Catholic, Apostolic and Roman Church, and the honour of the august Mother of Our Lord J(esus) C(hrist).
Secondly, we commit ourselves to teach free of charge such poor children as the Reverend Parish Priest of the place shall confide to our care: 1. catechism, 2. prayer, 3. reading, respect for the ministers of Jesus Christ, and obedience to parents and to legitimate princes.
We undertake, thirdly, to obey without question our Superior and those who under his orders shall be placed over us.
Fourthly, we promise to observe chastity.
Fifthly, we place everything in common.”

Brother Balko¹⁶² has shown convincingly that this formula was not a Profession of Vows but a contract of association for Christian educators of children inspired by the Marist consecration of 23rd July 1816 at Fourvière, as evidenced by the Marist motto, “For the greater glory of God and the honour of the august Mary, Mother of Our Lord Jesus Christ”. Jean-Marie Granjon and Jean-Baptiste certainly did not in March 1817 pronounce the 1826 text in its entirety but without doubt it would have been a formula which contained a reference to the fundamental passage of the Fourvière Consecration of July 1816:

¹⁶⁰ Brother Jean-Baptiste is hesitant about the date of the first promise. In the *Life* (Part I, Chapter 15, p. 152, “From the very beginning” the Brothers pronounced “promises” or “a consecration”, “written by the hand of the pious Founder”. A little further on (p.153) he is more precise, “When this promise was first proposed to the Brothers in 1818”.

¹⁶¹ OM1/168. Brother Jean-Baptiste’s version is notably different from this one: *Life*, Ch. 15, pp. 152-153.

¹⁶² FMS n. 31, 1978, p. 412. Reprinted in the collection of articles by Brother Balko, “Repensons à nos origines” pp. 77-82

"PROMISE"	FOURVIÈRE CONSECRATION (JULY 1816)
<p>"We, the undersigned, for the greater glory of God and the honour of the august Mary, Mother of Our Lord Jesus Christ, certify and declare that we consecrate ourselves for five years as of this day, freely and completely voluntarily, to the pious association of those who, under the protection of the Blessed Virgin Mary, consecrate themselves to the Christian instruction of the children of the country areas. ..."</p>	<p>"... We, the undersigned, wishing to work for the greater glory of God and of Mary, Mother of Our Lord Jesus Christ, affirm and publicly declare the it is our sincere intention and firm purpose to dedicate ourselves, as soon as is opportune, to the foundation of the most pious Congregation of Marists."</p>

Here we also find the programme Champagnat had set himself when he brought his first two aspirants together. It is possible that the second part of the commitment formula, given below, may also have been pronounced.

"We intend:

Firstly, to seek only the glory of God, the good of the Catholic, Apostolic and Roman Church, and the honour of the august Mother of Our Lord J(esus) C(hrist).

Secondly, we commit ourselves to teach free of charge to such poor children as the Reverend Parish Priest of the place may confide to our care: 1. catechism, 2. prayer, 3. reading, respect for the ministers of Jesus Christ, and obedience to parents and to legitimate princes."

However, this section would appear to be more logically placed at a time when the Brothers were in fact looking after the destitute children of the parish, that is, in 1818 or 1819. The third part, explicitly committing the Brothers to a form of life that makes explicit mention of obedience to an (ecclesiastical) superior, would seem to belong more logically to 1822.

Whatever may have been the chronology of its elaboration, the promise made by the Brothers was only imitating a type of commitment that was made in very many spontaneous communities, especially among women. J-B. Galley¹⁶³ draws attention to a document dating from 12th June 1795 which gives a very good description of their status:

"The young women, generally not particularly well-off, were linen-weavers, ribbon-makers, and small retailers, etc.; everywhere they provided instruction to young girls, receiving fees that were agreed on with the parents; they did not make any public vows which might deprive them of their civil rights; on entering they became members of the association by means of a contract made before a notary, who recorded the amount of the dowry they were bringing with them."

These legally constituted private associations were very active in the resistance to the Revolution:

¹⁶³ *Saint-Etienne et son district pendant la Révolution*, St-Etienne, 1907, vol. 3, p. 85.

“Before all else these Sisters were catechists, propagandists very much listened to by the devout womenfolk, and highly appreciated assistants to the priests in the parishes [...] They also dispensed medical advice, making them even more influential. Without the shadow of an education themselves they conducted schools that had nothing of a school about them but the name, [...] and these country Sisters could be seen weaving ribbons to earn a little income, just like the poor; trying to teach (the girls) to read the prayers of the diocese and the first pages of the catechism.”

In the village of Lavalla 10 “Sisters of the congregation” made soft furnishings for a living and the Annals of the Brothers at Lavalla (p. 51) state that this congregation had been founded in 1533 ...

“... as is attested to by some old papers which are in the possession of the present day Sisters of St Joseph at Lavalla. They were affiliated with the Sisters of St Joseph in Lyon in 1803. They took the habit and made profession at Lavalla.¹⁶⁴ As assistant priest, Father Champagnat presided over several of these ceremonies: his signature can be seen there.”

Communities of “Brothers” of this type were very rare, but in the writings of the Institute we find an example of this in the biography of Brothers Cassien and Arsène.¹⁶⁵ Louis Chomat, the future Brother Cassien, who was born in 1788, became a teacher at Sorbiers around 1820. Towards 1823 Claude Fayol offered to share in his work. After some time:

“It was agreed they would have a common purse; that anything they acquired or possessed would be held jointly; that at the death of one everything would go to the survivor, and that after his death, whatever remained would be devoted to good works.”

Eventually, these two companions, who had quite early come into contact with Father Champagnat, took the habit of the Marist Brothers in 1832, without doing a novitiate. (*Biographies*, p.217)¹⁶⁶

In short then, the promise pronounced in its primitive form from March 1817 and most likely gradually elaborated up to 1822, constituted the first charter of the Society of the Brothers. Champagnat’s teaching would aim to deepen its spiritual requirements.

“His instructions were short but lively and enthusiastic; they focused almost always on piety, obedience, mortification, love of Jesus, devotion to the Blessed Virgin and zeal for the salvation of souls.”

A collection of sayings has come down to us which Brother Jean-Baptiste places in 1822.¹⁶⁷ In this list we find three statements on piety (1-3), four on the love of Jesus and Mary (4-8), three on the happiness of the religious life (9-11), and four on the catechetical apostolate (12-15). The religious life is therefore still being per-

¹⁶⁴ This indicates that, although they were affiliated with the Sisters of St Joseph, the Lavalla Sisters retained a great deal of autonomy. In his memoirs, Barge makes several mentions of these Sisters.

¹⁶⁵ *Biographies de quelques frères*, Lyon, 1868, p. 189.

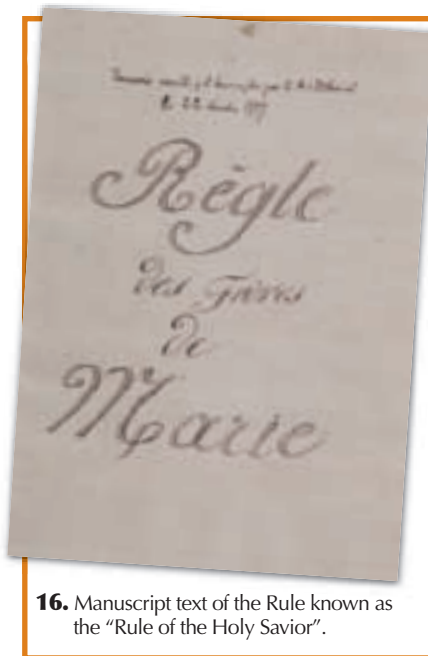
¹⁶⁶ We find examples of similar endeavours in Enzo Biemmi, *Le défi d’un religieux laïc au XIXe siècle. Le Frère Gabriel Tabourin (1799-1864)*, Thèse Paris-Sorbonne, Paris, 1995.

¹⁶⁷ *Life*, pp. 103-105.

ceived in a broad sense. There is no question of poverty, chastity and obedience. With regard to the apostolate, the word “school” is not mentioned. Nevertheless, by affirming strongly that the Brothers, through their catechetical ministry, are the successors of the Apostles, statement No. 12 sees them as collaborators with the clergy and not simply their assistants.

It was from a time before the foundations at Saint-Sauveur and Bourg-Argental that Champagnat and his disciples began to think of moving closer to the congregational model. On the 8th September, with Gabriel Rivat and Barthélemy Badard taking the habit, their number increased to six and it was at that date that the first spiritual retreat of their association was held.¹⁶⁸ It was also the moment when a sort of Chapter¹⁶⁹ was held at which Brother Jean-Marie was elected as their Director by secret ballot and they adopted a more monastic rule of life (meditation, Mass, the Little Office of the Blessed Virgin, Rosary, silence and spiritual reading). The Chapter of Faults was instituted to be held every Friday. It was certainly shortly after this that Champagnat, despite the objections of his Parish Priest,¹⁷⁰ (*Life*, Ch. 7, p. 73) moved in with the Brothers, transporting his furniture at night so as to avoid gossip. Brother Jean-Baptiste gives the reason for this move:

“... His Brothers were mere beginners in the religious life and in the art of teaching [...] so there would be certain shortcomings in their formation so long as he was not at their head.” (*Life*, p. 73)



16. Manuscript text of the Rule known as the “Rule of the Holy Savior”.

“... His Brothers were mere beginners in the religious life and in the art of teaching [...] so there would be certain shortcomings in their formation so long as he was not at their head.” (*Life*, p. 73)

The work comes under attack (1819-1820)

But Champagnat had more objective reasons for giving his work a structure and exercising a closer watch over it. The first was that the Brothers now had a school and the eyes of the public were on them. The second was the attacks that were now coming his way. Brother Jean-Baptiste refers to them in the *Life*:

“At one time, he was said to be setting up community of teaching Brothers; of Brothers for agricultural work, of hermits, etc. It was even asserted that he intended to form a sect of Bégains.”

¹⁶⁸ A.F.M. 5101.302, Brother François, 1st Retreat Notebook.

¹⁶⁹ *Life*, Ch. 6, pp. 67-69.

¹⁷⁰ Ch. 11 pp. 109-110

The Bourdin memoirs are more precise on the nature of the attacks.¹⁷¹ Father Bochart, the Vicar General in charge of educational establishments in the diocese, who would certainly have been informed of these charges, sent a letter at Easter (1819?) accusing Champagnat of holding “unauthorised gatherings” and of having kept for his own use a collection taken up on behalf of needy children. These accusations, coming from a hostile party, no doubt had the support of the parish priest.¹⁷² And there would have been no lack of reasons for discontent. Some would have been unhappy with the departure of the teacher Montmartin and Champagnat had been campaigning strongly against drunkenness, taverns, dancing, bad books, and neglect of the sacraments.¹⁷³ But it seems Champagnat went to see the Vicar General and succeeded in defusing the conflict.¹⁷⁴ This did not prevent the criticisms from bringing to light a certain excess of enthusiasm in the behaviour of the Brothers, and diocesan authorities certainly did urge him to exert better control over his enterprise.

The accusation that he was founding a sect of the Béguinges may seem strange. It could be referring back to an actual sect of Jansenist origin founded by two priests who were uncle and nephew, Claude and Jean-Jacques Drevet. They had been successively parish priests of St-Jean-Bonnefons near Saint-Etienne, and had viewed the coming of the Revolution with favour.¹⁷⁵ In 1792, persuaded that the Catholic Church had had its day, they announced the imminent birth of the prophet Elijah, who would usher in the era of the Paraclete. They gathered some hundred or so of the faithful, and in 1794 these béguinges set out for Jerusalem to found the Republic of Jesus Christ. They were stopped near Bourg-Argental by the National Guard at a place still called “The Republic”. They got the name “béghins” or “blues” “because of their political opinions” in favour of the Revolution.¹⁷⁶ As the Marist Brothers had very quickly acquired the name “the Blue Brothers”, and in fact are still called that today in the area around Saint-Chamond, the question arose in people’s minds as to whether there may have been a connection between this sect and these disciples of Champagnat with their somewhat exuberant zeal.

It is true that the current explanation for this name is the colour of the Brothers’ dress but the matter is not so clear. In 1822 Inspector Guillard noted that the Brothers at Bourg-Argental and Saint-Sauveur-en-Rue wore black.¹⁷⁷ Moving on to Lavalla, he did not encounter any Brothers and so made no comment on the colour

¹⁷¹ OM2, doc. 754 n. 16-18. Nevertheless, the author’s telegraphic style makes it difficult to establish the meaning with any certainty.

¹⁷² But it seems that relations between Champagnat and his parish priest were not too bad, despite some bitter quarrelling at times. The Bourdin memoirs (n. 16) seem to show how the matter was putting the parish priest in an awkward position.

¹⁷³ *Life*, Ch. 5, pp. 45-56.

¹⁷⁴ *Life*, Ch. 11, p. 110 – an account of a conversation between Bochart and Champagnat which seems an amalgam of two different conversations, one in 1819, the other later around 1821 or 1822.

¹⁷⁵ On the Béguinges see: Benoit Laurent, *Les Béguinges, des Foréziens en quête de Dieu*, éditions le Hérauff, 1980.

¹⁷⁶ Benoit Laurent, p. 86. The name « the blues » came from the colour of the uniforms worn by the soldiers of the Revolution. During the troubles of the Revolution and throughout the Nineteenth Century it was the “white” Royalists in opposition to the “blue” Republicans.

¹⁷⁷ OM1, doc. 75.



17. Little Brother of Mary as “Blue Brother.”
Habit used from 1819 to 1827.
(Anonymous drawing, with notes from
Br. Théodose; XIX c.)

of their clothing, whilst at Feurs Father Courveille’s Brothers were wearing blue but in a style different from what was worn by the Brothers at Saint-Sauveur. It could be that at Lavalla the novices wore blue, as did students attending the colleges, with black being reserved for the Brothers who had taken the Promise. This hypothesis would reconcile what was stated by Inspector Guillard, the only person to give explicit testimony, and the expression “Blue Brother”, which could have arisen from the fact that in Lavalla the population were seeing many novices in their blue and not many Brothers in their black.

The blue outfit, often worn by college students, could not be without some connection to a second attack recorded in the Bourdin memoirs (OM2/754 nos. 18-25), which seems to have happened at the end of 1819 or the start of 1820.¹⁷⁸ It came from the committee in charge of schools in the canton, presided over by Father Dervieux, parish priest of St-Pierre, and was seconded notably by Father Cathelin, principal of the College of Saint-Chamond,

which decided to denounce Father Champagnat’s school to the Archdiocese. As Father Champagnat was giving Latin lessons to a few pupils, Father Cathelin assumed there must have been an unauthorised college competing with the one in Saint-Chamond.¹⁷⁹ Inspector Guillard from the Academy was informed of this, when he was passing through the town in May 1820, but he was not able to go to Lavalla “where the assistant priest is running a college with several teachers in a building bought *ad hoc*” (for that purpose).¹⁸⁰

The Bourdin memoirs and the *Life* of Champagnat reveal that, this time, the threat was taken very seriously, because Father Dervieux had launched a furious attack on Champagnat’s work, threatening to have the establishment closed by the gendarmes and its founder removed.¹⁸¹ Champagnat was thinking therefore of selling his house to prepare for exile – in America, says Brother Jean-Baptiste,¹⁸² in the depths of the Bugey,¹⁸³ says Father Bourdin, that is to say, in the extreme east of the

¹⁷⁸ In the *Life* Ch. 11 pp. 109-111 Brother Jean-Baptiste refers to these events but without any concern for chronology, assembling various pieces of testimony about the same facts and making out Father Bochart to be Father Champagnat’s principal adversary, which seems far from the reality.

¹⁷⁹ OM2, p. 749 note 1.

¹⁸⁰ OM1/65.

¹⁸¹ Bourdin memoirs, *op. cit.*, p. 14.

¹⁸² *Life*, 115. This hypothesis is not to be excluded. Several priests from Lyon had left for Louisiana, notably Father Janvier, one of the signatories of the promise made by the first Marists at Fourvière in 1816.

¹⁸³ Bourdin memoirs, n. 21.

diocese where priests in disgrace were sent. Questioned as to their intentions, the Brothers decided that, whatever happened, they would follow Champagnat.

The project was saved by the Vicars General. Father Courbon, who oversaw the appointment of priests, refused to send Champagnat into exile,¹⁸⁴ and even encouraged him to persevere.¹⁸⁵ Nor did Father Bochard follow the hard line of Father Dervieux, because he had plans to found a diocesan congregation of his own, the “Brothers of the Cross of Jesus”, and this initiative of Champagnat could one day be incorporated into his. So an agreement was arrived at. Champagnat would place himself under Bochard’s protection, and Bochard would support Champagnat in the development of his congregation.¹⁸⁶

The attitude of the diocesan authorities is understandable on several accounts. They took a dim view of the State being involved in educational matters, and the Church was engaged in fighting the Mutual Method. In the end, the assassination of the heir to the throne, the Duc de Berry, on 14th February 1820, aroused the consternation of the general public, and led to the condemnation of the Liberal policies followed up to that stage by the ministry of the Duc Decazes. What’s more, this assassination seemed to portend a new threat of revolution, thus making all the more necessary a wide-ranging programme of Christian education. Shortly afterwards the very conservative ministry under Villèle was installed (1821-1828).

All these events considerably strengthened Champagnat’s position. He could now consider himself the beneficiary of unofficial recognition on the part of the Archdiocese, at a time when the University, which was controlled by the clergy, was seeing its independence considerably reduced. The foundation at Saint-Sauveur-en-Rue at All Saints in 1820 shows that the crisis had been overcome.

One sizeable problem remained. Bochard wanted his future diocesan congregation of Brothers to be called the “Brothers of the Cross of Jesus”. Champagnat and his Brothers were sticking adamantly to the name “Brothers of Mary”, which signified their attachment to a project that was both mystical and supra-diocesan. But the time was not yet ripe for fusion, and “Father Gardette (Superior of the Major Seminary and Champagnat’s adviser) suggested he drag the matter out”.¹⁸⁷



18. Imaginary recreation of Br. Lorenzo on the way toward Le Bessat

¹⁸⁴ Bourdin, *op. cit.*, n. 32.

¹⁸⁵ *Life*, Ch. 11, p. 111.

¹⁸⁶ OM2, doc. 754 nos. 24-25. The account of this matter in Chapter 11 of the *Life* of the Founder has very little chronological reliability. Brother Jean-Baptiste has put together various different accounts of the same events.

¹⁸⁷ OM2, doc. 754 n. 25.

The two trials endured by Champagnat from the spring of 1819 to perhaps the spring of 1820, brought about a deep change within him. The Bourdin memoirs relate that in 1819, at the time he was accused of “unauthorised gatherings”, “Father Champagnat continually prayed: My God, if this work is not from you, make it fail!” (n. 16), and a little further on: “From the time I read it (the letter accusing him), I felt more and more certain...” (n. 17). These words suggest it was these trials which removed his doubts and gave Champagnat the certainty that his work came from God.¹⁸⁸ And then, probably around the start of 1820, the Brothers had declared they were ready to go into exile with Champagnat if such were to be the case.¹⁸⁹

A young man on his travels and vocation recruitment

Although Champagnat was now in a better position in regard to the religious authorities, his project was in real danger from a lack of solid disciples. He had tried without much success to obtain some candidates for his novitiate from among the children, adolescents and young men residing with him or passing through. Between 1819 and 1821 only four new subjects had taken the habit. This had taken the number of Brothers to twelve,¹⁹⁰ but in 1822 the novitiate was empty, no doubt in part because of the instability of the young men in formation, but also because their way of life was a particularly hard one.

Nevertheless, the case of a young man on his travels would in part enable him to overcome this problem.¹⁹¹ “Towards the middle of Lent 1822”¹⁹², that is to say, in March, a young man presented himself one evening, asking to be admitted to the community, and declaring that he had spent six years with the Brothers of the Christian Schools. Champagnat would go no further than letting him stay for a while. The young man, however, got Champagnat to promise that he would admit him if he were to bring him a half dozen new recruits.¹⁹³ In addition, he obtained from Champagnat a letter of recommendation. Arriving back in his home area near St Pal-en-Chalancon, sixty kilometres to the west of Lavalla, he quickly assembled a group of eight young men aged from 15 to 25 years.¹⁹⁴

¹⁸⁸ “I felt more and more certain that I must continue this work” seems to me the most plausible interpretation of this second statement from Champagnat.

¹⁸⁹ Bourdin memoirs, n. 20 and the *Life* Ch. 11 p. 115.

¹⁹⁰ *Life*, Ch. 9 p. 96, footnote 2.

¹⁹¹ *Bulletin of the Institute*, No. XXVIII, article by Brother Gabriel Michel, pp. 275-278. Reprinted in the cyclostyled collection, “Pour mieux connaître Marcellin Champagnat”, Rome, General House, 2001, pp. 249-262 under the title “1822 and the 8 postulants”.

¹⁹² See the complete account in *Life*, Ch. 9 pp. 93-99.

¹⁹³ The Brothers of the Christian Schools’ Entry Registry, indicates that in 1822 there were 11 postulants from this Department. It was by far the best year for recruitment since 1805. When Brother Jean-Baptiste states that “several had already made up their minds to enter religion and had reserved their places in the novitiate at Lyon” (*Life*, p. 94), he seems to be stating as fact what were only plans.

¹⁹⁴ Brother Jean-Baptiste even states that he arranged written agreements with the families. (*Life*, p. 95)

Champagnat was dumbstruck when he saw a group arrive who were asking, not just for some hospitality, but to be admitted as novices. The Brothers were convoked in a sort of Chapter at Easter time, in mid-April, and Champagnat persuaded them to accept the new candidates despite the unfavourable opinions of his priest friends and the problems that would be posed by the lack of space and money. At the end of the chapter in the *Life* that relates this event, Brother Jean-Baptiste draws a spiritual lesson that was certainly inspired by Champagnat: “They came from the Haute-Loire, from the mountains of the Velay; it was Our Lady of Puy who had prepared them and sent them.” This is no doubt the moment that gave birth to an attitude which Champagnat would later formulate explicitly in a letter to Archbishop de Pins in 1835:

*“I dare not refuse those who come to me. I consider them as sent by Mary herself.”*¹⁹⁵

Apart from its spiritual interpretation, this event fits in with other things that were going at that time. The history of the Brothers of the Christian Schools by Rigault¹⁹⁶ records that the Ordinance of 1816 made provision for certain leading schools to offer courses to their most gifted pupils which would train them in the art of teaching. Provision was also made for the Brevet Level 2 to be awarded to village schoolteachers who would use the Simultaneous Method. Rigault mentions also that in 1821-1822 the Prefect of the Rhône, Lezay-Marnésia, came to an arrangement with the Superior General, Brother Gerbaud, for the classes given in the novitiate in Lyon to be opened to student-teachers who were destined for teaching in country areas. We can see this policy in operation at Bourg-Argental on 23rd April 1822 when Inspector Guillard found Sieur Brole-Labeaume¹⁹⁷, the teacher replaced by Champagnat’s Brothers, who would have to go and “learn the method of the Brothers at Condrieu or Annonay”, neighbouring towns where the Brothers of the Christian Schools were installed.¹⁹⁸

So, centres for the formation of teachers were multiplying under auspices of the Brothers of the Christian Schools, whose teaching method had the backing of the University. The ex-Christian Brother may have made Champagnat aware of this opportunity, which may explain why Champagnat let himself be persuaded to give him a letter of authorisation. It would seal a tacit agreement whereby both could take advantage of this demand for training in the method of the Brothers, with the young man securing a place for himself, and Champagnat obtaining some new young recruits. As his Brothers were already using the Simultaneous Method, Champagnat could see himself getting a foothold in a teacher training arrangement that was already up and running, and his offer would fit in with what the young men who came from the Haute-Loire were seeking.

¹⁹⁵ *Letters*, No. 56, Lent 1835.

¹⁹⁶ Vol. IV, pp. 468-469. According to Rigault “the experiments did not amount to more than some sketchy plans” but one may wonder if teacher training courses of this type did not have greater importance than he states, even if their implementation remained largely informal.

¹⁹⁷ He was not a young man, since he had been teaching at Condrieu before the arrival of the Brothers of the Christian Schools.

¹⁹⁸ *Origines Maristes*, Vol. 1, doc. 75, n.2.

Visiting Lavalla on 26th April 1822, less than a month after the arrival of the postulants from the Haute-Loire, Inspector Guillard noted two facts:

1. Champagnat was not running a college, but he was housing “12 or 15 young peasants whom he was training in the method of the Brothers so as to send them out into the surrounding parishes,”¹⁹⁹ which suggests moreover that not all his students came from the Haute-Loire; and
2. he was intending to form them into a congregation. Although doubly illegal, what Champagnat was doing was too close to the official policy of the time for the Inspector to do anything other than suggest he get his project legalised.

It is striking to note that the villages where the ex-Christian Brother went recruiting were in the neighbourhood of Usson-en-Forez, where Jean-Claude Courveille was born, and also of Apinac, where he had done part of his clerical studies under his uncle, who was parish priest there. Besides that, in 1822 Courveille had founded a group of Brothers at Feurs,²⁰⁰ and was priest in charge at Epercieux. It might be supposed then that the ex-Brother, seeking to be admitted and knowing Courveille, had taken advantage of this connection, and this may also help explain why Champagnat had listened to him and had even given him a letter of recommendation.²⁰¹

The sudden and unexpected arrival of this group opened up Champagnat’s work to a vast rural world marked by poverty and with groups of men moving about looking for work. Some of these young men – and some not so young – leaving their home areas could find with him the chance to settle down and make a modest improvement in their position in life. In opening a first entry register at this time, Champagnat was himself expressing his awareness of having crossed a threshold in the composition of his society, which was beginning to be more than a purely local endeavour, and was orienting itself more decisively towards the preparation of teachers for schools. The days of teaching catechism in the hamlets and practising a more than ordinary austerity were coming to an end. But more than that, in his mind, the work of establishing the Brothers was not just a project for teacher training, nor was it simply an association, nor even a congregation. It was the first step in the realisation of the Society of Mary, a project he would labour to bring to birth using all the audacity and adaptability he could muster. It was because of the ambitiousness and the depth of his project that Champagnat came to outstrip other promoters of works similar to his.

¹⁹⁹ OM1, doc. 75.

²⁰⁰ OM1. doc. 75.

²⁰¹ This strong link with Apinac is again illustrated by the proposal made in 1824 by an individual from the place to give three properties to the Brothers of Mary: one bringing in an income of 800 francs and the other two worth 8000 francs each. (OM1 doc. 110). The Archdiocese was in favour of the proposal and passed the offer on to Father Champagnat. But nothing came of it.

Obedience and the classroom ahead of mortification and multiple works of zeal

Other associations of Brothers founded in the diocese of Lyon at the same time as Champagnat's were also experiencing crises of identity and growth. They also were being subjected to pressure from Bochard who wanted to bring about some unity into this somewhat chaotic little world. Etienne Rouchon, priest in charge at Valbenoîte near Saint-Etienne, had brought together seven young men in 1817. In Lyon in 1820 André Coindre was likewise starting to gather some "Brothers of the Sacred Heart". The two groups united in September 1821 but could not come to a lasting arrangement, which is why the Brothers of Father Rouchon came to Lavalla in May 1822 to attempt a merger. However, they were put off by the poverty of the house and their little society fell apart soon after.²⁰² The Brothers of the Sacred Heart moved their novitiate to be close to their founder who had set himself up as a diocesan missionary at Monistrol-sur-Loire, in the Diocese of Saint Flour.²⁰³ This was in August 1822.²⁰⁴ Father Bochard's Brothers of the Cross of Jesus, founded to catechise children and to assist the Fathers of the Cross of Jesus,²⁰⁵ were very few in number and functioned more as assistants to the priests than as a society in their own right. In 1822 the Brothers of Mary were the only association of Brothers in the diocese of Lyon with any strength.

The year 1822 was also the year that Brother Jean-Marie, the Director of the Brothers, was removed from the house and the novitiate at Lavalla, the reasons being that he was too strict, he "practised virtue in his own particular way" (*Life*, Ch. 8 p. 91), and also because of the lack of novices. But was the novitiate indeed empty before the arrival of the postulants from the Haute-Loire? We have seen that Inspector Guillard, with his experienced eye, had observed that at Lavalla Champagnat was giving lessons to 12 to 15 young peasant lads. In fact, candidates were not in short supply but there were no good vocations among them for reasons both internal (an over severe formator) and external (the young people were not sufficiently well motivated). The removal of Brother Jean-Marie and the appointment of Brother Louis as novice master are indications that the formation programme was moving towards something less harsh in its approach and now had some young men whose good dispositions had won Champagnat's heart. In this context, the departure of Brother Jean-Marie for the Trappists at Aiguebelle can easily be explained.

Doubtless using the testimony of Father Champagnat, the Bourdin memoirs give the circumstances of this event:²⁰⁶

²⁰² P. Zind, *op. cit.*, pp. 216-217.

²⁰³ The Diocese of Le Puy was only re-established in 1823.

²⁰⁴ P. Zind, *op. cit.*, p. 218.

²⁰⁵ P. Zind, *op. cit.*, p. 213. The register at the Church of Saint Bruno, in the parish of Chartreux, records the signatures of 10 Brothers between 1818 and 1820.

²⁰⁶ (Translator's note) The French original of the Bourdin memoirs contain some very idiosyncratic punctuation and spelling, which in the French edition of this history have been modified by the author.

“Gets the idea of going to La Trappe. Informs Fr Champagnat. Advised by his director, he leaves.

– “But you won’t stay.”²⁰⁷

Brother Louis, master of novices, replaces him. Better educated, does no better.²⁰⁸ Br Jean-Marie stayed a month [...] Br Jean-Marie returns: asks to be taken back. Fr Champagnat:

– “You thought the society not holy enough. Find some saints somewhere else!”²⁰⁹

While Brother Jean-Baptiste gives us to understand that this departure was on “a sudden impulse”,²¹⁰ which caught Champagnat off guard, the Bourdin memoirs are more nuanced and Champagnat puts his finger on the main difficulty, Brother Jean-Marie’s search for a more saintly society. But he makes no mention of any prior commitment that would restrict him from leaving.

Indeed, if at the time of taking the habit in March 1817 Brother Jean-Marie had made his commitment in the association for five years, his promise expired in March 1822 and he was free to go wherever he wished. This is why it is not strange that Father Champagnat gave him a warm welcome when he returned and sent him off in 1822-1823 to Saint-Symphorien-le-Château after he had renewed his promise at the retreat in 1822, which was held probably in September or October, “in the new classroom on the first (floor)” of the newly enlarged house at Lavalla.²¹¹ Nevertheless, it may also be that, given what had just happened, this was the year the formula of commitment was completed:



19. The maxims written on the wall of the community room of La Valla are the first expressions of the Marist spirituality

²⁰⁷ Certainly Father Champagnat’s own words.

²⁰⁸ He did not succeed either.

²⁰⁹ You thought you would some holy men in some other place.

²¹⁰ *Life*, Part 1, Ch. 14 p. 147.

²¹¹ Brother François, AFM, 5101.302, Retreat notes, no. 1, p. 121.

“We intend, thirdly, to commit ourselves to obey without question our superior and all who, under his orders, shall be placed over us. Fourthly, we promise to observe chastity. Fifthly, we place everything in common.”

Furthermore, Brother François on this date wrote in his retreat notebook:

“To obey without question my superior and all who, under his orders, shall be placed over us, as if Jesus Christ in person commands me ...”²¹²

In his own way, Brother Jean-Marie was posing the same problem as the parish priest of Lavalla. His commitment had been made in an association which united a highly visible apostolic life with extreme austerity, and not in an enterprise that was evolving into a congregation of school teachers. He believed he was justified in withdrawing. He had fulfilled his commitment, and in his eyes the primitive ideal was being lost. And to a certain degree he was right. All the same, things were far from being lax and permissive. During the summer of 1822, with the help of his Brothers, Champagnat enlarged the house. This period of work was accompanied by monastic practices: “During the work, silence was observed rigorously” (*Life*, Ch. 10, p.102), and “from time to time a Brother who was tired or was younger, would read from *Advice for Sinners* by Louis de Grenade or *The Life of St François Régis*”.

In 1819 the Brothers of Mary were still a small and slightly suspect group engaged in a somewhat haphazardly organised apostolate. The founder himself seemed rather uncertain if this association was indeed willed by Providence and even perhaps what its objectives should be – catechism or the classroom, preparing teachers for the parishes or a more structured group? By 1822 the community had triumphed over malicious rumour-mongering, the suspicions of the clergy and attacks coming from the Ministry of Public Instruction. Champagnat had seen in these events the signs that this work was indeed willed by God. Above all, he had obtained the unofficial support of the diocesan authorities and tolerance of his work from the University. The internal shift had been even more profound. His association was moving towards a regular religious life, where community, obedience, the classroom and a moderate level of austerity were taking precedence over impulsive zeal and extremes of mortification. The arrival of new aspirants who were numerous and capable of committing themselves to the enterprise would now allow a rapid development to be envisaged.

Some matters remained. The cohesion of the group was not well served by a commitment limited to five years, and there were the misgivings of its first member in the face of developments he did not understand. Bochart was intent on his Brothers of the Cross of Jesus; and the Society of Mary, of which the Brothers of Mary were supposed to constitute one branch, did not as yet exist.

²¹² AFM, 5101.302, p. 1.

5.

THE HERMITAGE AND ARCHBISHOP DE PINS (1824...)

Champagnat connects favourably with the new diocesan authority

The extension of the building at La Valla carried out in 1822 could not absorb the influx of postulants and boarders. There was a need to think of a larger building in a more accessible place. Such a development could not be undertaken without the approval of the diocesan authorities.

The matter was complicated by the fact that an influential group led by Father Besson, Parish Priest of Saint Nizier in Lyon, was lobbying to have an Apostolic Administrator appointed for the Archdiocese of Lyon, where Cardinal Fesch was still Archbishop. The day to day administration of the diocese was no longer in the hands of the Cardinal, but his Vicar Generals were governing in a situation of canonical uncertainty, giving rise to many disputes. Bochard, the Vicar General with the strongest determination to carry on the work of the Cardinal, was working hard to build up a group loyal to Fesch and to himself personally, based primarily on his almost total control over the diocesan education system, which was made up of the Society of the Chartreux (missions and higher ecclesiastical studies), the seminaries and the primary schools, which therefore included Champagnat's foundation.

A change of authority – from Bochard to an Apostolic Administrator

The Government and the Ultra party achieved their goal at the end of December 1823 with the appointment of Jean-Paul Gaston de Pins, Bishop of Limoges, as Titular Archbishop of Amasia, and Apostolic Administrator of the Archdiocese of Lyon. When he arrived in February 1824, de Pins was aware of the need to dismantle the power of Bochard, and so his kindly attitude towards Champagnat would not have been without its motives. He was able to get the Missionary Society of the Chartreux on side by nominating their Superior, Father Mioland, to his Council (OM 1 doc. 93). He favoured the return of the Sulpicians to the major seminary of Saint Irénée, but Father Gardette, a diocesan priest, remained on as superior. In regard to Champagnat he adopted as his own the policy of Bochard but went one better – the Brothers of Mary

would no longer be threatened with having to use the name Brothers of the Cross of Jesus. In short, the coming of the Administrator had something of the appearance of a palace revolution – the men of the previous regime would remain in place on condition they were willing to pledge their allegiance to the new administration. (De Pins never did enjoy the title of Archbishop of Lyon in his own right. With the death of Cardinal Fesch in 1839, de Pins, too much of a *légitimiste* – Bourbon supporter – for the government’s liking, was passed over in favour of Cardinal de Bonald, who was appointed to succeed Fesch as the next Archbishop of Lyon).

Despite their sketchy nature, the Bourdin memoirs relating to the establishment of contact between Champagnat and de Pins are of great value, because they come directly from Champagnat. Father Gardette, superior of the major seminary, had become Champagnat’s advocate with Archbishop de Pins. De Pins received Champagnat in audience, authorised him to construct a large house, and gave him Father Courveille as his assistant.²¹³

Whatever the case, with the arrival of Archbishop de Pins the situation began to change rapidly. On 3rd March the Archbishop’s Council, recognising that “Father Champagnat [...] had succeeded in training Brothers for schools” encouraged him in his work. The meeting with Champagnat must have taken place sometime between 3rd March and 13 April²¹⁴, the day on which the Council authorised him to acquire land for the building of the Hermitage. But “in that regard, he will be left to see to it himself.”²¹⁵ On 12th May Courveille was authorised to go and assist Champagnat. The next day, Courveille and Champagnat became joint purchasers of the Hermitage property²¹⁶ and, the same month, Father Cholleton, the new Vicar General, came to bless the foundation stone. On 19th July the Archdiocese authorised the printing of the Prospectus for the congregation of the Little Brothers of Mary. In November the main part of the building was completed. Thus, between March and November, Champagnat had obtained the official support of the Diocese and had finally established a centre suited to the future scope of his work.

Father Seyve is replaced by Father Courveille

The project to build the Hermitage had contributed to a serious upset in the parish of Lavalla. In the spring of 1824,²¹⁷ a petition was circulating demanding

²¹³ OM 2, doc. 754. “The matter could not go ahead because Mgr de Pins was arriving at Christmas. – when he came, Fr. Champagnat wrote 2 letters, one for him and 1 for Fr Gardette. The 1st a general one, the 2nd so that Fr Gardette could explain – [...] The Archbishop wrote, had him come ... wanted to appoint him Parish Priest of Lavalla; he refused because of his work and to prevent rumours he wanted to replace – [...] – He had thought, during Fr Bochart’s time, of creating a little oratory group, and to give his all to this work; no, my God! I would be only too happy! He did more, and not happy”...

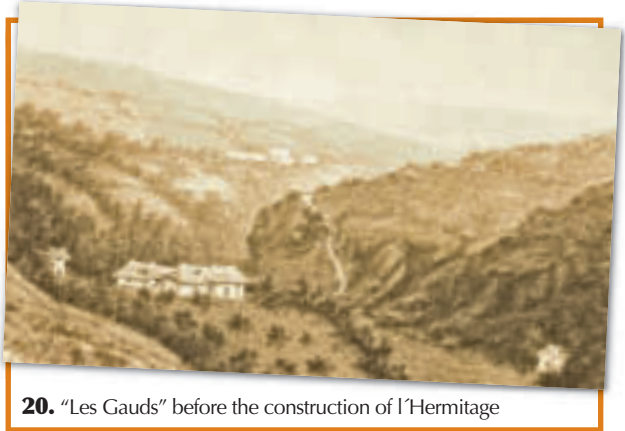
²¹⁴ *Life* Ch. 12 p.126. The *Chronologie mariste* based on the Annals of Brother Avit places the interview of Champagnat with de Pins on 3rd March.

²¹⁵ OM 1 doc. 95, 97.

²¹⁶ OFM 3 doc. 647. Purchase from Monsieur Montellier. Two other purchases of land followed in the same year.

²¹⁷ *Life* pp. 118-119.

the replacement of Father Rebod, the parish priest of Lavalla. In the *Life* it is claimed that the instigator of this petition was a priest. The man in question was the Abbé Jean-Baptiste Seyve (1789-1866), a Marist aspirant. He had been parish priest of Arthun in 1821, had withdrawn from there on 20th October 1823, “and it was no doubt then that he came to Lavalla to assist Father Champagnat.”²¹⁸



20. “Les Gauds” before the construction of l’Hermitage

The Bourdin Memoirs also mention: “Fr Seyve was helping with the project.”²¹⁹ But finally he was appointed to Burdigne as parish priest on 5th May 1824.²²⁰ The attempt to have the parish priest replaced had put Father Seyve on bad terms with Father Champagnat. But there is a difference of interpretation between the account in the *Life* and that of Father Bedoin who, as a result of this affair, was appointed parish priest on 24th May 1824.²²¹

“On returning to Lavalla Father Champagnat found the parish in a state of turmoil. A priest that the ailing pastor had called in to help him with the Easter ceremonies, had taken advantage of Father’s absence to arouse the parishioners against their pastor. At his instigation, a petition was made to demand a change of Parish Priest, and to have the priest in question appointed in his place. Father Champagnat spoke out strongly and in no uncertain terms against what had happened. [...] He even criticised to his face the priest responsible for all these intrigues, and told him straight that he wanted to have nothing further to do with him, which irritated the latter immensely.”

To these assertions Father Bedoin replied:

“It was Father Champagnat himself acting on his own initiative, and not the parish priest, who had taken himself off to the place and to the residence of this priest and had insistently begged him to come to Lavalla for Easter, which he succeeded in doing, but only with great difficulty. It is entirely false that it was at the instigation of this gentleman that the parishioners had launched a petition to have the parish priest changed. Father Champagnat was himself no stranger to the commotion in the parish and had very clear intentions with regard to this ecclesiastic who at that time shared his view of things.”²²²

²¹⁸ OM 4 p. 354. This indicates that, even before the arrival of Archbishop de Pins, the diocese was supportive of the work of Champagnat, who had started in 1823 to look for a place to establish his work.

²¹⁹ OM 2 doc. 754 n. 29.

²²⁰ OM 1 doc. 98.

²²¹ OM 1 doc. 104; The series “Documents maristes” n. 1, Rome, 1982, p. 16.

²²² The 1989 edition of the *Life* does not indicate in its footnotes this interpretation of Fr Bedoin, which is nevertheless very important.

Father Champagnat would have therefore been counting on Father Seyve to take over his duties as assistant priest so that he could prepare for the building of the Hermitage and also to serve as his assistant with his undertaking. Judging Father Seyve to be now compromised, he asked the Archdiocese to appoint Father Courveille²²³ and on 12th May 1824 Archbishop de Pins' Council authorised Father Courveille to go and assist him "in his institution of Brothers for schools."²²⁴ He withdrew from Epercieux on 30th June 1824,²²⁵ just as the construction of the Hermitage was starting. But the withdrawal of Father Seyve was not enough to calm the campaign against Father Rebod – which indicates that responsibility in this affair is not at all clear – and on 24th May 1824²²⁶ the Archdiocese appointed Father Bedoin to the post of Parish Priest while at the same time tactfully arranging for his predecessor to remain in the parish. In fact, the object of this petition was already a very sick man who died not long after on 27th January 1825 in his 46th year.

It is important to pay close attention to Father Bedoin's version, which is more reliable than the *Life*, because he had direct knowledge of the situation. It shows further that the construction of the Hermitage and the absences necessitated by Champagnat's numerous business dealings were having a destabilising effect on the parish. It was as if the authority of the assistant was the guarantor of the parish priest's own authority. This incident was also to have major consequences for the nascent Society of Mary because Courveille, despite his claims to be the man chosen to head the Society of Mary, was Champagnat's second choice, which indicates that Champagnat had quite early begun to have certain reservations with regard to Courveille.

In the short term Champagnat had successfully concluded two delicate matters. On the one hand, he had been able to remove himself from the control of Bochard and place himself under the authority of the Administrator of the Diocese, thus freeing himself from the danger of annexation by the Brothers of the Cross of Jesus; on the other, he had brought to a successful conclusion the construction of a large house capable of housing one hundred and fifty persons and situated in a valley close to Saint-Chamond. With the help of his two Marist confreres he was now hoping to lay the foundations of the Society of Mary. This attempt was, however, to prove an even thornier business than the foundation of the branch of the Brothers.

The Prospectus of 1824 – a milder version of a more militant original

The construction of the Hermitage was well under way when the "Prospectus of the Establishment of the Little Brothers of Mary" was printed under the authority of Father Cholleton, Vicar General. Dated 19th July 1824, it was the first official recognition of the Institute by the diocesan authorities. It had been preceded by a

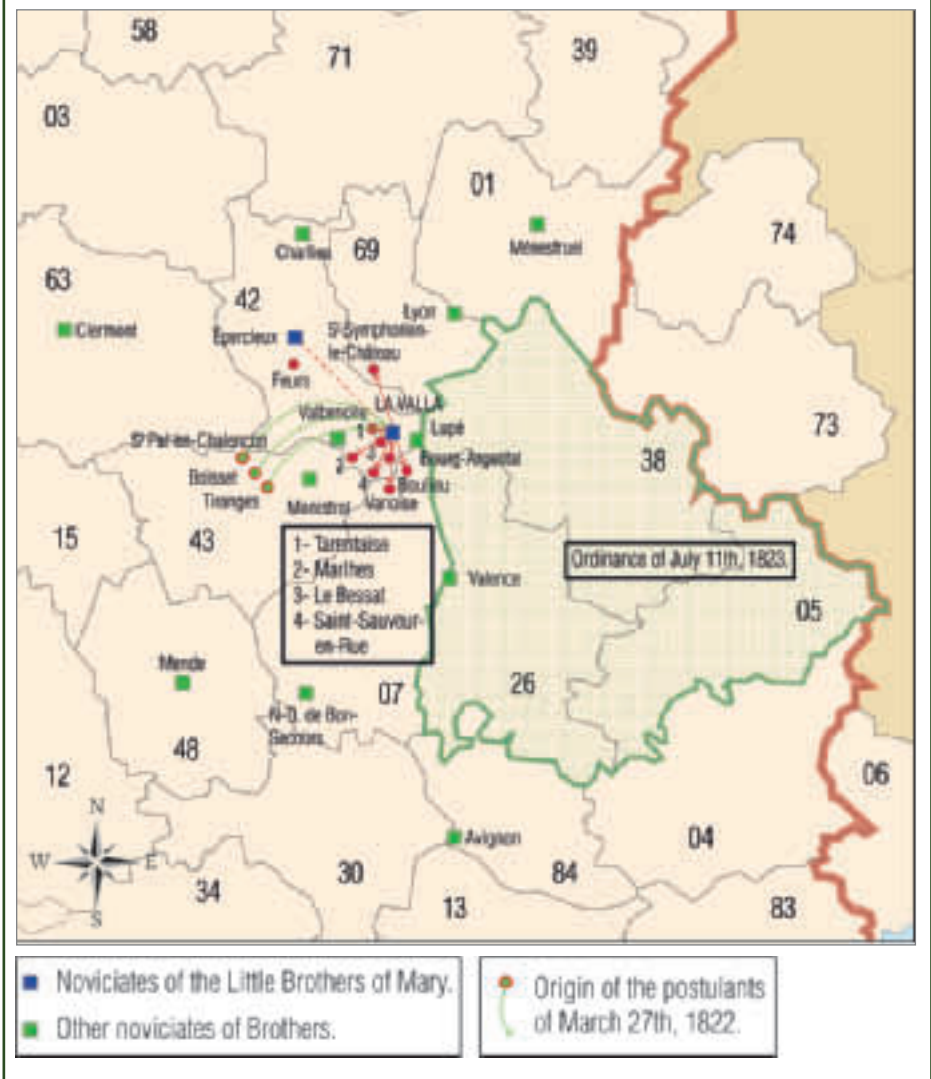
²²³ *Letters of Champagnat* no. 30, August-September 1833.

²²⁴ OM 1 doc. 101.

²²⁵ OM 1 doc. 111.

²²⁶ OM 1 doc. 103.

Map 5. The Little Brothers of Mary in 1823



draft outline prepared at the Hermitage, which is better seen as a reflection of the years 1820-1824. Its authors were certainly Champagnat and Courveille, but it is not possible to distinguish clearly the contribution of each one to the whole.²²⁷ The Prospectus is largely inspired by the draft but modifies it quite substantially and avoids details that were too prosaic.

²²⁷ Brother Pedro Herreros in *La regla del fundador* p. 21 attributes to Courveille the more intransigent language of the preamble, with the remainder coming from Champagnat.

Articles 1-6 of the original document give us a coherent and more or less complete vision of the whole enterprise. In order to combat the irreligious teachers who are corrupting the countryside, Brothers, after the style of the Brothers of La Salle, called “Little Brothers of Mary” go out to the poorer communes in twos, or sometimes threes, their only requirements being just 200 Francs per Brother, somewhere to live and some basic furniture. They teach the whole of the elementary programme using the method of the Brothers of the Christian Schools. For intending candidates (Articles 4-6) the admission requirements are: to be between 15 and 30 years of age, and to have a basic knowledge of reading and writing...

In fact, this simply expresses in writing what had been arrived at during the years 1820-1823. There is no longer any question of a Brother on his own, like Brother Laurent at Le Bessat in 1819-1820 and later at Tarantaise up to 1823. The plan foresees offering Brothers to the communes in two ways, either a permanent community or Brothers going there just for the winter. The Hermitage is not spoken of directly as a Mother House but as the location of a future shelter for orphans thanks to a water supply²²⁸ which would provide the power needed to establish workshops where these children would learn a trade. This was one of the reasons for establishing the house in a narrow valley.

This project for an orphanage, which was not retained in the Prospectus, shows that Champagnat intended to continue his activity on behalf of the poor. And even, by specifying that virtuous and capable children would be offered employment in the house, he was placing himself firmly in the tradition of Lavalla where, among the destitute and homeless children who were taken in, he hoped to find some suitable recruits. Many of the points in the original document express more the desire than the reality. It is doubtful if in the schools they were teaching the whole of the indicated programme: Catechism and Prayers, Reading and Writing, Arithmetic and Elementary Grammar, Church Music and Sacred History. Similarly, the conditions for entry to the novitiate are more wish than reality. In 1823 Champagnat was still noting that the numerous novices arriving were “almost all poor and very young”. (Letter No. 1)

One is struck by the warlike tone of the preamble to the original draft, which was to be considerably watered down in the definitive text.

DRAFT PROSPECTUS JUNE (1824 ²²⁹)	PROSPECTUS FOR THE ESTABLISHMENT (19 JULY 1824)
(1) Christian instruction is today entirely neglected in country areas, or is being replaced by antichristian instruction. In the late autumn, persons with no morals and no religion move out into the country areas where the arm of the law does not extend, and there by their immoral conduct, their impious discourse and	“The Establishment of the Little Brothers of Mary. Prospectus.” [1] The education of the less well-off classes is generally confided to the <i>Brothers of the Christian Schools</i> . The good that they accomplish in the towns where they are established is well known. But, since by the Rule of their Institute, they are not permit-

²²⁸ This water supply would only become available to the Hermitage after 1839 with the purchase of the Patouillard factory.

²²⁹ AFM 132.8 pp. 76-82. Quoted in Pedro Herrerros, *op. cit.*, p. 21.

<p>their poisonous books, sow corruption, irreligion and antimonarchical sentiments.</p>	<p>ted to go fewer than three to the places to which they are invited, and since thereby the costs of their establishments are considerable, it follows that the majority of communes, especially those in the country areas, because of lack of sufficient resources, are not able to enjoy the advantages of the education these Brothers offer.</p>
<p>(2) To remedy so great an evil and to drive out from the less fortunate areas of the countryside these impious pedagogues, these enemies of good order, of Christian society and of the Monarchy, pious school teachers devoted to Mary and under the name of Little 'ignorantins' Brothers²³⁰ go out in twos to even the poorest places where, because of lack of resources, the Brothers of the Christian Schools are not able to go.</p>	<p>[2] To overcome this difficulty, an establishment of school teachers has been set up, under the name of <i>Little Brothers of Mary</i>; and at this moment a house of this Institute is under construction at the Hermitage of Notre-Dame-sur-St-Chamond, in the Department of the Loire.</p> <p>[8] <i>The Little Brothers of Mary</i> go in threes or even twos, to those Parishes that request them.</p>

The very literary and very general character of the first part of this Preamble suggests it was copied from an author or a newspaper from the period 1815-1820, at the height of the wars between the Simultaneous and Mutual Methods of teaching referred to earlier. But this Preamble needs also to be seen in the context of the discourse taking place among the elites, notably the clergy, dating from before the Restoration. Pierre Zind²³¹ quotes for us a report of the Archdiocese of Lyon around 1809 concerning teachers in the Departments of Ain, Rhône and Loire:

“Outsiders, driven out of their own areas or fugitives [...] men ejected from other places where they have engaged in corrupt behaviour, men who are lazy, with no energy or talents, souls low and vile, who have not been able to obtain any other sort of employment, take up teaching as their last resort, not seeking to be useful to society but just to have something to eat: promoters of every sort of vice corrupting the youth, and inspiring in them aversion for the priest, abandonment of their religious practices, and contempt for religion.”

This attitude would explain that the Preamble was aimed less at teachers using the Mutual Method and more at the itinerant teachers, often natives of the Southern Alps (areas of Briançon, Queyras, Ubaye) who, during the winter, moved out, not only into Provence, but also into Dauphiné, Lyonnais and Forez. In 1802 a Prefect gave a description of these same persons, but without the suspicious mindset:

“These good people teach numerous lessons throughout the length of the day: in between they provide almost as many services as paid domestic workers and

²³⁰ (Translator’s note) The French text uses the term *petits frères ignorantins*. Originally a pejorative term (“unlearned”) describing the Brothers founded by De La Salle because they did not teach Latin in their schools, it later lost its pejorative sense and became the name by which all such Brothers were commonly known.

²³¹ *The New Congregations of Brothers*, P. 77.

people are surprised by the very small wage they request for going to so much trouble. When the snows melt they return to their native areas with the few écus with which they pay a part of their contributions, and there during the summer season they work on the land.”²³²

Champagnat’s famous “We must have Brothers” from around 1816 has therefore to be situated in the context of a pastoral tradition of educational reform that was reactivated by the sudden emergence of the Mutual Method in 1815. Further to that, starting from 2nd March 1816, that is, several months before the first Marists’ consecration at Fourvière, the Vicars General of Lyon, Bochard and Courbon, administrators of the diocese in the absence of Cardinal Fesch, had come out against the Mutual Method.²³³ Lyon, they said, was already well provided for with schools conducted by the Brothers and the Sisters which were much appreciated by parents and pastors. Why add to them a method of teaching as yet unproven and which did not, in terms of moral values, offer the same guarantees as the schools conducted by the religious congregations?

Combatting the traditional mediocrity and a suspect new pedagogy

Given all this, we are not aware of any concrete case before 1824 of the Brothers being in a situation of conflict with either the itinerant teachers or practitioners of the Mutual Method. At Bourg Argental the Brothers had supplanted Sieur Brole (OM 1/75), a teacher of the traditional type. He had taught Latin, was cantor in the church, and “at times drank to excess”. But he had the support of the “leading persons of the area” who “had scant interest in having the Brothers from Lavalla”. It was a quarrel between the traditional type teacher, part cleric part layman, with no teaching method, and whose behaviour left something to be desired, and the new style of teaching brought by Brothers who led an austere life and used the Simultaneous Method. Nevertheless, as Bourg-Argental was a town, it was a milieu that would favour the installation of a teacher using the Mutual Method, which may account for Champagnat’s decision to take on a town school and, in so doing, depart from his original idea.

The rivalry with schools using the Mutual Method is further manifested with certainty in two other towns, Feurs and Charlieu. In Feurs in 1822 Inspector Guillard came across a Brothers’ school founded by Father Courveille. (OM 1/75) “The mere mention of the word Brother was enough to finish off the two other schools in the town, which were in truth in bad hands,” said Guillard. At least one of these schools was using the Mutual Method. Courveille’s school did not last. Brothers from the Hermitage came to Feurs in 1829²³⁴ but were withdrawn in 1831 following

²³² Bernard Gasperrin, *Les petites écoles sous L’Ancien Régime*, Ouest-France université, 1984, p. 47-48.

²³³ Robert Raymond Tronchot, *L’enseignement mutuel en France de 1815 à 1833*, Vol. 1, part 2 «L’école mutuelle en France de 1815-1824», p. 381. Archives Nationales F 19/6286.

²³⁴ *Life Ch.* 17 p. 171, and Avit, *Annales des maisons*, Hermitage, Feurs.

a decision by the Municipal Council, a typical case of a “settling of accounts” on the part of supporters of the Mutual school after the Revolution of 1830.²³⁵

Charlieu was founded in 1824 (OM 1/113, 120) to counter the school run by Sieur Grizard, which did not use the Mutual Method but was affiliated with Vicar General Bochart. In the Annals of the Houses, Brother Avit states that the pupils were difficult and that the parents “had been warned off against the Brothers by the secular teachers.” He indicates that in 1831 a man named Attendu founded a Mutual school which could only attract a dozen pupils, and that the town would have cut off the allowance of 600 Francs allocated to the Brothers. The foundation in Saint Symphorien-le-Château in 1823, again a town, may also have been motivated by the threat of the establishment of a Mutual Method school.

Fundamentally, the preamble to the draft prospectus reveals a militant attitude. Champagnat and Courveille see the teaching vocation as a global combat on three fronts – against an older system of teaching they saw as ineffective in its mission of Christian evangelisation, against an unstable body of teachers under suspicion for evil ways of life and thought, and against a suspect new Mutual Method which had to be stopped from spreading.

The Preamble to the Prospectus itself did not retain the expression “*petits frères ignorantins*” (See footnote 230) found in the draft document, but made official the name “*Petits Frères de Marie*” (Little Brothers of Mary) found in Article 2. As the name “*frères ignorantins*” was used at the time to designate the Brothers of the Christian Schools, the addition of the adjective “*Petits*” signified a concern to locate themselves within that educational tradition but at a humbler level.²³⁶ So it was the writer of the original draft who, no doubt for the first time, employed the term “Little Brothers of Mary”, because up to that time Champagnat and his men had been using the expression “Brothers of Mary”, a name which would remain in use for a long time.

It was foreseen in the draft (Article 5) that the novices would bring along with their “*légitime*” (their share of the family inheritance) a list of items that would later be confirmed in the Prospectus. The promise made by the Brothers already envisaged the Brothers holding their goods in common and the Parish Priest of Lavalla had in 1822 accused Champagnat of making the novices hand over their inheritance to him. We should not see in this an evolution towards the vow of poverty, but the application of the tradition in use among those forming associations we have spoken of earlier. The draft, in fact, did envisage the pronouncing of vows, but this wish was not retained in the Prospectus. By accepting patrimony being held in common while not mentioning vows, the diocesan authorities were demonstrating their prudence. The Brothers of Mary were a pious association of laymen and not the germ of a new congregation.

²³⁵ *Letters* of M. Champagnat, No. 21 p. 64, April 1831. Brother Jean-Baptiste (*Life*, Ch. 17 p. 177) claims that this was the result of a Brother being guilty of being over familiar with a child. If this was the case, it was used as a pretext. The deliberations of the Council took place on 23rd March 1831, at the invitation of the Prefect. Two arguments were used to justify the Brothers being sent away: the slowness of the Simultaneous Method and the high cost it entailed.

²³⁶ Using the same logic, Pierre Zind was to distinguish the “*Grands frères*” (De La Salle Brothers) from the groups of “*petits frères*” founded during the Nineteenth Century.

The spirit of the Prospectus – the “little booklet” of 1824

With regard to the broad educational principles, Brother Jean-Baptiste tells us (*Life* Ch. 12 pp. 128-130) that in 1824, during the construction of the Hermitage Father Champagnat had “thoroughly instructed the Brothers on the religious vocation, on the end of the Institute and on zeal for the Christian education of children” and that he had even given them “a small written summary of the main things he had said.”²³⁷ In two pages he gave its “substance” for the Brothers: to ensure the salvation of their souls by prayer, the sacraments, the rule..., and by practising fraternal charity. With regard to the instruction and Christian formation of the children Champagnat detailed twelve points that can be summarised along a number of broad lines:

- Catechism, sacraments, prayer, devotion to the Blessed Virgin, the guardian angels and the patron saints; instruction in Plain Chant and the ceremonies of the Church.
- Great vigilance in the supervision of the children.
- Obedience and respect towards parents, and towards the authorities both ecclesiastical and civil.
- Love of work and of order, politeness and good manners.
- Good example.

This “little booklet” appears to be elaborating and making more explicit points 1 and 2 of the “Promise”. There is no question here of the vows nor even the virtues of obedience, chastity and poverty. It seems Champagnat had at that time wanted to remind the Brothers of the profound nature of the contract binding them, and was going well beyond what was stated in the Prospectus. The Prospectus stood as the official version of his undertaking, while the “little booklet” was reminding them of the spirit of the work, coming as it was at a time of profound change in its nature.

“The aim of the Brothers”

Apart from this document, we have the collections of instructions compiled by Brother François (A.F.M. 5101.307) and Brother Jean-Baptiste. These contain several versions of a detailed instruction on the purpose of the Institute. In it we find the fierceness of tone we saw in the preamble to the draft prospectus. It is quite likely that this instruction, in its primitive form, may have been given in 1824. We quote two of its opening sections:

“[415a] The Aim of the Brothers”.

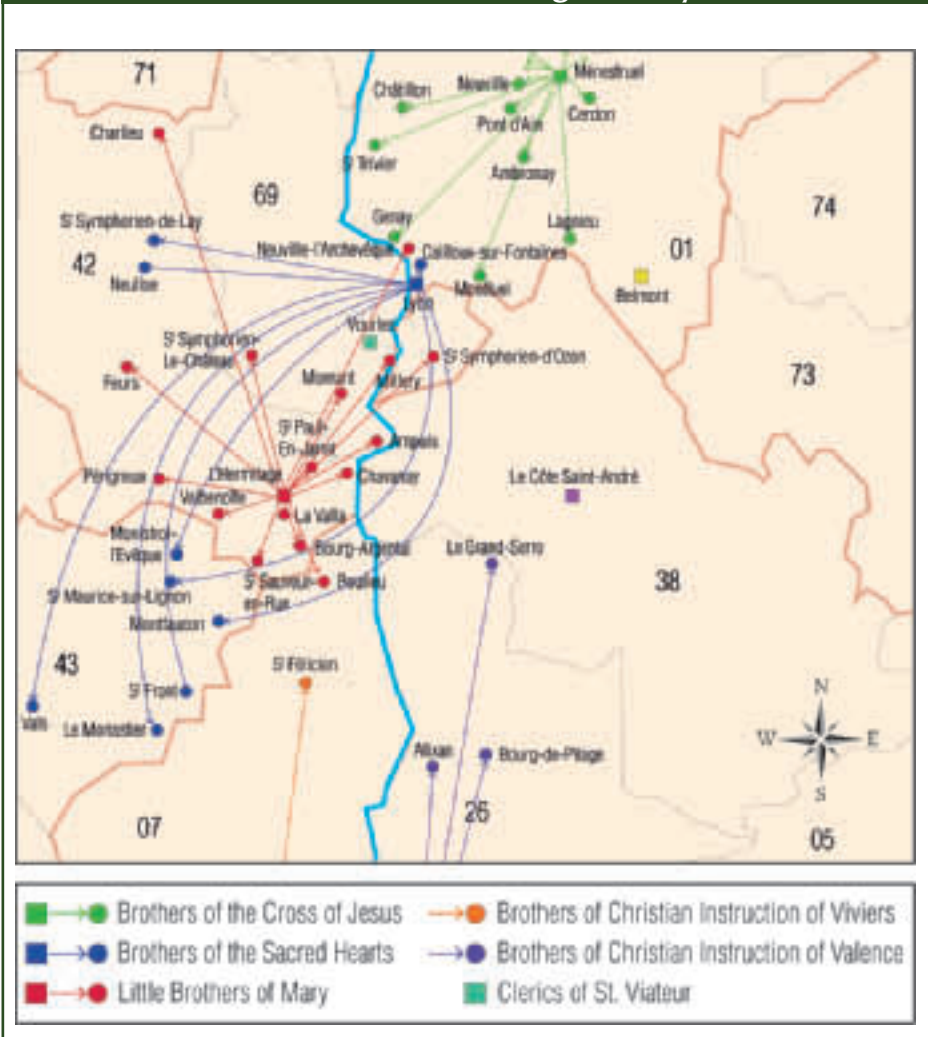
“To work at our sanctification and that of the children, this is the aim of our Institute, the goal of our vocation. [...] Indeed, the vocation of the Brother is an apostolate. The most precious portion of the Church is confided to them. They

²³⁷ See the memoirs of Brother Sylvestre, Ch. VII.

share with the priest in the ministry of the Word.²³⁸ The Brothers must sow the first seeds and the priest cultivate them.

In regard to the children the Brothers stand in the place of the parents. The Brothers' schools are havens which God has prepared for the children, to preserve them from the corruption of the world. They are the remedy Providence has prepared to heal or prevent the harm caused by irreligion. [...]

Map 6. The new congregations of the brothers involved in education in 1830 in the region of Lyon



²³⁸ This idea was already present in the sayings of Champagnat dating from 1822.

We are in a century when people are thirsting for knowledge. Education is expanding even to the smallest villages. Evil men, inspired by the angel of darkness, are using it to infect the minds and hearts of children with the most perverse and pernicious of principles, with the most subtle of poisons. [...] The schools of the Brothers are established to throw up a dam wall against this torrent of evil doctrines. They are established to provide knowledge of Jesus and of his religion. They are established for the regeneration of our homeland to prevent the faith from ever being extinguished among us.

The Brothers' vocation is therefore a sublime vocation. The aim they propose to themselves is of such importance that on its accomplishment depend the salvation of a great number of souls, the preservation of faith and of morality, and the spiritual and temporal happiness of the present generation and of those to follow.

In Champagnat's view the Brother is an apostle of children; and woe betide anyone who would be content to teach just the secular subjects! This is a warning given at the very moment the Brothers' association was advertising itself to the public as a society providing educational services conforming to the official programmes.

The Society of the Little Brothers of Mary, through its deep rootedness in the Society of Mary, was in its essence mystical. At first an association of equals, the group had been evolving towards something close in form to a religious congregation, but the process was not yet complete: there were no vows. Recognised by the Archdiocese as an Educational Society in 1824, they were now in the fight against the Mutual Method and the schoolteachers of the old traditional and itinerant type. Their politico-religious commitment was beyond doubt. And we need to remember, moreover, that this was in an era when education was still in the hands of the clergy through their domination of the University.

6.

THE BROTHERS IN THE SOCIETY OF MARY

On the periphery or at the centre of the project?

For Champagnat and Courveille, the Hermitage was not just the continuation of what had been begun at Lavalla but it was also the emergence of the Society of Mary, with the branch of the Brothers for the educational apostolate and the branch of the Fathers for the formation of the Brothers and for missionary activity.²³⁹

The Hermitage was not the only place where the project had been maturing. At Cerdon, in the Department of Ain, Pierre and Jean-Claude Colin, who had been joined by Jeanne-Marie Chavoïn and Marie Jotillon, had begun two branches of the Society, the Fathers and the Sisters. Jean-Claude Colin had written a rule and he was probably the principal author of a letter written by the Marists to Pius VII on 25th January 1822 with a view to obtaining canonical recognition for the Marists. With the reply from Rome asking them to make contact with the Nunciature in Paris, Jean-Claude Colin went there in November 1822 and again in the spring of 1823 to present the society to Cardinal Macchi.²⁴⁰

The creation of the Diocese of Belley, which was detached from the Archdiocese of Lyon on 6th October 1822, caused a severe disruption to the situation of the embryonic Society. Bishop Devie, who had been appointed Bishop of Belley by the King on 13th January 1823, entered his diocese on 23rd July 1823. From now on the Marist aspirants belonged in two dioceses, and it would take much time and much negotiating before Bishop Devie and Archbishop de Pins, Apostolic Administrator of Lyon, would finally agree to the Marists coming together again in a single society.²⁴¹

At the time Champagnat was building the Hermitage, therefore, there existed at Cerdon a very active Marist centre which, not content just to negotiate with Rome and later with Bishop Devie, was preparing to embark on missionary work

²³⁹ We should not forget the group of Sisters founded at Rive-de-Gier by Father Courveille.

²⁴⁰ Concerning these events, see OM 1.

²⁴¹ See OM 4 for biographies of J.-C. Colin and Bishop Devie.

in the Bugey, an extremely poverty-stricken and neglected part of the diocese. In fact, in June 1825, just as the Brothers and Fathers were moving into their new house at the Hermitage, the Colin brothers, Pierre and Jean-Claude, were moving to Belley where for four years they and others of the Marist aspirants went out into different areas preaching missions, having been given the title of diocesan missionaries by Bishop Devie. We need therefore to keep in mind that around this time 1824-1825 the early Marists found themselves faced with two models of the nascent Society of Mary, and with some feeling more drawn towards one rather than towards the other. Such was the case with Etienne Terraillon, appointed to the Hermitage against his wishes in 1825, after the Archdiocesan authorities had refused his request to join the Cerdon-Belley project. (OM 1/115,141)

The Society of Mary at the Hermitage – a first attempt ends in failure (1824-1826)

The construction of the Hermitage had cost a great deal²⁴² and financial problems would weigh heavily in the events of the years 1824-1826. Nevertheless, they would only be of secondary importance once Champagnat had been elected by the Brothers as their Superior in the autumn of 1825, probably in October. The account of this event as given in the *Life*²⁴³ shows that the Brothers' choice in this matter upset not only Courveille but also Champagnat and, while it precipitated a crisis between the leading Brothers and Courveille, it was also a cause of embarrassment to Champagnat, caught as he was between the two camps. However, it was Etienne Terraillon, appointed to the Hermitage on 25th August 1825, and probably present at the Hermitage at the time of this election, who was subsequently to play a decisive – and highly debatable – role in this crisis.

The fundamental reason for the conflict was as follows: Father Courveille regarded himself as the founder chosen by Mary to bring the Society of Mary into existence, and Champagnat accepted him in this leading role, but more at the theoretical level than in their day to day reality. However, this choice on the Brothers' part looked to him like an act of defiance. In the short term the Brothers' choice does not seem to have caused difficulties in the Courveille-Champagnat relationship, since on 13th December 1825 they negotiated a substantial loan of 12,000 francs with Mlle de Divonne, the Archdiocese no doubt acting as guarantor.²⁴⁴ It is clear too that Father Courveille was taking his duties as administrator seriously, since on 1st January 1826 he opened the Register of Receipts and Expenses for the new year.

Nevertheless, the Marist sources (*Life*, Avit, Sylvestre) are emphatic that Courveille did not cease to denigrate Champagnat's manner of governing. Champagnat, exhausted by years of work and worries of all sorts, then fell gravely ill and had to take to his bed on 26th December 1826. His state deteriorated rapidly and on 3rd January Courveille,

²⁴² To go by the account books, the amount would have been 20,000 to 30,000 francs.

²⁴³ Ch. 13, pp. 133 – 135.

²⁴⁴ OM1, doc. 142.

who still considered himself Superior of the Society of Mary, sent a circular letter to the Brothers in the schools asking for prayers for his “much loved son” and “venerable Father Director”. On 6th January Champagnat dictated his will. He was so weak that he could not sign it. Courveille agreed to be his sole heir whereas Terrailon had refused.

The Marist sources²⁴⁵ are also agreed that, when news got out that Champagnat was close to death, creditors arrived in crowds, threatening to put the house up for sale along with its contents. They speak movingly of the discouragement felt by the Brothers as they faced the prospect of Champagnat dying and the severity of Courveille, who was continuing to threaten, punish and send Brothers away.



21. Picture of Dervieux

When Father Courveille announced publically that he was planning to withdraw, their exasperation would have been reaching its peak. Nevertheless, Brother Stanislaus, leader of the opposition, encouraged the Brothers, remonstrated with Father Courveille, and kept Father Champagnat informed of the situation. Finally, Champagnat appeared at a meeting of the Brothers to reassure them of his presence as their superior, before going to convalesce at the house of Father Dervieux, Parish Priest in St Chamond, who had accepted to pay off the most urgent of the debts. Courveille would then have requested a diocesan inspection in order to denounce the inadequacies of the Brothers’ formation, but, following a moral failure detected by Father Terrailon,²⁴⁶ he withdrew to the Trappist Abbey of Aiguebelle at the end of May 1826.

The events as described would therefore have been a conflict between the leading Brothers and Courveille, and would have taken place between 25th December 1825 and the end of May 1826. However, other documents suggest another and quite different version and another timetable of events. Thus, the Register of Expenses indicates that the great financial crisis occurred in May between the 3rd and 10th of the month, when the house had to meet a debt of 7,568 francs. It was not therefore the fear of Champagnat dying that unleashed the financial crisis but some other event or a set of events, and if we are to get to the heart of the matter, we need to take another look at this scenario in the light of other Marist sources.

So, in 1833, at the time the question came up of uniting his project to that of Father Querbes, Champagnat referred back to “the sad affair of Father Courveille” and the “desertion of Father Terrailon” in 1826,²⁴⁷ and he was hardly less severe towards Terrailon than he was towards Courveille:

²⁴⁵ *Life*, Avit, Sylvestre.

²⁴⁶ Notice biographique de M. Terrailon, OM4, p. 355.

²⁴⁷ OM1, doc. 286. This was in fact a draft of a letter.

“During a long and serious illness, and with heavy debts weighing over my head, I wanted to make Father Terraillon my sole heir. Father Terraillon refused to be my heir saying that I had nothing, which is what he, along with Father Courveille, never stopped saying to the Brothers: the creditors will be here before long and chase you all out of here; we have only to accept a parish and abandon you.

Finally, God in his mercy, and – alas! – perhaps in his justice,²⁴⁸ eventually restored me to health. I set my children’s minds at rest; I told them not to be afraid of anything, that I would share all their misfortunes, even to sharing with them the last scrap of bread.

I saw that in this situation neither of them had any of the feelings of a father for my young men. Other than this, I have no complaints to make against the Reverend Parish Priest of Notre Dame.²⁴⁹ His behaviour whilst in our house was always edifying.

Finding me all alone because of the dismissal of Father Courveille and the departure of Father Terraillon, Mary did not abandon us. We gradually paid off our debts; other confreres took the place of the first ones. I have to see to the costs of their upkeep on my own. Mary is helping us, that is enough.”

The scenario he describes would therefore unfold in four stages:

1. Champagnat falls ill, which causes Terraillon to lose confidence in him.
2. Terraillon and Courveille aim to provoke the Brothers who are opposed to them into leaving.
3. Champagnat returns to health, and takes action to reassure the Brothers.
4. He is now on his own as the only priest; the finances return to a more favourable situation.

Let us therefore re-examine the affair in the light of the documents in our possession. On 6th January Father Champagnat made his will and Father Terraillon expressed his refusal to become his sole heir. On 14th February 1826 Champagnat and Courveille bought two parcels of land from Monsieur Bertholon for an average of 1000 francs, which they paid in cash.²⁵⁰ On that same day Champagnat was present at the office of the notary, Maître Finaz, which means that he was no longer confined to bed. The amount paid shows that the two buyers were not short of credit, and that there was no question of the work being abandoned.

The war between Courveille-Terraillon and a party of Brothers led by Brother Stanislaus must therefore have taken place earlier, between 6th January and the beginning of February. The *Life*,²⁵¹ moreover, makes it clear that the conflict lasted three weeks and that the other houses were not informed of it. It was, therefore, a violent crisis but short-lived and confined to the Hermitage. Nevertheless, the idea that the house was at risk of bankruptcy took root in the minds of the

²⁴⁸ He seems to suggest that Courveille’s transgression was a chastisement from Heaven.

²⁴⁹ This was the post occupied by Terraillon in 1833.

²⁵⁰ OFM, doc. 654.

²⁵¹ Ch. 13, p. 141.

Brothers, which is why Father Champagnat, no doubt at the beginning of February, gave his guarantee to the Brothers that he would not abandon them.

What happened then between 14th February and the month of May, given that a massive debt repayment was made in May and that Courveille's departure came at the end of May? No record of an inspection has been kept in the Archdiocesan Archives. Even the Archdiocesan Council, at the beginning of July, did not seem to be aware of the crisis, since on 5th July 1826²⁵² it was decided:

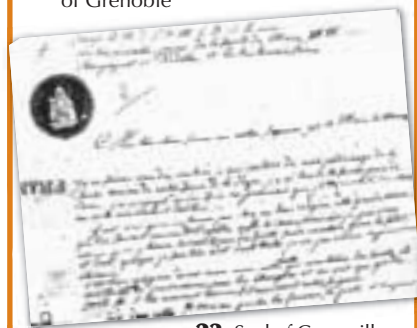
“Father Cattet is willing to try to arrange for a retreat to be given to the primary school teachers²⁵³ at the house of L’Ermitage at St Chamond.”

This plan no doubt occasioned a visit by the Vicar General and in the eyes of the Brothers this would have looked like an inspection, all the more so because Father Champagnat was absent and Father Terrailon, who was certainly the one in charge, may have been influencing the Inspector. The *Life* informs us that Father Champagnat was at that time resting at the house of Father Dervieux, and that he came back to the Hermitage on this occasion to find himself on the receiving end of some caustic comments. This visit in the course of July therefore alerted the Archdiocese and on 2nd August 1826, the Council decided:²⁵⁴ *“The deplorable state of the temporal affairs of the Brothers at the Hermitage makes a detailed account of their situation very necessary.”*

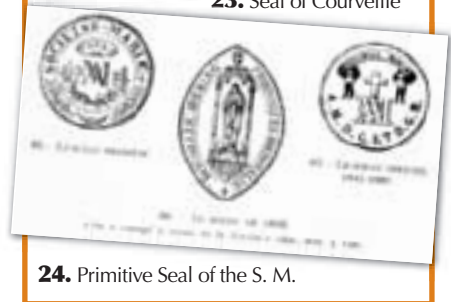
We need therefore to favour a longer chronology for the crisis, which was still not over with the departure of Father Courveille. Champagnat's stay with Father Dervieux would seem to be situated in the period July to September. This would have left Father Terrailon in charge of the house in his absence, but with no great success in relation to the Brothers, since he left at the start of November, on All Saints Day.



22. Seal of Courveille placed at the end of the Prospectus kept in the diocesan Archives of Chambéry and of Grenoble



23. Seal of Courveille



24. Primitive Seal of the S. M.

²⁵² OM1, doc.155.

²⁵³ Not just, therefore, the Brothers. This was a time when the University was under the control of the clergy. But also in the diocese little distinction was made between the Marist Brothers and other teachers.

²⁵⁴ OM1, doc. 158.

The tradition retained among the Brothers has therefore erased Father Terraillon's part in the matter, for the simple reason that, at the time the *Life* was being written, he was still alive and was a Marist Father.²⁵⁵ The older Brothers residing at the Hermitage did play a decisive role in this affair for Courveille-Terraillon had wanted to drive out those early Brothers who were faithful to Champagnat and Lavalla. The tradition among the Brothers rightly underlines Brother Stanislaus' resolute resistance, but it also reveals deep trouble within their ranks, as is illustrated by the departures of Brothers Jean-Marie Granjon and Etienne Roumésy, two of the earliest and most capable Brothers, and Brother Louis' temptation to leave and study for the priesthood.²⁵⁶ Father Terraillon himself seems to have been deeply affected. Brother Avit tells us that before his departure from the Hermitage: "Following an illness, he fell into a profound lethargy" to the point where he was thought to be dead.²⁵⁷ In the letter he sent from Aiguebelle at the start of June 1826, Father Courveille was able to put his finger right on the fundamental cause of these illnesses and surprising departures: "Differences of opinion as to the end, shape, intentions and spirit of the true Society of Mary."²⁵⁸

By All Saints 1826 Champagnat was the only priest remaining, chosen, so to speak, for a second time as their superior by his disciples, who for a time seemed more resolute than he was. With regard to the financial difficulties, real as they were, they do seem to have been exaggerated by Courveille and especially by Terraillon. The very big repayments made in May 1826 are evidence of a loss of confidence in the project on the part of the creditors, but these payments did not come about because of the risk that Champagnat would die, but because there were rumours circulating concerning disagreements among the men in charge of the project. As further evidence, in a letter to a senior Vicar General in 1827²⁵⁹ Champagnat recalled:

"The unfortunate matter of Father Courveille and the departure of Father Terraillon have put me in a very bad light with the public, who always talk without knowing the whole story."

Writing at the same time to Father Barou, Vicar General, he was even more precise:

"I am on my own here, as you know, which is giving a great deal to think about to those very persons who seemed to love the work and who were helping it. The general public, who nearly always talk without knowing the facts, are blaming me first and foremost for the departures of Father Courveille and Father Terraillon."²⁶⁰

And in 1833, recalling that dramatic situation of 1827, which had fortunately been overcome, he drew a spiritual interpretation:

"Mary did not abandon us. We gradually paid off our debts; other confreres took the place of the first ones. The costs of their upkeep are all on me. Mary is helping us, that is enough."

²⁵⁵ Ibid. He did not die until 1869.

²⁵⁶ *Life*, Ch. 14, pp. 146-151.

²⁵⁷ Annals of the Institute, year 1826, s. 57.

²⁵⁸ OM1, doc. 152, s. 13.

²⁵⁹ OM1, doc. 173, s. 6.

²⁶⁰ OM1, doc. 173, s. 16.

Although in the eyes of the Brothers Champagnat had acquired the stature of a founder, he did not for one instant entertain the idea of making the Brothers independent of the original project:

“The society of the Brothers cannot in any way be regarded as constituting the work of Mary, but only as a subsidiary branch of the Society itself.”²⁶¹

The problem of 1825-1826 therefore remained: how in practice to combine the specificity of the Brothers’ life and apostolate with the original project? The Society of Mary would only emerge from this dilemma well after the death of Champagnat through an amicable separation between the Fathers’ branch and that of the Brothers.

The collapse of 1824-1826 was in fact the demise of a Society in the form dreamed of in 1816 by Jean-Claude Courveille and also by Champagnat. Courveille did not succeed in having his charismatic authority accepted, and Champagnat had difficulty in seeing himself as a founder. As for Terraillon, with Courveille eliminated and Champagnat off the scene because of his long convalescence, it seems he had wanted to play his own hand but did not succeed. All three were reminded by the Brothers that they too had their idea of the Society – a hierarchy of functions, yes, but founded on a relationship of companionship with Champagnat as his fellow workers, the way things had been done at the very beginning.

The Hermitage of Our Lady

Marcellin Champagnat and Jean-Claude Courveille had placed their project under the title of “The Hermitage of Our Lady”, given officially, no doubt, at the time of the laying of the foundation stone in May 1824 and featuring in any case from July in the Prospectus. It was only after the dismissal of Father Courveille in 1826 that this title came to be replaced during the period 1827 to 1829 by that of “Our Lady of the Hermitage”, which gradually replaced the traditional name of the area, “Les Gauds”. Even if they left no explanation for the choice of this somewhat strange name, there is little doubt that it symbolised the spiritual association they had formed in order to bring the Society of Mary into existence in that place. As the word ‘society’ was not a suitable designation for a house, they would have substituted ‘hermitage’, resulting finally in the formula “Hermitage of Mary” or “Hermitage of Our Lady”.

The idea of ‘hermitage’ may perhaps have come from La Trappe, the monastery in Normandy reformed by Abbot de Rancé in the Seventeenth Century, and which still in the Nineteenth Century was regarded as the perfect expression of the monastic life as strongly inspired by the Desert Fathers. For de Rancé in fact, La Trappe was the best adaptation that could be made of the primitive ideal of the solitary life. And this hypothesis is all the more plausible in that in 1822 Brother Jean-Marie Granjon went to the Trappist monastery at Aiguebelle, as did Father Courveille in 1826. It was there that he formulated a theory of the Society of Mary very much inspired by the Trappist model. Besides that, in the Life of Rancé written

²⁶¹ Letter to Father Cattet, Vicar General, OM1, doc. 185.

by Dom Le Nain (1715) we read that de Rancé, before he entered La Trappe, tried to establish a ‘hermitage’²⁶² in the Pyrenees. And later, in a letter to the Bishop of Pamiers who wanted to found a monastery, he advised:

“One of the principal things will be to find the right location for the establishment. It must be in a deserted place. [...] All that is required is a small valley with a little water flowing through it, a level area of three or four acres for a garden to provide for the life and sustenance of the religious, and a little woodland.”²⁶³



25. Sister María de Agreda *Mística ciudad de Dios*. XVII c.

This description quite closely matches the location chosen for the Hermitage of Our Lady. Although Champagnat, unlike Courveille and Jean-Marie Granjon, has not left any indications of a connection with Trappists at Aiguebelle, the austerity of the period at Lavalla was quite strongly inspired by that style of monastic life. It is true that in 1824 Champagnat wanted a type of life, monastic certainly, but something less rugged. The type of formation given at the Hermitage, light on intellectual content and with its basis in manual work, was similar to the Trappist way of life as monks tilling the soil. To sum up then, there clearly was a Trappist influence at the Hermitage but interpreted differently by Courveille and Champagnat. If the word ‘hermitage’ did emerge from this, there is no documentary evidence putting the matter beyond doubt.

There is another hypothesis that can be put forward. Courveille and Champagnat would have been inspired by *The Mystical City* of

Mary of Agreda, in which that saintly Seventeenth Century Spanish religious sought to show Mary as the one announced before the ages in the mind of God, then conceived Immaculate, and finally Co-Redemptrix with Christ and Mother of the Church. In her writings, which are packed with biblical references and endless stories, she sets great store by Chapter 12 of the Apocalypse, which describes the various episodes in the battle between the Woman clothed with the Sun and the Dragon. Once her child had been born and swept up into the heavens, “the woman fled into the desert where God had prepared for her a place where she would be looked after for a period of one thousand two hundred and sixty days.”

Mary of Agreda does a long symbolic exegesis on this text (Ch. VIII s. 105): “This solitary place to which this Woman fled is that of our great Queen, she being the unique and only one endowed with sovereign holiness and exempt from all sin [...] thus she fled and took her place among creatures who are pure, in a solitude which is unique

²⁶² The present day spelling of the word in French is ‘ermitage’ but the word ‘hermitage’ was current at that time.

²⁶³ Dom Le Nain, *op.cit.*, p. 248.

beyond all others and without equal." This then is indeed a "hermitage of Our Lady" – not a place where she is alone, but one where she is surrounded by pure souls.

Many other passages showing Mary in solitude, protecting Christ's faithful ones against the demons, could be added to the collection. Certainly, Mary of Agreda hardly ever uses the word 'hermitage' but rather 'a solitary place' or 'a desert'. Nevertheless, Champagnat and Courveille could scarcely name their house the 'desert' or the 'solitude of Our Lady'. The word 'hermitage', on the contrary, being a fairly common place name, would be much more acceptable.

Could Champagnat and Courveille therefore have symbolically envisaged the valley of Les Gauds as a refuge for those saintly souls who are invited by Mary to take up the fight against Hell? This hypothesis is not at all a gratuitous one. We know that Father Colin was a great reader of Mary of Agreda and that Champagnat had *The Mystical City* in his library. But, above all, in 1827, when Champagnat was drawing lessons from his rupture with Courveille, he expressed himself in eschatological terms very rare for him (OM1, doc. 173), but close to the thought of Mary of Agreda.

"The unhappy business which took place in the one who seemed to be its leader shows clearly the terrifying efforts that the whole of Hell²⁶⁴ has constantly unleashed in the attempt to overturn this work which Satan foresees must do him so much harm. Jesus and Mary will always be the solid basis of my confidence."

Let us conclude with a third and more hazardous hypothesis. It is taken from the *Monographie de N.D. de L'Hermitage* of 1925, and calls to mind an oral tradition known in the area and related by an eighty year old man from Izieux, who met the brother gardener from the Hermitage at the end of the Nineteenth Century.

"Father Champagnat, searching for a suitable place for the construction of his main building, was carefully examining the present day site of the Hermitage. Suddenly, he spied among the rocks, and hidden behind some bushes that covered it, a statue of the Blessed Virgin, which he could not at first get hold of. Both intrigued and delighted, he ran to see the man who built wagons whose simple house, along with several others, stood on the slope above the Gier. "Lend me a ladder," he said, "I have found a treasure." "We will share it," said the man, his eyes wide at the news of this discovery by the good Father. "Oh! No," said Father Champagnat, "this is not a treasure that can be shared."

So he took the statue back to Lavalla but some days later found it again in the same spot: "Mary, visibly, had just intervened to have the good Father choose that spot as the location for the house he was planning."

The early Marist sources have no report anywhere of this tradition. On the other hand, in his discourse on the occasion of the proclamation of the heroicity of the virtues of Champagnat on 22nd June 1920, Pope Benedict XV alluded to it. (Circulars Vol. XIV, 15 August 1920, p. 386):

"The Blessed Virgin, through a statue of her which appeared, disappeared and was finally found again, was undoubtedly no stranger to the rapid multiplication

²⁶⁴ Mary of Agreda in several places speaks of the "efforts" of Lucifer or the demons.

of the early houses of the Little Brothers of Mary and to the good formation received there by the children they took in."

We should not too quickly disregard a story of this type, which does, what is more, have its realistic side. The request to the wagon-builder for a ladder seems to be at the origin of the legend. As to the story of the statue, if we are willing to leave aside the part concerning its movements from place to place, it could mean that Champagnat had found on the site traces of an ancient hermitage or what he took to be one.

This hypothesis is in no way without foundation. The 1830 memoirs of Father Bourdin (OM2, n. 754) indicate that Brother Jean-Marie Granjon, Father Champagnat's first recruit, had during the crisis of 1826: "wanted to make a cell, forge inside... The Brothers arrived for the holidays, asked where Brother J-M. was, they were forbidden to go and see him so as not to make him tired." (The forge would have been for making nails). And Brother Avit gives further details. "He built himself a hut made of branches under the cliff overhanging the spot where the great terrace was built in 1830." Jean-Marie Granjon may therefore have been recalling the inspiration which had presided over the choice of the place, while at the same time making his protest against the situation as it was at the Hermitage in 1826, which was not a Society of Mary befitting the name "Hermitage of Our Lady". And, by abandoning that name, Father Champagnat would have been of the same opinion. In his letters of 1827, he would even acknowledge, though not in as many words, that if the Society of Mary was truly willed by God then it would have to be brought into existence with other men.

Whatever can be made of these hypotheses, which could in any case be combined into one, the choice of Les Gauds as the site for the building was motivated by a spiritual experience that pointed to it as the place where the Society of Mary would be incarnated under the somewhat mysterious title of the "Hermitage of Our Lady". The house at Lavalla itself had never been given any marial title for it had only been a preparation for this foundational act. This then may well be the symbolic meaning of the story of the statue which, having been taken back to Lavalla, refused to remain there.

Father Séon, Father Champagnat and the Diocese

Now that he was the elected superior, Champagnat did not in any fundamental way reverse the evolution of the Society towards a monastic way of life. His disagreements with Father Courveille had been more over how this evolution was to be brought about than about its ultimate objective. In 1826 the Brothers began to make private vows and in 1829, in spite of a revolt by certain Brothers, Champagnat prescribed for them a habit with soutane and rabat, which made them look like the Brothers of the Christian Schools.²⁶⁵ He also prescribed a more modern method for teaching reading. The restructuring of the Brothers branch was then just about

²⁶⁵ He also prescribed stockings (long socks) made of cloth rather than hand knitted. Beside greater uniformity, this took advantage of the fact that the Hermitage was producing woven cloth in its workshops. Perhaps there was too an echo of St Aloysius Gonzaga, who himself wore cloth stockings. (*Life* by Fr. Cépari).

complete a little before the Revolution of 1830. With regard to the priests, we may wonder if, from 1827-1829 onwards, with the situation of the Brothers becoming progressively more settled, this matter did not now move to the forefront of Champagnat's concerns.

In 1827 writing to his superiors²⁶⁶ to ask their help, Champagnat thought that, for the work of establishing the Fathers, "maybe he (God) wants other men to establish it." And, even though Champagnat's role in the foundation of the Marist Fathers was to remain an important one, the initiative would indeed come from other men, particularly Father Etienne Séon, who was assigned to Champagnat by Archbishop de Pins' Council on 30th May 1827. Several young clerics (Bourdin, Pompallier, and others) were soon to follow him.²⁶⁷ Very quickly contacts with Belley were resumed. Nevertheless, Jean-Claude Colin betrayed serious reservations about what Champagnat was doing, speaking of "your work" and "your dear Brothers".²⁶⁸ From his side, in a letter Champagnat wrote on 18th December 1828 to Father Cattet, Vicar General, he gives a noteworthy insight into the way he conceived the Society of Mary.

"For the fifteen years I have been committed to the Society of Mary, whose growth is in your hands, I have never doubted that God wills this work in this age of unbelief [...] The Society of the Brothers definitely cannot be regarded as the work of Mary, but only as a branch subsidiary to the Society of Mary itself."

In the period 1828-1830, then, the Society of Mary at the Hermitage was functioning at the practical level but with no official recognition and no internal organisation for the priests' group. The same letter to Father Cattet gives us an insight into the role of the priests who were part of it and were content to be provided with their *nutritum* (food) and *vestitum* (clothing) in the same way as the Brothers. Father Séon saw to the spiritual side, looked after the ribbon factory, and from time to time helped out with the spiritual needs of the nearby parishes.²⁶⁹ Father Bourdin was in charge of the novices' classes, handwriting, arithmetic, singing, catechetics, the book depository, and the chapel. Champagnat looked after the establishments and the admission of novices. The testimony of Father Séon reveals a monastic atmosphere where equality reigned between Priests and Brothers:

"At the Hermitage we shared the Brothers' way of life in every respect. We followed a very strict rule; our Chapter of Faults was detailed and, after the confession of failures, each one would say publicly to the one accusing himself everything they had noticed about him. Father Pompallier, who had been appointed spiritual director by the Archdiocese, was very good at making rules"...

²⁶⁶ OM1, doc. 173.

²⁶⁷ OM1, doc. 175. In 1846, (OM2, doc. 625 nos. 11 and 23) Fr. Séon relates that it was he who relaunched the presence of the priests at the Hermitage by recruiting Bourdin and then Pompallier, Chanut and Forest.

²⁶⁸ Letter of 22nd May 1828. On the other hand, vis-à-vis the priests, his words are more than cordial: "I have found in my breviary a *memento* from Fr. Séon. I will guard it most carefully. I embrace you both 1000 times *in cordibus Jesu et Mariae*." The mention of this *memento* between Séon and Colin is of great importance for it reveals a spiritual relationship between the two men that dates from an earlier time.

²⁶⁹ The Hermitage had not forgotten its missionary character and was even reinforcing it.

Apparently this situation seemed satisfactory to him since on 18th March 1829²⁷⁰ Archbishop de Pins' Council authorised him "to acquire at his own expense a dwelling convenient to the Hermitage if he would like to live there as an auxiliary priest". A little later on, probably in 1830, Father Séon²⁷¹ had a complete change of attitude. In 1846 he would explain the reasons for falling out with Champagnat:

"Father Champagnat, however, was totally taken up with the branch to which he had devoted himself and [...] he was no longer giving as much thought to the priests' branch and had, so to speak, given up hope [...] Ah my dear friend, we mustn't think about it; there won't be, I believe, any other Society of Mary than that of the Brothers; the rest won't happen, don't think about it anymore. You are doing good here, and our work is giving glory to God; that has to be enough for us."

Séon hit back. He wanted to be "in a society of priests engaged in evangelisation", and this testimony of his has given rise among commentators to the idea that Champagnat had doubts as to whether the Society of Mary could be established. In fact the matter in dispute is otherwise. Towards 1830 Séon, who up to that time seemed to have accepted the aims of the Hermitage, was holding on to a Society of Mary on the Belley model while Champagnat was conscious that the Diocese of Lyon did not want missionary Marist Fathers who were tied in with Father Colin and the Diocese of Belley.²⁷²

Some "Statutes of the Society of Mary",²⁷³ written by Pompallier very probably just before the Revolution of July 1830, seem to be an attempt to reconcile the viewpoints of the Archdiocese, Champagnat and Séon. The following are some fundamental points:

Art. 5... The Society of Mary is governed by a Superior General, who is one of the priests who are chaplains of the Brothers; he is appointed for life, and on the majority of votes, by the principal leaders of the work. The convocation is presided over by the deceased superior's deputy, who also presides over the election.

Art. 7... The priest chaplains form part of the Society; they follow its constitutions and provide the Brothers with the spiritual helps of Religion.

Art. 8... If the number of priests comes to be more than is required for the needs of the Brothers, they offer their services to the respective Bishops of the dioceses where they are, to be employed for such priestly services as the Bishops may wish to confide to them. Nevertheless, these priests do not in any way cease to be part of the Society; they will always be available to return, when the need requires it, and when the Superior General requests it of them.

²⁷⁰ OM1, doc. 188.

²⁷¹ OM2, doc. 625 nos. 11 and 23.

²⁷² Séon's account (OM2, doc. 625 n. 22) recalls that Father Gardette, Father Champagnat's faithful advisor, "was also forcefully exhorting us not to think of anything other than a diocesan enterprise, saying that we must let ourselves be guided by the authorities and that it was vain imagination to be thinking of wanting to establish ourselves throughout the whole world."

²⁷³ In No. 21 of Marist Notebooks there is an account of the discovery of "Statutes of the Society of Mary" in 16 articles, from the hand of Father Pompallier, probably written in 1830 and communicated to Bishop Devie, Bishop of Belley, by Father Champagnat in 1836. (Letter No. 75)

Art. 9... Mother Houses are established to serve as novitiates or as retreat houses for the Brothers during their holidays. Each one is governed by a Brother Superior in all that pertains to temporal matters...

Art. 10. Each establishment or parish school is governed by a Brother with the title of Rector.

Art. 11. No Brother can be appointed superior of a mother house if he is not at least twenty-five years of age and does not have five years of profession.

Art. 16. It is ordinarily the Superior of the Mother House who comes to an agreement with communes that request Brothers as to a reasonable and modest amount to provide for their upkeep...

This is manifestly a Society (Article 5) with two branches and two sets of functions: the Brothers are responsible for primary education; the priests are chaplains to the Brothers. It is an egalitarian society, in which hierarchy is based solely on function. Although the Superior General is a priest, he is elected by the “principal leaders of the work”, a formula which suggests that the Brothers featured among this group of electors. Furthermore the houses are governed in temporal matters by Brothers. The Superior General is therefore little more than the supervisor of a practically autonomous society of Brothers, a sort of chaplain-in-chief.

In spite of its paradoxical and somewhat utopian character, this text is a quite good reflection of the reality of the Hermitage from 1825 to the early 1830's, as understood by the Diocese and Champagnat. In first place come the Brothers,²⁷⁴ and the priests necessary for their formation, with the other priests being available for mission work in the surrounding areas, once they had received authorisation from the diocese. It is understandable why, in the long run, a situation such as this would have been quite unsatisfying to Father Séon and the young priests at the Hermitage.

²⁷⁴ The word “Brother” seems still to have a fairly general sense, as if the Hermitage was as much a training centre for primary teachers as a novitiate for religious.

7.

FROM THE “THE CENTRE OF UNITY” TO SOCIETY OF MARY BELLEY-STYLE (1830-1840)

The Society of Mary – the Colinian model prevails

Having been appointed Superior of the Belley college-seminary at Easter 1829, Jean-Claude Colin, took up his heavy task of preventing Bishop Devie turning the Marists into a simple diocesan society. At the Hermitage the Statutes that were commented on in the previous section reflected a balance that was teetering on the brink of collapse, for at the start of 1830 there was an intensification in the exchanges of letters between the Hermitage and Belley, the aim of which was the establishment of a “centre of unity”. The Archdiocesan offices in Lyon, however, were not in favour:²⁷⁵

“We cannot get anywhere, came the reply, with these priests. So, the only way for us to secure our union and for the Society to expand outside of our diocese, is for the Pope to intervene or for the Bishops to come to an agreement.”

At the same time, no doubt under pressure from his young priests, Champagnat took steps for the house to become a mission centre, and the Archdiocese agreed to his request. Thus, on 12th February 1830, he obtained authorisation once again for the “four priests of our Society in this diocese”, Séon, Bourdin, Pompallier and himself, to grant absolution in reserved cases, given that they were often being requested to go out on supply or give retreats. Thus on 31st March 1830, the priests of the Hermitage were given authorisation for the whole of the diocese, on condition that they not give retreats or preach missions without special authorisation. (OM1, docs. 211, 215)

A decisive event – the Revolution of 27th-29th July 1830

The effects of this important change at the Hermitage were in jeopardy because of the Paris Revolution of 1830, which overthrew the Bourbons, launched yet another wave of violent anticlericalism, and prevented Champagnat securing the doc-

²⁷⁵ OM1, doc. 213. Letter of Father Cattet dated 18th February 1830.

ument of legal authorisation for his congregation, which then only awaited the King's signature. (OM1, doc. 218). It was a catastrophe, too, for the Administrator, Archbishop de Pins, a strong *légitimiste* (supporter of the Bourbons as the legitimate monarchs of France). Although as an event it was brief and localised, it had a considerable number of more general consequences. In France in the short term it saw the installation of liberal or anticlerical personnel in the public administration. In the longer term, it was the beginning of a policy of the marginalisation of Catholicism, the final result of which would be the separation of Church and State in 1905. In Europe, the revolutionary contagion spread to other nations, notably Italy, where Pius IX, although a liberal, was driven out of Rome in 1848.

Nevertheless, the Marists took advantage of the weakened state of the Church authorities in order to accomplish a bold move. A letter of Jean-Claude Colin dated 22nd October informs us that he had just been elected as the centre of unity in Belley. The diocesan authorities had only given tacit approval. The same letter invited the priests at the Hermitage to choose for themselves a superior. They would receive the plan of the society and were to model their rule of life on the one in use at Belley. Finally, between 3rd and 8th December, Father Champagnat was elected by his confreres as Provincial Rector in the diocese of Lyon.

The Archdiocese accepted this *fait accompli* and on 18th December 1830 Father Cattet, in the name of Archbishop de Pins (OM1, doc. 226), appointed Champagnat to the position of "Titular Superior of the Society of Mary", making it clear that as far as Archbishop de Pins was concerned Champagnat, in his capacity as Director of the Hermitage, had already been "de facto Superior". The following year, the Act of Consecration to Mary made by the Marists at Belley on 8th September 1831, was like the renewal of the consecration first made at Fourvière. (OM1, doc. 236) The Brothers had been completely left out of these negotiations, and also out of the election of the provisional Superior. Champagnat's election as Superior of the Society of Mary in Lyon was scant compensation for the victory of the Colinian concept of the Society of Mary.

Between 1831 and 1836 the Society of Mary in Lyon made scarcely any headway in getting established, apparently because the Marist Fathers, who had moved out of the Hermitage to become assistants to Father Rouchon at Valbenoîte, near Saint Etienne, found themselves in a delicate position the ins and outs of which are difficult to grasp.²⁷⁶ The diocesan authorities themselves seemed to be divided. Champagnat's cause appears to have been supported by Vicar General Cattet and Pompallier, while Cholleton was backing Jean-Claude Colin and the priests at Valbenoîte. The lists of preachers for retreats at the Hermitage during those difficult years²⁷⁷ seem to point to a cooling of relationships between the Hermitage and the rest of the Society, because in the years 1832-1834 the Brothers' retreats were preached by Jesuits and not by Marist Fathers.

Nevertheless, from 1834 onwards the situation began to evolve. Champagnat, in order to get the priests at Valbenoîte out of a situation that was going nowhere, offered to hand over to them the house at Grange Payre (OM1, doc. 321), near the Hermitage,

²⁷⁶ See *Letters*, Vol. 2 p. 457 for the biographical note on Father Rouchon.

²⁷⁷ Reported by Brother François in his Retreat Notes No. 1 (AFM 5101.302) p. 121.

and Colin appreciated this selfless gesture. For his part, Pompallier, now established in Lyon, was looking for ways for the Society to overcome its divided situation, but it was by conducting a policy favouring the interests of the diocese of Lyon and partly opposed to the policy of Colin. During those same years he founded two Third Orders, one for men, the Tertiary Brothers, and the other for women, the Young Christian Ladies. The first was not to last long, but out of the second group came the pioneers of what later became the Missionary Sisters of the Society of Mary (SMSM).

Having resumed negotiations with Rome in the years 1833-1836, Jean-Claude Colin tried at first to have the Society approved with its four branches. Rome refused absolutely. The breakthrough in the case eventually came when the Society agreed to take on the Vicariate of Oceania – with Pompallier as Vicar Apostolic – in return for a canonical recognition limited to the Marist Fathers only. By the decree *Omnium gentium* of 29th April 1836, the priests were canonically constituted as the Society of Mary. On 24th September 1836 Jean-Claude Colin was canonically elected Superior General of the Fathers by the twenty Marist aspirants, among them Champagnat, but in reality Colin was responsible also for the Brothers, the Sisters and the Third Order. These groups had been left to one side by Rome's decree of approbation, but they were not prepared to give up their right to also be part of the Society of Mary.²⁷⁸

So, from 1836 onwards in Lyon-Belley the term “Society of Mary” signified three different realities. Canonically, it was the priests’ group alone; spiritually, it was still a collection of four branches all claiming a common identity; historically, however, each of these societies already had its own long and varied past. Jean-Claude Colin would have a great deal of work to do to sort this situation out, particularly with Champagnat and the Brothers. All the same, at that moment, the decision by Rome was seen as a highly significant first step towards recognition of the Society in its entirety, something we now know was never going to happen. In the meantime, the mission to Oceania was a modest start, for at the end of 1836, along with the new Bishop and four missionary priests, the departing group also included two Brothers from the Hermitage. A third Brother, Joseph Xavier Luzy from Belley and had not done his formation at the Hermitage, although he did pronounce his vows there before the departure of the group.

A question remains – the integration of the Brothers’ branch

During this period the situation of the Brothers remained an important question for, since Champagnat had not obtained official authorisation from the government, the diocese was looking to unite them with the Marianists or with the Clerics of Saint Viateur (OM1, docs 255-259). Eventually an agreement arrived at with Father Mazelier, Superior of the Brothers of Christian Instruction of Valence, provided an acceptable solution. Brothers from the Hermitage threatened with military service would go to stay with Father Mazelier, whose congregation had authorisation but did not have many vocations. As for Jean-Claude Colin, he had little appreciation for the tradition, which went back to Lavalla days, whereby Brothers who did manual work and Brothers who taught were all in together in the one entity. He wanted

²⁷⁸ J. Coste, *Lectures on Society of Mary History, 1786-1854*, Rome 1965, pp. 88-104.

to set up a distinction between the two by establishing a category of Joseph Brothers who would be responsible for manual tasks (OM1, doc. 246). Champagnat and his Brothers were having none of that!

Nevertheless, Jean-Claude Colin who before 1830 would speak of “your Brothers”, and later of “the Brothers”, at some stage a little before 1836 was recognising “our Brothers” as a branch of the Society of Mary.²⁷⁹ At the Hermitage they were becoming resigned to a Society of Mary centred on Belley, and Champagnat, who could scarcely get enough priests to meet the staffing needs of the Hermitage, had taken the decision to hand over some key positions to the Brothers. The Marist Fathers, in the meantime, regarded it as their duty to provide the chaplains and preachers the Brothers needed. In fact, with Fathers Matricon and Besson a real continuity was established, for Father Matricon represented exactly the type of priest Champagnat had wanted for the Society of Mary. Born at Le Bessat in 1803, he had received lessons in Latin at Lavalla in 1821. Having become a priest in 1828, he entered the Hermitage in 1835, where he lived the same way of life as the Brothers until his death in 1882.²⁸⁰ Father Besson, likewise, spent thirty years as chaplain to the Brothers at the Hermitage and later at La Bégude.

It is true that the problems encountered by the Brothers in Oceania, where some of the Marist Fathers at times treated them just as pious servants, were a perpetuation of the Belley tradition, since at Belley the Brothers had hardly ever been thought of other than as assistants employed in manual tasks. All the same, it would be important to remember that in the missions, where everything had to be built from the ground up, manual skills were indispensable, and were held in quite high regard by the native peoples. Even Champagnat was not exempt from a somewhat limited vision of the Society. On 27th May 1838,²⁸¹ when he was replying to a letter from Pompallier, the only news he passed on was news from the Hermitage:

“Mary shows very clearly how well she protects the Hermitage. [...] Without that holy name, without that miraculous name, people would long ago have ceased talking about our Society. Mary, there you have the sum-total of the resources of our Society.”

Fundamentally then, the Society was still incomplete, not only because this was Rome’s wish, but also because among the members of both branches, Fathers as well as Brothers, the conviction that they were the real heart of the Society was interfering with the dynamic of union. Mystically the Society of Mary was one, but historically it had been established around two poles. Only one of those two had been recognised – and even that one only in part – since the Marist Sisters still remained on the sidelines as did the Third Order in Lyon.

²⁷⁹ *A contrario*, Pompallier in his correspondence speaks constantly of “our Brothers” and uses the expression “the whole Society”. Furthermore, it seems that apart from Séon, all the priests who had been formed at the Hermitage thought along the same lines as Pompallier.

²⁸⁰ *Letters of M.J.B. Champagnat*, Vol. 2, Rome, 1987, pp. 9 and 375.

²⁸¹ *Letters*, Vol. 1, p. 391, doc. 194.

The institutional revolution of 1836 – the Society of the Brothers of Mary

A look at the way the Brothers' vows evolved is a good way of seeing just how much the recognition granted by Rome in 1836 brought significant benefits to the Hermitage.

From 11th October 1826 and 3rd April 1836²⁸² entries made in the Register of Marist Temporary Vows record the vows which the Brothers made "**secretly**²⁸³ [...] **to the superiors of the said Society of Mary according to its statutes and ends**",²⁸⁴ which means that the Society of Mary of the Hermitage did indeed exist, but that it had no elected superior. As for the Society's "statutes and aims", what fundamental text do these go back to?

No sooner had the canonical erection of the Society of the Marist Fathers been completed between 20th and 24th September 1836, than Fathers Colin and Convers preached a retreat to the Brothers at the Hermitage. This was between 3rd and 10th October. Father Champagnat gave the talks on the religious life (*Life* Ch. 19, p. 202). On the last day the Brothers, both perpetually professed and temporarily professed, signed their names in the Vow Register. It was their first time to do so as a group, and it was done according to a new formula:

*"We, the undersigned, **Little Brothers of Mary**, [...] have freely and voluntarily made, with the permission of our Reverend Father Superior, whose signature also appears below, and **with the ceremonies in use in the Society of the Brothers of Mary**, the three perpetual vows of poverty, chastity and obedience **to the Superior of the said Society, according to the Constitutions and ends of the order.** [...]"*

Now the vows are no longer secret; there is no question any more of Society of Mary; there is now just one Superior, Champagnat. The "statutes and ends" of the Society of Mary have become the "Constitutions and ends of the order". The expression "Little Brothers of Mary" has begun to displace "Brothers of Mary".

There was no longer any place for secrecy for, with the Society of Mary now having a status recognised by Rome, the Brothers had become its indirect beneficiaries. As for the "constitutions and ends of the order", these were taking up an expression found in the Pope's letter in Latin dated 25th January 1822 (OM1, doc. 69, n. 4): ... "*Haec sunt proposita nostra ut nobis assignantur in constitutionibus jam confectis*" and "*Has enim constitutiones habemus, ex nullo libro aut ex nullis aliis constitutionibus excerptas*". The letter from Courville at Aiguebelle²⁸⁵ in June 1826 also spoke of the "Constitutions of the Order". In all these cases the order in question is the Society of Mary, and if the Marist Brothers were explicitly seeing themselves as just one branch of the Society of Mary with a single Superior, they

²⁸² The first professions of the Marist Sisters took place on 6th September 1826. The ceremonial was the same as that of the Marist Brothers (OM1, doc. 161, and Rule of the Little Brothers of Mary of 1837).

²⁸³ The vows could not be public because Archbishop de Pins could not authorise a new diocesan congregation.

²⁸⁴ They were signed by Champagnat, Brother Bernard, Brother Antoine and Brother François. After 1830 the signature of Champagnat no longer appears.

²⁸⁵ OM1, doc. 152, n. 15.

were laying claim to an earlier Constitution by which, despite the recent decisions by Rome, they were irrevocably attached to a Society of Mary, in essence mystical, but as yet not fully realised.

There exists, however, an important discrepancy between the record in the Register and the Ceremony of Perpetual Vows:

RECORD IN THE VOW REGISTER	FORMULA FOR VOWS IN THE 1837 RULE
<p>“We, the undersigned Little Brothers of Mary, declare that we have freely and voluntarily made, with the permission of our Superior, whose signature also appears below, and with the ceremonies in use in the Society of the Brothers of Mary, the three perpetual vows of poverty, chastity and obedience to the Superior of the said Society, according to the Constitutions and ends of the Order”...</p>	<p>“Prostrate at your feet, most Holy and most Adorable Trinity [...] I freely and voluntarily make the three (perpetual) vows of Poverty, Chastity and Obedience to the Superior of the said Society of Mary, according to the Constitutions and ends of the Order. Deign, O my God, to accept my vows and my devotion; and you, Mary, my tender Mother, receive me among your cherished children. Amen.”</p>

According to the record in the Vow Register, the vows are made to Father Champagnat whilst in the Ritual they are made to Father Jean-Claude Colin. Here we have a highly ambiguous situation. We could even speak of latent opposition for, although it had occurred without any overt opposition, this ambiguous change in wording had generated some anxiety and even some resentment. Further to that, Brother Avit and Brother Jean-Baptiste²⁸⁶ report a strange tradition in regard to the election of the Superior of the Society of Mary:

“Several of the Fathers wanted to nominate our holy founder. He gave them to understand that having responsibility for the Brothers was for him a quite heavy load. All the same, he accepted the title of Assistant. The younger of the Colins was retained in the position of General.”

It is a way of suggesting that Champagnat was the man more deserving of the title of Superior and that fundamentally Jean-Claude Colin (“the younger of the Colins”!) had a less legitimate claim to it.²⁸⁷ In the *Life* of Father Champagnat (Part 1) where Chapter 19 develops the theme of “Father Champagnat’s contribution to that undertaking” (the Marist Fathers), Brother Jean-Baptiste goes to great lengths never to use the expression “Society of Mary” when speaking of the Marist Fathers.²⁸⁸ It is his way of discreetly affirming that the Society of Mary could not be reduced to just the Society of the Fathers.

It seems too that 1836 had set off a controversy in regard to the two names being used concurrently, “Brothers of Mary” or “Little Brothers of Mary”. We find traces

²⁸⁶ *Annals*, Vol. 1, n. 136, p. 172; *Life* Part 1, Ch. 19, p. ___.

²⁸⁷ In many places in his *Annals of the Institute*, Brother Avit gives further evidence of a muted hostility towards the Marist Fathers which may have its origins in 1836.

²⁸⁸ Instead he uses terms such as “the congregation of the Marist Fathers”, “the Society of the Fathers”, “the work of the Marist Fathers”, the Fathers of Belley”, the “branch of the Fathers”, and the “Society of the Marist Priests.”

of it in an instruction on “The Spirit of the Institute” reported three times by Brother Jean-Baptiste²⁸⁹ which stresses the importance of the adjective “little” as symbolising the authentic Marist spirit. The debate was brought to a close with the 1851 decree of civil recognition, which ratified the name “Little Brothers of Mary”, whilst the designation “Marist Brothers” had become the one in current use.²⁹⁰ In 1903, however, the congregation was definitively recognised by Rome as the “Marist Brothers of the Schools”, no doubt in reference to the Brothers of the Christian Schools, but also perhaps to keep the word “Marist”.

The canonical recognition of the Marist Fathers did not therefore go off as harmoniously as has previously been thought, and the Brothers seem only to have accepted it in the hope of a more official union, all the while feeling that they were something rather more than just a branch of the Marist tree.

Jean-Claude Colin’s hesitations in regard to the Brothers (1836-1840)

Having officially become the Superior and Founder of a society of Priests, and unofficially the Superior of a branch of Brothers and a branch of Sisters, Jean-Claude Colin took his responsibilities seriously.²⁹¹ On 18th September 1837 he had Champagnat place the branch of the Brothers in his hands, only to then reappoint him as their Superior (OM1, doc. 416, p. 950). But, starting on 27th October 1837 he precipitated a crisis by declaring to him: “I am planning a major reform in the government and management of the Brothers and I am expecting from you a truly religious obedience.”²⁹² In the meantime, all the Brothers, including those recruited by the Marist Fathers, would be going to the Hermitage to make their profession and Colin would select some from among their number who would go to help the Fathers.²⁹³ Many of the Brothers, however, were reluctant to move to the Fathers’ houses.²⁹⁴ As well, Jean-Claude in a letter to Champagnat dated 22nd February 1839 (*Colin, sup*, doc. 60), formulated his own theory of the Society and of the place of the Brothers in it:



26. Portrait of Colin

²⁸⁹ In the manuscripts “Ecrits 3” pp. 123-130, “Ecrits 4” pp. 349-356 and the Foreword to *Avis, Leçons, Sentences, par. 3*)

²⁹⁰ OM1 doc. 153. We find “Marist Brothers” in the document of spiritual affiliation given to Father Courveille by the Trappist Abbey at Aiguebelle in 1826.

²⁹¹ He took even longer over the Third Order.

²⁹² Gaston Lessard, S.M., “Colin sup”, *Documents pour l’étude du généralat de Jean-Claude Colin (1836-1854, Rome 2007, Vol. 1, doc. 21.*

²⁹³ See J. Coste S.M., *Lectures on Society of Mary History (Marist Fathers), 1786-1854, Rome, 1965, pp. 182-183.*

²⁹⁴ And especially about sending Brothers to Verdélais in the diocese of Bordeaux.

“Remember that Mary, our Mother, [...] devoted herself entirely to the needs of the Apostles;²⁹⁵ [...] in my opinion, a Brother working in the service of the priests of the Society does twenty times more good than he would employed in a commune, where, thanks be to God, the means for instructing the young are not lacking these days. But you have never been able to properly understand this order and this aim of the Society.”²⁹⁶

These statements from Colin show clearly the weight of the original project as expressed in the Fourvière Consecration of 1816 – to evangelise the world in imitation of the Apostles under the auspices of Mary. Champagnat was in agreement with him on this fundamental point, but he believed that, through their catechetical work, the Brothers also were invested with the apostolic ministry. For him teaching was not some secondary task but, on the contrary, an eminently strategic mission since, by providing a basic Christian formation, the schools would enable the priestly ministry to be effective. Fundamentally, Colin was right. Champagnat and he did not understand the Society of Mary, or even the Church, in the same way. Colin’s was a classical ecclesiology, whilst Champagnat’s vision saw an apostle, lay in every respect, who was worthily engaged in the teaching of Christian Doctrine. So, once again, but in a sharper fashion in 1839, we see revealed a divergence that was first manifested in 1816 when Champagnat insisted, “We must have Brothers”.

These menacing proposals from Colin are further evidence of his profound conviction, namely, that he was the man chosen to bring about the Society of Mary as it had been envisaged in 1816. Fortunately, and more often than not, this certainty was counterbalanced by an attentiveness to the signs of the times and a real prudence. Thus, on the question of the Brothers, he was to quickly reverse his position, envisaging instead “a group of Brothers destined solely for the service of the Priests” (letter of 14th May 1838). Then, on the occasion of the Marist Fathers’ retreat at Belley from 28th August to 3rd September 1839, the professed Fathers, meeting in a mini-Chapter, decided on the separation of the Marist Brothers and the coadjutor Brothers (to be called Joseph Brothers), with the younger Fathers tipping the balance in favour of this solution.²⁹⁷

But the rapid deterioration in the health of Father Champagnat was constituting a more serious problem and, on 12th October 1839, an electoral assembly of ninety professed Brothers elected Brother François as Director General, and his two Assistants, Brothers Jean-Baptiste and Louis-Marie.²⁹⁸ In January 1840 Jean-Claude Colin proposed a collection of 18 “Articles relating to the Brothers.”²⁹⁹ These recognised two categories of Brothers, Coadjutor Brothers and Teaching Brothers, wearing different habits, but governed by a Father Provincial having authority over a Brother Director General, who would be able to choose for himself two assistants.³⁰⁰

²⁹⁵ Probably a reference to *The Mystical City of Mary* of Agreda.

²⁹⁶ And he invited Champagnat to go on retreat for three days and humble himself before God “for having up to now failed to carry out His Will in certain matters.”

²⁹⁷ “Colin sup” I, doc. 41. Bernard Bourtot, *The Coadjutor Brothers of the Society of Mary under the Generalates of Colin and Favre, 1836-1885*, Documents SM no. 57, March 2001, pp. 8-9; J. Coste, *Lectures on the History of the Society of Mary*, p. 183.

²⁹⁸ In theory, an appointment to be made after consultation with the Brothers.

²⁹⁹ J. Coste and G. Lessard, *Autour de la règle*, Rome, 1991, doc. 2 p. 14.

³⁰⁰ This is a little different from what was done at the election of Brother François, as if these articles had been written before that event.

With this arrangement foreshadowing a separation of the property of the Brothers from that of the Fathers, Champagnat, by a deed executed before a notary on 22nd March 1840, set up with six of the principal Brothers of the Hermitage a civil society, which would be the legal heir to all his property.³⁰¹ Not one Father was included in this entity, not even Father Matricon, who was chaplain at the Hermitage. In a letter to Father Champagnat dated 1st April 1840 (*“Colin sup.”* 1, doc. 149) Father Colin complained about the contract being drawn up at Saint-Chamond in the office of Maître Mioche instead of at Lyon in the office the Marist Fathers’ notary. Again on 24th April 1840, Colin was looking at handing over the branch of the Marist Brothers to the Diocese of Lyon in the hope that the government of the Brothers would then be entrusted to the care of a Marist Father.

Between 1836 and 1840, therefore, relationships between the Marist Fathers and the Marist Brothers had been a laborious, if not to say conflictual, affair. The nub of the problem is clear. As far as Colin was concerned the Brothers had not been envisaged in the original project and had not been recognised by Rome. And furthermore, since they were refusing to act as assistants to the Fathers, as far as he could see, their apostolic usefulness was debatable. Their relative legitimacy derived solely from their attachment to Champagnat. Certainly he had been a Marist from the very beginning, but his enterprise had been brought into existence within the framework of the diocese of Lyon. It is true that in 1837, by requiring Champagnat to resign his position as Superior of the Brothers and then reappointing him, Jean-Claude Colin had given recognition to this work. But the difficulties that had followed were now making him doubt if the Will of God lay in maintaining this link.

The Spiritual Testament, prepared in accordance with Champagnat’s instructions by Brothers François and Louis-Marie, and then read publicly in his presence on 18th May 1840, was intended as Champagnat’s unequivocal response to those doubts:

“The Superior General of the Fathers, being also the Superior of the Brothers, is to be the centre of unity for all [...] His spirit is mine, his will is mine. I consider this full accord and submission to be the base and the support of the Society of the Brothers of Mary.”

A last encounter between Colin and Champagnat on 24th May³⁰² succeeded in smoothing over their remaining difficulties.³⁰³ Champagnat’s death on 6th June 1840 set the seal on their recovered union and established a new situation, as Brothers François, Louis-Marie and Jean-Baptiste, as yet inexperienced, needed an *alter ego* for Father Champagnat.

Father Colin backed down therefore, but his doubts concerning a lasting union had still not been removed. He would thus preside over the destinies of the branch of the Brothers up to 1845, and remained their protector up to the end of his Gen-

³⁰¹ AFM, Cahier des Annales de l’Hermitage. Archives départementales de la Loire, archives notariées de maître Mioche (5^E_VT 1233_23).

³⁰² *“Colin sup.”* Doc. 176 and *Life* p. 244.

³⁰³ “He (Champagnat) spoke for a long while with Father Colin; commended the Brothers to his care, and finished the exchange by asking pardon, in great humility, for any inadvertent failures on his part,” says Brother Jean-Baptiste.

eralate in 1854. The legal authorisation of the Brothers in 1851 would allow them to set up their own structure by establishing definitive Constitutions. In 1858 Brother François began negotiations with Rome which in 1863 resulted in a Decree of Praise. This was granted in spite of opposition from the Archdiocese of Lyon and a group within the Marist Fathers who wanted to retain control over the Brothers. Full recognition by Rome would not come until 1903.

The history of the origins of the Marist Brothers is therefore to be located under the sign of a twofold inspiration, a source of spiritual riches but also of numerous difficulties. Aware both of his own path and of a compelling link with the Marist Project, Champagnat never wanted to choose one in preference to the other. Which is why, even though he would willingly concede that the Brothers were not part of the original project, he still considered them an essential element. Never would he have considered the Hermitage the Mother House just of the Brothers, but always as the seat of a missionary society comprising Fathers and Brothers united in a universal project, a project nourished by an ecclesiology inspired by the early Church in which, under the auspices of Mary, the Apostles were the forerunners not just of the priests, but of all who spread the Word of God. In short, Church as the People of God, in intuitive anticipation of Vatican II.

Champagnat's developmental strategy had not looked to Rome for its support but to the diocese. Up to 1830 this strategy worked almost perfectly, and had it not been for the July Revolution,³⁰⁴ the Champagnat model of the Society of Mary may well have had a different destiny. The failure of the Hermitage vision was only relative. Because of their number, their conviction that they were members of the Society of Mary by right, and the particular conception they had of their apostolic mission, the Brothers had made their integration into the Society both indispensable and yet impossible. At the time of Champagnat's death in 1840 the unity of the Brothers and the Fathers was in part artificial, because, as the Brothers saw it, their origins were in January 1817 at Lavalla and had very little to do with the Consecration at Fourvière in July 1816.

³⁰⁴ Which had prevented the Association of the Little Brothers of Mary from receiving its legal authorisation.

8.

THE MARIST BROTHERS AS AN EDUCATIONAL SOCIETY

In the period 1820-1824 Lavalla was already a small formation centre receiving both novices and boarders - some of them studying Latin – and everyone living all in together with the Brothers. During the winter months, children from the hamlets would bring their provisions and stay in the house during the week.³⁰⁵ Homeless children wandering the countryside alone or in groups would quite often join the more stable population, but generally did not stay long. The house also served as a book depository for the textbooks and stationery items (paper, pens)³⁰⁶ being used by the young men in formation and by the Brothers' schools.

The construction in 1824-1825 of the house of the Hermitage, which was capable of accommodating 150 persons, was initially an extension of that still tentative arrangement which, according to the 1824 Prospectus, placed the Little Brothers of Mary under the protection of the Archdiocese.³⁰⁷

The battle for an authentically Christian education

As has already been noted in various chapters, Champagnat's political sympathies lay towards the Ultras. This was linked to his concern to fight against educational practices which in his judgement were inadequate or dangerous. It seems that after 1826 his political stance evolved towards something more moderate but on educational matters his convictions did not change. Between 1830 and 1833 his work was to come under attack, but his prudence and skill enabled him to weather these storms without any great damage.³⁰⁸

³⁰⁵ The famous table in Champagnat's room, with its numerous drawers and only capable of seating quite small people, seems to have been for the use of these children who were called "caméristes".

³⁰⁶ See CM 31 pp. 84-86.

³⁰⁷ P. Zind, *Bienheureux Champagnat*, p. 246. No mention is made of the University.

³⁰⁸ Page 550 of the *Life* (Ch. 24) outlines for us a veritable strategy: "If the cause of religion is to triumph during persecutions and if the opposition of the wicked to the works of God is to be frustrated, two means [...] The first is to gain time [...]. The second is to engage in passive resistance by the exercise of patience"...

In any event, politics only occupied a very small part of his thinking. His real concern was about what would later come to be called dechristianisation. For example, in 1840 when replying to a letter from the parish priest of Pré-Saint Gervais in Paris, who no doubt had been describing the spiritual poverty of his parishioners, Champagnat admitted to him that “the evil [is] not so frightful in our area” but he lamented that because of the lack of manpower they would not be able “to keep the contagion from becoming almost general.”³⁰⁹ Other letters, it is true, have a more optimistic tone. In 1838³¹⁰ he acknowledged, “Here in Paris there is an excellent core of good Christians. How I wish that our country folk who think they are such good Christians, could see how respectfully these people behave in church.” In Letter No. 194 (27th May 1838) he notes,

“I have made all my visits, and run all my errands in my soutane without anyone insulting me; no one has even called me a Jesuit” [...] “People in the capital are far more religious than one might think” [...] “Religion will not die out in France yet, it has too much depth and strength.”

And then Marcellin Champagnat, unlike certain other founders, did not leave any anti-revolutionary diatribes. On the contrary, the texts we have are almost silent on those events, perhaps because his family experience had led him to have a more nuanced view of the Revolution. In addition, like many Catholics of his day he saw the Revolution as the consequence of a much earlier disruption, the Reformation. Its encouragement of freedom of investigation, had destroyed the principle of authority, and this in its turn had led to loss of faith and the breakdown of order. Hence, Marcellin Champagnat’s entire educational system was founded on the restoration of the principle of authority.

At the level of education properly so called, the task of the Brothers, as he conceived it, was essentially evangelical. In his letter to Brother Barthélemy on 21st January 1830 we read:

“I also know that you have many children in your school; you will consequently have many copies of your virtues, because the children will model themselves on you, and will certainly follow your example. What a wonderful and sublime occupation you have! You are constantly among the very people with whom Jesus Christ was so delighted to be, since he expressly forbade his disciples to prevent children from coming to him. [...] What a reception you will have in your turn, from this divine and generous master [...] Tell your children that Jesus and Mary love them all very much: those who are good because they resemble Jesus Christ who is infinitely good; those who are not yet good, because they will become so. [...] Tell them that I love them very much too”...

Letter 19 (3rd January 1831) has a more militant tone:

“You have in your hands the prices of the blood of Jesus Christ. After God, your many children will owe their salvation to you. [...] Exert yourself, spare nothing to form their young hearts to virtue; make them realise that without virtue, without piety, without fear of God, they will never be happy; there is no peace for the wicked. That only God can make them happy, that it was for him alone that they were created.”

³⁰⁹ Letters, n. 339, 3rd May 1840.

³¹⁰ Letters, n. 183.

The educator is therefore another Christ, who by his example, but also by his authority and his knowledge of doctrine, awakens his children to virtue. Virtue was their guarantee of happiness and of salvation. This was far removed from a formalistic perspective which only required the child to master the letter of the catechism. It was likewise far removed from an instrumentalist concept of the teacher as one engaged in teaching by rote learning. No, it would be by his good example combined with his catechism lessons that the Brother would bring about the children's conversion.

Catechism as the foundation of the school

From very early on Father Champagnat gave pride of place to the teaching of catechism. The memory of one of the lessons he gave during his holidays from the seminary has been preserved.³¹¹ Using an apple to represent the earth he explained to the children that there were people living all over its surface like tiny insects. At the opposite end of the earth there were unfortunate people living like animals, and missionaries would go there to teach them their catechism. At the end of the lesson he divided up the apple and gave each child a share.³¹²

This anecdote, where we see cosmography being used to teach catechism, gives us a good idea of the way the Founder thought about the teaching of secular subjects, which should be used for the indirect teaching of catechism. Three examples are preserved for us in the *Life*. In the first, while visiting a class during a lesson on drawing and geometry, he saw that the children had a good knowledge of drawing to scale and could measure the earth. He then invited them to also measure Heaven, that is, by knowing the commandments and putting them into practice. On another visit he found the children doing a history lesson on the reign of Clovis,³¹³ which occasioned reflections on "the strength and power of prayer." During a Geography lesson on the capitals and famous cities of Asia he recalled that Jerusalem, a city still at that time in the hands of enemies of the faith, had kept intact the sepulchre of Christ, illustrating the words of Scripture: "You shall reign in the midst of your enemies".³¹⁴

Chapter 20 of the *Life of the Founder*,³¹⁵ with its title "His zeal for the glory of God and the salvation of souls", contains several anecdotes on his catechetical zeal, stopping in the street to ask the children questions, spending hours teaching catechism to the children who were minding sheep or working in the fields. While on a journey to Paris, probably at a wayside coaching house, he encountered a young boy begging for money. He gave him a sou (a small coin) if he would promise to learn his catechism.³¹⁶ He would often repeat:

³¹¹ *Annals of the Institute*, Vol. 1 p. 18; *Life* pp. 21-25, 31.

³¹² This lesson was a determining factor in the vocation of the young Epalle who later became a missionary bishop in Oceania.

³¹³ *Life* p. 495.

³¹⁴ Psalm 110; *Life* p. 596.

³¹⁵ Part II, pp. 490-508.

³¹⁶ *Life*, p. 509.

"I cannot see a child without feeling the urge to teach him his catechism, without wanting to let him know how much Jesus Christ has loved him and how much he should, in turn, love the divine Saviour."³¹⁷

This obsession of Champagnat's with catechism was not always so readily picked up by his disciples. Some young Brothers thought that too much time was being given to catechism with not enough time left for the secular subjects,³¹⁸ and, what is more, that the Brothers of the Christian Schools (the obligatory reference point) only taught catechism once a day. Champagnat had therefore to argue:

"It is quite likely that if the Venerable Abbé de la Salle were founding his Institute today, he would require his Brothers to teach catechism twice a day. Indeed, at the time he founded the Brothers of the Christian Schools more than a hundred and fifty years ago, parents were eminently religious and taught their children themselves. All the Brothers had to do in their schools was to put the finishing touches on the instruction received in the family. Today, unfortunately, the situation is very different."

In actual fact, Jean-Baptiste de la Salle had already thought the parents were too deficient in the knowledge and practice of their Christian faith. The intransigence that Champagnat displayed on this matter of catechism was reinforced by his experience of the inadequate catechetical instruction he had received as a child during the time of the Revolution, and his fear of the rising tide of post-revolutionary irreligiousness that was drawing its strength from the Enlightenment ideal of the Rights of Man, competition from the State, and society's reservations about religion. With the Revolution of 1830 these forces of competition or resistance, which had been held in check during the Restoration period, were now enjoying their moment of triumph. An ever widening gap was developing between the aims of the civil society and the aims of the Church.

It is true that by fitting his catechetical project in with the aspirations of society, and by accepting, though not without misgivings, that education under the auspices of the State was breaking free of its catechetical matrix, Champagnat was engaged in a subtle adaptation of the ancient model and even, through his focus on the rural areas and small towns, was making his contribution towards its renewal and completion. He was, all the same, highly aware of the dangers of that position, for in his eyes this congregation of his was much more than simply a competent and successful educational society. No, it was the advance guard of a new Church, marial and apostolic, prepared and ready for the battles that were to come before the end times.

Formation also for adolescents

As he was receiving numerous adolescents who, after a short novitiate, were being sent out to the schools to do the cooking – and also to get up to all kinds of silly behaviour and teenage pranks – Champagnat took an interest in this age group, resulting in this strongly worded message to his unhappy Brother Directors:

³¹⁷ *Life*, p. 492.

³¹⁸ *Life*, pp. 503-504.

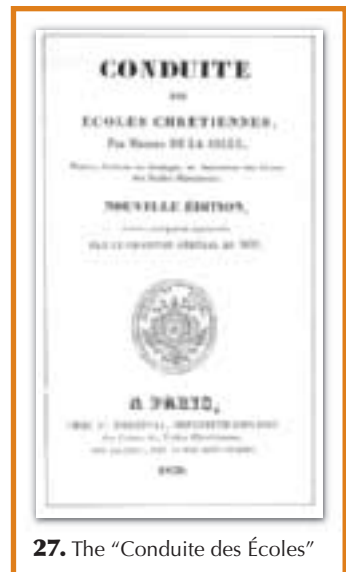
“My dear Brothers, don’t be surprised if those who are only fifteen or twenty years old do not match, in their exercises of piety, the fervour and devotion that you have. This age is the most critical period in life; it is the time then the passions begin to make themselves felt and wage a cruel war against man, which finishes only with death. [...] It is an age which takes its toll of all men and when even those who are naturally good and pious scarcely feel the consolations of grace and piety.” (p. 441)

The Directors needed therefore to show some sympathy towards the young Brothers’ difficulties and to “be very careful not to be scolding them or giving them a hard time” but instead have them pray, keep them fully occupied, give them encouragement, and see that they observed the rule.

This is what he himself did at the Hermitage where he patiently put up with their immature behaviour, being content with such comments as, “That’s not a very edifying way for a Brother to behave who is supposed to be giving good example!” or, “How much longer are you going to carry on like a child?” (p. 439). But he had one principle. The first time, he pardoned the misbehaviour; the second time, he warned the guilty one, “You owe me”; the third time, payment had to be made. And he was unyielding when it came to defects that originated in “a superficial character, a secretive mind or were of a kind likely to cause scandal to the Brothers.” Any who remained too attached to their parents, or to “worldly manners”, and any who committed public faults against morals were dismissed without pity. (p. 444-445). Sometimes misdemeanours which to us seem harmless were severely sanctioned. A sacristan who drank from a chalice was sent away, as were some novices who had been jumping over the midsummer bonfires lit for the feast of St John the Baptist.³¹⁹ In short, as soon as he saw any novices determined to live with one foot in the secular world, he considered they had no business being in the house. A young man could enter the Hermitage easily enough but he could just as quickly find himself on the way out.

Politics and Pedagogy in the time of Champagnat

We have seen that from the start of his project Marcellin Champagnat adopted the Simultaneous Method³²⁰ and that Inspector Guillard had noted in 1822 that the Brothers were inspired by *The Conduct of the Christian Schools*³²¹ which had been republished in 1811 and 1819. The “Instruction on the examination of conscience” of the 1837 Rule (p. 74) has the following question:



27. The “Conduite des Écoles”

³¹⁹ Memoirs of Brother Sylvestre.

³²⁰ P. Zind, *Bienheureux Champagnat*, p. 351.

³²¹ OM 1, doc. 75.

“Are you enthusiastic and zealous in your teaching? Are you exact in following the *Conduct*?”

The battle against the Mutual Method, very much alive between 1815 and 1822, was reactivated by the Revolution of 1830. After 1833, however, the Minister for Education, Guizot, was drawn towards choosing the Simultaneous Method. He believed it was better, and the figures speak for themselves. Of the 42,000 schools existing in France, 1,400 were mutual schools and 24,000 simultaneous.³²² The Method of the Brothers had won out, but it was the State that pocketed the winnings³²³ when it advocated a method called ‘Simultaneous-Mutual’,³²⁴ which the Brothers of la Salle then went on to adopt in their *Conduct of the Christian Schools* in 1837.³²⁵

At the strictly pedagogical level there had always existed crossovers between these two methods. Brother Jean-Baptiste seems close to the reality when he claims that Father Champagnat “unconsciously combined the Simultaneous and Mutual modes; he borrowed from the latter what was best in it, to perfect the former, and [...] he prepared his Brothers for the eventual definitive adoption of the Simultaneous-Mutual Method.” (*Life*, p. 524). Further, in teaching catechetical method to the Brothers, he very quickly called for the participation of the pupils:

“He (Father Champagnat) had stopped when he had done as much as could be done, pupils with some capacity were then called to take catechism, each one in turn, not just on any topic but on the chapter for that day [...] The venerated Founder sometimes came incognito to correct the catechist if need be or else to give him a little word of praise if he deserved it.”³²⁶

And in a passage in the *Life* of the Founder (p. 524), difficult to date unfortunately, Brother Jean Baptiste recalls a practice in the beginners’ class where the teacher had frequently to go back over lessons already given:

“He should enlist the aid of the most capable students. When, for example, he has heard the children at the blackboard read, he will leave it to a monitor to go back over the lesson with them, while he turns his attention to those concentrating on the elements. He will do the same for subsequent lessons and for the recitation of prayers and catechism.”

The Society for Elementary Teaching which presided over the destinies of the schools using the Mutual Method counted these “mixed method” schools in its statistics. For their part the Brothers of the Christian Schools adopted certain practices of the Mutual Method, but essentially only in the beginners’ class. There was no question of going beyond that.³²⁷

Since De la Salle’s Brothers were integrating the official new method, the Marist Brothers imitated their example. The *Statutes* of 1837³²⁸ state: “For their teaching

³²² On this matter see Christian Nique, *Comment l’Ecole devint une affaire d’Etat*, Nathan, 1990, 4th part, pp. 173-230 : « Paul Lorrain, l’homme de l’ombre ».

³²³ See also Tronchot, *op. cit.*, p. 448.

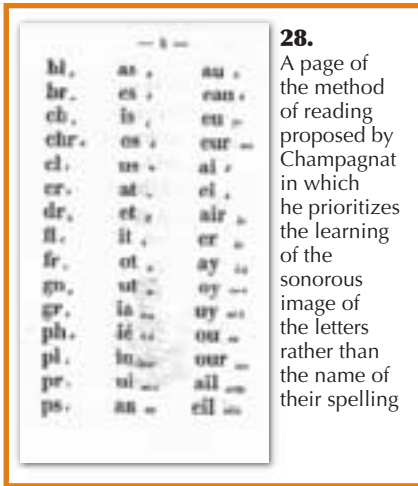
³²⁴ Tronchot, *op. cit.*, Vol 2, p. 524.

³²⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 528.

³²⁶ Brother Sylvestre, Mémoires, (“F. Sylvestre raconte Marcellin Champagnat”) p. 306.

³²⁷ *Ibid.* p. 221.

³²⁸ Letter to Salvandy, Minister for Public Instruction (*Letters*, N. 15, 27th November 1837).



28. A page of the method of reading proposed by Champagnat in which he prioritizes the learning of the sonorous image of the letters rather than the name of their spelling

they will follow the new system of pronunciation and the Simultaneous-Mutual Method.” This change probably did not alter things very much on the ground where a spontaneous use of monitors had always been the practice. Besides, the custom of having the Brother cook spend his spare time in the classroom had already led to the adoption of the practices of the mutual method. Nevertheless, Brother Avit relates that at St Genest-Malifaux in 1841³²⁹ he had two pupils as supervisors (monitors), whose seats were arranged on either side of his own.³³⁰ We do not know how the Brothers adapted their methods for the simultaneous teaching of reading and writing, which was a fundamental feature of the simultaneous-mutual method.

The choices Champagnat made about teaching methods also had a political reason, since he needed to obtain his legal authorisation and the Brothers of the Christian Schools were in the University. He was very explicit about this strategy in a letter to the parish priest of Sury-le-Comtal concerning the organisation of the school buildings:³³¹

“This is the advice of my confrères³³² and of our older Brothers whom I have consulted. It is also the rule of the excellent Brothers of the Christian Schools who ought to set an invariable standard for us in everything.”

But as far as other institutes of Brothers were concerned, the Brothers of the Christian Schools were more distrustful than enthusiastic. While on business in Paris in 1838 Champagnat was somewhat disappointed to find that he could not obtain the De la Salle Brothers’ textbooks for his schools at the prices they charged to their own establishments.³³³ This was at the same time (2nd August 1838) that Brother Anaclet had provided Champagnat with a prudently worded letter of approval in support of his case for official authorisation:

“I have learned with the greatest of pleasure that [...] you have established for the Dioceses of Lyon and Belley a congregation of teaching Brothers under the name of Marist Brothers which you intend principally for communes where the population is not sufficient to allow for an establishment of our Institute.”

He then expressed his wish that the government authorise Champagnat’s Brothers for “the small localities”.³³⁴ This was of no help to the Founder’s business. He

³²⁹ *Annales des maisons*: St Genest-Malifaux.

³³⁰ The mantelpiece over the fireplace collapsed on top of him and crushed the seats of his assistants.

³³¹ *Letters*, n. 161, November 1837.

³³² The Marist Fathers.

³³³ Not only was the price not the price paid by their own establishments, it was higher than the price at which they were then sold to their pupils.

³³⁴ *Annales de l’Institut*, Vol. 1, pp. 220 and 237. See also *Letters* nos. 171, 172, 179, 185, 197 ...

refused a civil authorisation that would have confined him to localities with fewer than 1000 inhabitants,³³⁵ because there was no way a community of three Brothers could survive there. It was for this reason that almost all of his schools were situated in villages or small towns of between 1200 and 4000 inhabitants.³³⁶

The problem of teaching methods did not therefore cease to have political implications even after the decision by the State to refuse authorisation to private societies, using as their pretext their concern to protect the Brothers of the Christian Schools. Despite his persevering efforts, Champagnat was not able to obtain anything more than toleration for a work which society in general lumped together under the generic term "Brothers of Christian Doctrine". This affair is also a good illustration of a truth that has been lost sight of, namely, that the educational debate was not exclusively between Church and State but also between the State and private educational societies, whether free-thinking or religious, and also between religious congregations who were competing with each other in a not always kindly fashion.

Administrative organisation

We have already referred to the Prospectus which describes the Marist Brothers as complementary to the Brothers of the Christian Schools and being particularly suited to supplying teachers to poor rural parishes. However, this document reveals only one aspect of an establishment which also served as a residence for missionaries, a religious house, a teacher training centre, and had agricultural and manufacturing activity as well.³³⁷ The Hermitage was also taking in and looking after elderly men³³⁸ and orphans.³³⁹

Besides that, with many children attending school during the winter only, certain Brothers returned to the Hermitage each spring to take up employment there.³⁴⁰ Even those who remained in their schools spent around two months each year at the Hermitage during the time of school holidays in September and October.³⁴¹ This was the time when they did their retreat, participated in ongoing formation sessions, handed in the year's accounts and prepared for a possible departure to a new posting.

³³⁵ *Letters*, n. 227.

³³⁶ On this whole question of the authorisation see Brother Gabriel Michel, *Marcellin Champagnat et la reconnaissance légale des Frères Maristes*, duplicated notes typed and bound.

³³⁷ The Hermitage was subjected to harassment during the troubles of 1830 for political reasons (the house was suspected of hatching a plot, like the Jesuit house at Montrouge.) But economic reasons may have had a part to play. It was a period when workmen were invading the workshops of religious houses that were in competition with them. Brother Jean-Baptiste (*Life* p. 174) relates that "bands of unemployed workmen [...] planned to go up to the Hermitage and knock down the cross from the spire and do away with the other religious emblems adorning the house." He is putting together two different reasons to explain the suspicion of which the Brothers had become victims.

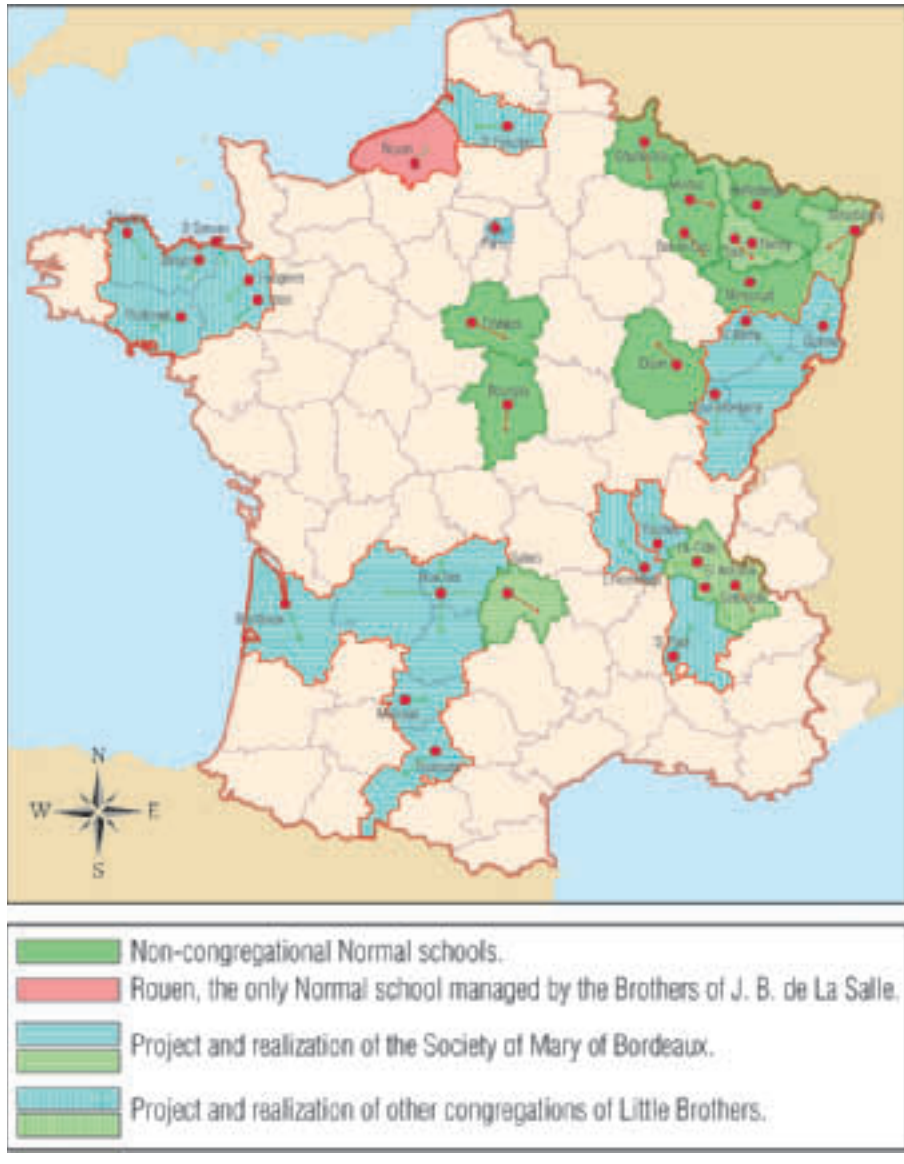
³³⁸ *Life*, p. 515. In 1832 he accepted two elderly incurables. Letter n. 27, Spring 1833.

³³⁹ *Life*, p. 512.

³⁴⁰ *Letters*, n. 12.

³⁴¹ In 1833 the holidays ran from 1st September to 15th October (*Letters*, n. 29).

Map 7. Normal Schools or Model Schools for civil instructors in 1830



In a letter of 1828 already quoted,³⁴² Champagnat gives a kind of outline of his organisational structure:

- Father Champagnat: overall direction, establishment and inspection of schools, management of staffing.
- Father Séon: spiritual direction, manufacture of ribbons; services in the surrounding parishes.
- Reverend Bourdin (deacon): supervision of novices’ classes, writing, arithmetic, singing, catechism, the book depository for supplying the establishments, and the chapel.

Champagnat was looking for a priest to look after the temporal affairs of the house, but the Diocese did not accede to his request.³⁴³

In 1831 the Deputy Mayor of St-Etienne mentioned that, according to the Statement of Accounts for the house, its means of support came “from the fees paid by the novices, from what is harvested from the garden, which they cultivate themselves and which brings in the greater part of what is needed for the frugal life they lead, abstaining almost totally from meat; and finally, from the work of several of the Brothers who devote several hours per day to the manufacture of cotton and woollen cloth.”³⁴⁴ To these resources we need to add gifts from charitable persons³⁴⁵ and, before 1830 at least, from the civil authorities.³⁴⁶

In 1828 the Founder had drawn up for the civil authorities of the Loire a first account of the state of his work:³⁴⁷

PLACE	PERSONNEL	VARIOUS
L’Hermitage: motherhouse	3 priests 60 Brothers 16 novices	
Lavalla: “a rather small house”	2 Brothers in winter; 115 children	Non fee-paying (thanks to the parish priest)
Saint-Sauveur: “a rather good house and a nice garden.”	3 Brothers in winter; 2 in summer; 120 pupils	“Reading is free of charge as being the only thing useful for being a good Christian and a good citizen.” ³⁴⁸

³⁴² *Letters*, n. 11.

³⁴³ Champagnat took some time before handing over positions of responsibility to the Brothers. It was done after 1830 because he realised that there would no longer be any priests other than himself involved in the management of the Hermitage.

³⁴⁴ P. Zind, *Bienheureux Champagnat*, p. 311.

³⁴⁵ The Deputy Mayor suspected the Brothers were being financed – it was 1831 – by the Propagation of the Faith.

³⁴⁶ *Life* p. 171, P. Zind, *Bienheureux Champagnat*, p. 174.

³⁴⁷ P. Zind, *Bienheureux Champagnat*, pp. 275-277.

³⁴⁸ Significant words which express well the primitive ideal.

Tarantaise: "lacking many necessities."	2 Brothers in winter; 55 children	
Bourg-Argental: "a spacious house, well ventilated, quite well furnished, a small farmyard, with a nice garden."	3 Brothers; 130 children	
Chavanay	2 Brothers; 90 children	"the teaching there has been fee-paying after having been non fee- paying." ³⁴⁹
St Paul-en-Jarret: classrooms "too small and very unhealthy"	3 Brothers; 120 children	
Valbenoîte: classrooms too small	3 Brothers; 140 children	Fee-paying for the better-off; free of charge for the poor.
Charlieu	3 Brothers; 120 children	
Boulieu	2 Brothers; 150 children	
St Symphorien-le-Château (sur Coise)	2 Brothers; 90 children	
Mornant	3 Brothers; 130 children	
Neuville-l'archevêque (sur Saône)	3 Brothers ; 100 children	
St Symphorien d'Ozon	2 Brothers ; 90 children	
Ampuis	3 Brothers ; 150 children	
14 schools	96 Brothers of whom 36 are teaching 1600 pupils; 16 novices	

The figure of 1600 pupils certainly indicates the number enrolled. But in summer, and even in winter, the pupils actually present were certainly fewer. Further, in schools with three Brothers, or even two, one was responsible for domestic matters and acted as a teaching assistant in his spare time. So, in 1828 a little more than a third of the Brothers were in schools and the actual number of Brothers teaching was between 22 and 25. The numbers for the Hermitage pose something of a problem because the functions carried out by the 60 Brothers indicated are not detailed. Given that a good number were employed in manual work and in the service of the house, still a number of them must have been engaged in teaching or religious instruction, especially of the novices and the students in the boarding section which was no doubt serving as a teacher training centre. Besides, with no clear distinction drawn between a teacher training establishment and a novitiate, what exactly did the term 'novice' mean?³⁵⁰

³⁴⁹ See *Letters* n. 41: in 1834 the fees set by the Mayor were too low and there were too many poor children paying no fees. Father Champagnat was thinking of making it a private school.

³⁵⁰ In his *Annales de l'Institut* (vol. 1, p. 79), Brother Avit records 4 Receptions of the Habit in 1826; 10 in 1827 ; 7 in 1828 ; 10 in 1829.

The description by the Mayor of the Hermitage's resources rightly emphasises the fact that the house was largely self-supporting for, even though revenue from the schools was far from negligible, payments were slow in arriving. Various account books have indeed made it possible to establish that for the period 1825-1832 ten of the earliest schools provided a healthy slice of revenue of between 136 and 368 francs. But the irregularity of the payments by the authorities in the communes made it difficult to establish a rigorous budget. The same difficulty was found with the payment of the fees for novitiate, with debts being paid off very slowly. Thus, Gabriel Rivat, future Superior General, who had entered in 1818, by 1830 had not yet finished paying for his novitiate.³⁵¹ The Hermitage therefore was rich in monies owing, but had to rely on its own resources to ensure its daily sustenance, at the price of a great austerity of lifestyle. Around 1830 it was still very much an *Ancien Régime* way of life, educationally as well as economically. On the one hand, money was rare; on the other, although the population wanted good quality teachers, they were not very ready to pay them a fair price for their services.

After 1830, the situation improved slowly. Little by little Father Champagnat came to realise that he could no longer rely on having priests for the formation of the Brothers.³⁵² In 1835 he complained that he was ceaselessly obliged to travel to visit his 29 establishments and asked the Archdiocese for a priest who could cover for him during his absences,³⁵³ but his request was not granted. He did concede, however:

"I do have, it is true, Brothers who are assisting me in various areas: a good master of novices, a Brother who is able to take the Brothers' classes, one for the novices' classes, and an economer."

The correspondence for the years 1838-1840 show us how the central administration functioned. There was a chaplain, Father Matricon, a Marist priest, assisted by another Marist priest, Father Besson.³⁵⁴ It was Brother François (Gabriel Rivat) who was the Founder's "right arm".³⁵⁵ A Council met every Sunday, Father Champagnat, the Chaplain, and "the customary Brothers",³⁵⁶ among them certainly Brothers Stanislaus and Jean-Marie.³⁵⁷ The Founder also used the services of the Brother who visited the schools as inspectors. Thus, Brother Cassien (Louis Chomat),³⁵⁸ formerly a lay teacher, was employed as a school inspector in 1838.³⁵⁹

³⁵¹ See CM 31, pp. 37-99.

³⁵² The priests had founded a community of Marist Fathers at Valbenoîte that was independent of the one at the Hermitage (1832?).

³⁵³ *Letters*, n. 56.

³⁵⁴ *Letters*, vol. 2, p. 85.

³⁵⁵ *Letters* n. 194.

³⁵⁶ *Letters*, n. 169.

³⁵⁷ *Letters*, n. 177.

³⁵⁸ His life is related in *Biographies de quelques frères* p. 189 (*Our Models in Religion*, p. 197, also *Our First Brothers: marvellous companions of Marcellin*, p.193)). He had already been a teacher at Sorbiers from 1812. He was joined by Césaire Fayol and they lived together sharing all in common for close to 20 years. They came in to contact with Fr Champagnat in 1822, and even participated in the Brothers' retreats. Finally, without making a novitiate, they took the religious habit in 1832. They then returned to continue teaching at Sorbiers, but as the Mayor was not willing to carry out repairs to the facilities, the school was suspended. (See *Letters*, vol. 2, p.118.)

³⁵⁹ *Letters*, nos. 169, 172, 174.

A more rigorous selection?

By 1835 requirements for the admission of candidates had become more precise.³⁶⁰ Postulants “must give good reason to hope that during their novitiate they will acquire the virtues which the religious state demands, as well as the talents required for the type of work which each one is destined for.” On entering, each had to bring at least a quarter of his room and board “and twenty francs for books, paper, etc., etc.” “The habit (soutane) is only given when payment for the novitiate has been completed and the required clothing and other items supplied.” Nevertheless:

“If someone cannot pay anything, but we feel sure of his vocation, we require him to promise that if ever he leaves the congregation of his own volition or if he is sent away because of misconduct, he will recompense the society out of his future earnings.”

The candidate, besides furnishing his Baptismal Certificate and his Birth Certificate, had also to complete a long questionnaire on his family, the state of his health and his religious practice. In particular, “Has he by any chance got it into his head that in the religious life he will not have to work as hard as he would in the world?” “Has he already belonged to some other community? In that case, he could not be admitted unless for very serious reasons.” It is significant, however, that the candidate would not be questioned on his level of education. So, before anything else, this was about entry into religious life.

The following table, put together from various sources, gives an idea of the development of the work:

YEAR	HERMITAGE	BROTHERS IN SCHOOLS	SCHOOLS	TOTAL BROTHERS	PUPILS	SOURCE
1828	60 Br+16 nov	36	14	96	1600	
1833	32 Br+ 10 nov	54	19	82 or 86		Br Avit
1834	40 nov	72				Letter n. 34
1835	46 nov	80		149		Br Avit
1837	20 nov		34	171		Letter n. 84
1837	100 Br + nov	130	43	250	5503	Circ. Vol 1 p. 307
1837	40 nov	130				Salvandy ³⁶¹
1839		139	45			?
1840			50	300		Arch. de Bonald
1840	100 Br	180	48	280	7000	Br Avit

³⁶⁰ Letters, n. 55.

³⁶¹ These figures appear to be inflated. A detailed state of the society, done at the same time as this letter, indicates 83 Brothers employed. It is true that for three of the schools the number of Brothers is not given and that the first three school foundations (Lavalla, Marlhés and Saint-Sauveur) are not mentioned.

A first change can be noticed between 1828 and 1833, with the proportion of Brothers in the schools moving from 36% to 62%, whilst the total numbers of Brothers dropped slightly because of the Revolution of 1830. The strong numerical growth of the congregation seems to start in the years 1834-1835, the Guizot Law and the diminution of the after effects of the Revolution seeming to be no strangers to that phenomenon. The qualitative changes noted in 1833 are confirmed. In 1840 64% of the Brothers were employed in the schools. The first decade of the July Monarchy, then, saw the Marist Brothers becoming more effectively a teaching congregation.

Brother Avit, in his *Annals of the Institute*, gives the names of Brothers receiving the habit on various occasions. This has allowed us to prepare the following table:

YEAR	NUMBER RECEIVED	YEAR	NUMBER RECEIVED	YEAR	NUMBER RECEIVED
1825	10	1831	12	1837	40
1826	4	1832	22	1838	58
1827	10	1833	14	1839	61
1828	7	1834	11	1840	47
1829	10	1835	46		
1830	10	1836	29		
Total	51		134		206

There is no sign of a drop in recruitment during the years 1830-1833, indicating that the work of the Marist Brothers was not viewed negatively by public opinion and that its cohesion as a group was already strong. A contraction in the total numbers of Brothers in those years, however, points to a number of Brothers leaving the congregation at that time. It is also a confirmation of Champagnat's steadiness and calm in the face of the events of the Revolution. On the other hand, we see very clearly that beginning in 1835 there is a jump in entries, which was largely an effect of the Guizot Law.

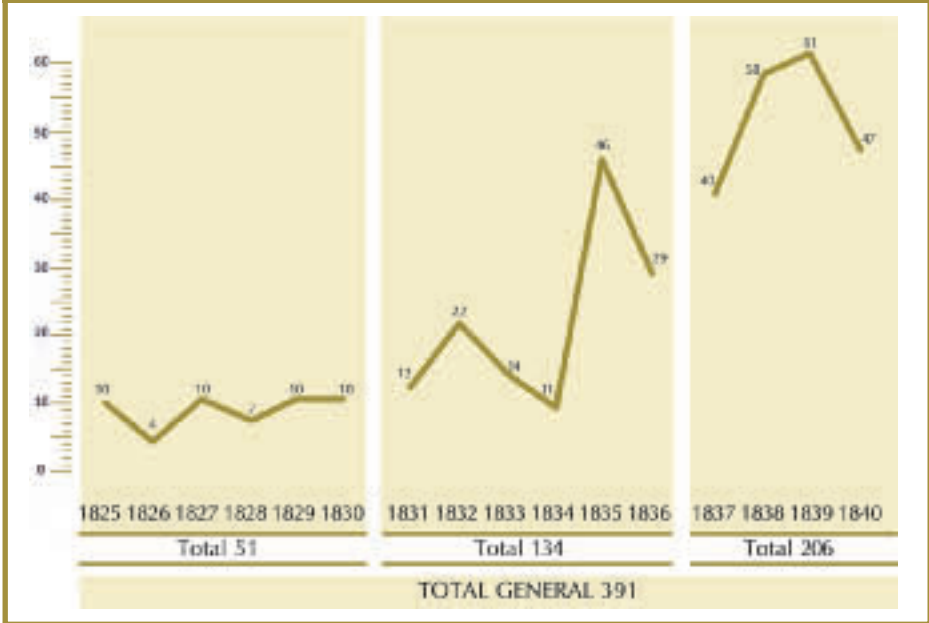
Establishing standards for the classrooms

In the beginning schools were often established in unhealthy buildings, but from 1837 onwards new foundations were being subjected to some very precise requirements. In a letter to the Parish Priest of Sury-le-Comtal, Champagnat demanded that the classrooms be separated by brick partitions with glass-panelled doors in them, in conformity with the *Conduct of the Schools* of the Brothers of the Christian Schools.³⁶² Only a short while before his death, on 21st January, in a letter to Father Gire, parish priest of Saint Privat-d'Allier, he described the layout of an ideal school,³⁶³ equipped even with a small facility for housing weekly boarders, known as a *caméristat*.

³⁶² *Letters*, nos 161 and 267.

³⁶³ *Letters*, n. 315

STATISTICS 1. Taking of the habit from 1825 to 1840



“There must be, on the ground floor, a kitchen, a storeroom, a dining room, and two large adjoining rooms connected by a glass partition extending the entire width and one-and-a-half to two feet high, at a convenient height for the Brothers of see each other. In the middle of this same partition, there must be a door with a glass panel. The first of these two rooms must be able to hold 60 writers and the second 70 to 80 children who are learning to read.³⁶⁴ If the normal number of boarders will be between 20 and 30, it will be necessary to build a third room adjoining the two others, to give them a separate class, which is however to be connected to the others as we have seen above. [...] The first floor should include two or three bedrooms and a dormitory which can hold about forty beds, one metre apart. It would be good to build into the Brothers’ room a window through which they can see and supervise the children in the dormitory. The toilet facilities should be placed where the Brothers can see them from their classrooms.”³⁶⁵

Once the school was ready, the Brothers were sent. Letter 290 to the parish priest of Craponne-sur-Arzon (Loire) describes for us the process of installation in 1839:

“The Brother Director of your establishment is leaving for Craponne today, to discuss with you the making of the furniture. [...] We will take care of making the purchases and the Brothers who will be his assistants will bring everything with them.

³⁶⁴ The simultaneous learning of reading and writing was no longer in use.

³⁶⁵ See the *Prospectus of the Institute* in Vol. 1 of *Circulars*, p. 241 (1838), 341 (1840), 382 (1844).

Please be good enough to present the document we gave you to your Town Council so that we can have their approval in writing. The Brother Director will at the same time present the necessary documents to obtain his ministerial appointment. As soon as we have received the approval of your town council the other Brothers will go to Craponne for the opening of school.

Thus for the Founder the typical school is a public school, under the direction of a Brother who has his *Brevet* (Teaching Certificate) and is employed by the commune. Attached to the school is a small boarding facility, or *caméristat*. The school has two or three classrooms, (130 day students and 20 or 30 boarders) where three or four Brothers are teaching, two of whom do not have their *Brevet* and are acting as assistants.³⁶⁶ The Brothers receive a salary paid by the commune, with a not inconsiderable extra amount coming in from fees paid by the pupils and from the boarding facility. At the same time the school is offering the chance for an education to the children who live in the hamlets and parishes around the area. This was one way the Brothers could continue to take care of those on the margins of society.

Numerous letters to parish priests reveal an overriding concern to take on only schools that were fully endowed or even non fee-paying.³⁶⁷ This was because collecting school fees was a source of embarrassment for the Brothers.³⁶⁸ Insisting on these conditions and requirements was doing no harm at all to the congregation as it was now well positioned in the educational market. Inspector Dupuy, visiting schools in the arrondissement of St-Etienne in 1833³⁶⁹ declared:

“What we need in these mountains of the Pilat are men of unlimited devotedness, costing little, who are content to receive from the State, the communes or from public charity, what they need to live on. These men are the Brothers of Mary. These teachers will be welcomed there as a blessing; if any others are sent, they will be viewed with suspicion by the people, and the communes will not accept them.”

In the years 1830 to 1840 the congregation would have to defend itself against the constant stream of requests because there were never enough Brothers, especially Brothers with their *Brevet*, to respond to them all.³⁷⁰

³⁶⁶ See P. Zind, *Bienheureux Champagnat*, for arrangements made between religious congregations and the government which was prepared to tolerate just the Director having the *Brevet*.

³⁶⁷ *Letters*, n. 230 indicates that the Brothers were receiving many offers to run non fee-paying schools with a guaranteed salary.

³⁶⁸ See *Letters*, nos 115, 121, 129, 133, 136, 189, 224 ...

³⁶⁹ P. Zind, *Bienheureux Champagnat*, p. 328.

³⁷⁰ *Letters*, n. 249, “We have made two establishments since Saint-Pol (at Ternoise in the department of the Nord, which an official in the Ministry had obliged Champagnat to accept), or I should rather say, they tore Brothers away from us for two communes (Isieux and Les Roches-de-Condrieu).”

The situation on the eve of the Founder's death

In the years 1830 to 1840 the congregation, now more and more concerned with good administration, was keeping its lists of establishments up to date. A new overview of the enterprise can therefore be drawn up for the years 1837-1839.³⁷¹

- 48 schools in 8 Departments (Loire, Haute-Loire, Rhône, Ain, Ardèche, Isère, Pas-de-Calais). The mother house is not included.
- 157 Brothers
- Pupils : between 5879 and 6027
- 30 commune schools, 17 private schools
- Founders of these establishments: 11 parish priests or bishops, 12 lay benefactors, 1 hospice.
- Sources of income: 10 schools either non fee-paying or endowed; 11 on salaries paid by the communes and supplemented by pupils' school fees

APPENDIX 3 – Schools founded by Champagnat – Page 360

To the establishments listed above we need to add the nine Brothers who had left for Polynesia with the Marist missionaries. The congregation was therefore regional and even international. The names and titles of the benefactors and the financial arrangements which had made these foundations possible are very instructive. The tradition of foundations being made by aristocrats, wealthy bourgeois and parish priests continues, but a somewhat more modern feature appears with the schools at Terrenoire and La Voulte, which belonged to companies engaged in mining or in the production of iron and steel. The Guizot Law, requiring each commune to found a school and to ensure a minimum salary of 200 francs to the teacher, was making its effects felt. But the communes were niggardly with money. Those who paid more than the minimum salary required by law were few and far between. This explains why, in many cases, a school's financial set-up depended on a two way arrangement of salary plus school fees, or even a three way arrangement involving endowment plus salary plus schools fees. Only schools with substantial endow-



29. Boarding School established in the Abbey of Valbenoite

³⁷¹ A first table from 1834 featured in the request for authorisation addressed to King Louis-Philippe. Volume 1 of the *Circulars* pp. 308-312 took this table and completed it for a new request for authorisation (*Letters*, p. 312). Brother Avit in the *Annales de l'institut*, Vol., p. 285 completes this latter by including establishments up to 1839. I have therefore taken as my basis the table in the *Circulars* (1837) and I have added to it the establishments given by Brother Avit.



30. La Grange-Payre and its surroundings up until 1835. The building is found at the bottom and to the left. At the right is the Church of Izieux

ments could be totally non fee-paying, and there were only ten of these.

Thus the congregation's strategy had several thrusts. Approximately two thirds of the establishments were financed by the communes. Private schools were established where the founders were sufficiently wealthy to offer good conditions (Anse, Terrenoire, La Voulte, and others). Nor were orphanages and hospices in any way neglected.

The congregation employed around one Brother per fifty day students. Quite frequently an extra Brother was required if there was a *camérista*³⁷² attached or lessons were being offered to adults. Regarding the private schools, if the benefactor was not sufficiently wealthy, the boarding facility was the main source of revenue. In 1839 the congregation had boarding schools at Valbenoîte (5 Brothers but only 4 paid by the commune), Neuville sur Saône (5 Brothers for 120 to 140 pupils in a private school), Millery (a private school with 5 Brothers for 100 pupils), La Côte Saint André (5 to 7 Brothers for 180 to 210 pupils), and Saint Didier-sur-Chalaronne. To this list we should add those that were boarding only, such as the hospice at Saint-Chamond, and the orphanages in Lyon. Finally there was one establishment with a very special status, the one at Belley because the Brothers there, in spite of Champagnat's misgivings, were not engaged in teaching but were at the service of the Marist Fathers.

The boarding establishment at Grange-Payre was likewise in a quite particular situation, as Father Champagnat announced in a circular to the Brothers³⁷³ on 15th August 1837. In this spot, so close to the Hermitage, a house had been opened "for postulants who have not reached the age of 13 years". Brothers were invited to bring with them candidates who have good dispositions and are able to pay 100 écus³⁷⁴ for their bed and board. It was therefore a mixed establishment, both pre-novitiate and teacher training centre.³⁷⁵

In fact, having learned from past experience, Champagnat no longer wanted to have a novitiate and a boarding school together in the one house. He explained his reasons to Bishop Devie who wanted to set up such an establishment at St Didier-sur-Chalaronne:³⁷⁶

³⁷² *Letters*, n. 309. Father Champagnat proposed the establishment of a primary boarding school to the parish priest of Roches-de-Condrieu, as "an excellent means of ensuring the success (of the school) and of furnishing your establishment with that just and reasonable security which makes an educational establishment run well."

³⁷³ *Circulars*, Vol 1, pp. 14-15.

³⁷⁴ 300 francs.

³⁷⁵ A letter of Father Champagnat provides further details on this kind of establishment. *Letters*, 305 to Bishop Devie, 3rd December 1839.

³⁷⁶ *Ibid.*

“In the beginning, we started off at the Hermitage some outside students and some boarders.³⁷⁷ We found ourselves obliged to give it up, since they caused the loss of a good number of novices and did evident harm to everyone. We were even obliged to separate the postulants totally from the Brothers.

Nevertheless, in 1829 the General Council of the Loire, having been requested by the Minister to establish a Teacher Training College for the department, had suggested that the novitiate at the Hermitage might serve as a model for the Loire.³⁷⁸ But the project came to nothing in the face of opposition from the Rector of the Academy of Lyon, and the Revolution of the 1830 put an end to the matter.

The boarding school at Grange-Payre could perhaps also be seen as the continuation of this tradition of accepting young men at a time when the congregation had not yet settled firmly on a single model of teacher, that of the teaching Brother. By establishing a clear separation between Brothers and laymen, the congregation was clarifying its formation. But this was a double setback for it, for after 1830 the authorities refused to consider it a suitable institution for training lay teachers, and contact between boarding school and novitiate had shown itself to be too problematic. From then on novitiate, boarding school and teacher training institution were to become entities each one quite distinct from the other.

These distinctions were still not clearly perceived by non-specialists in education and, because after 1830, Marcellin Champagnat was considered an expert in the matter of foundations he received offers from multiple correspondents who still thought of the Brother in the traditional way, as a village school master. In 1837 also two Vicar Generals requested the foundation of two novitiates, one in the Diocese of Albi, the other in the Diocese of Belley.³⁷⁹ In 1838 the Founder was giving serious thought to founding a novitiate in the South of France, the Midi.³⁸⁰ In the same year he received requests for “mother houses” in the Pas-de-Calais, the Diocese of Montpellier, and the Department of Var.³⁸¹ He was also considering a pre-novitiate at Viriville, in the Isère, probably like the one at Grange-Payre.³⁸² Finally, two projects were settled on, the novitiate in the Diocese of Autun which the Founder established at Vauban just before his death³⁸³ and the one at Lorgues in the Diocese of Aix-en-Provence,³⁸⁴ which because of his death did not go ahead.³⁸⁵ A novitiate was under consideration at Chalon-sur-Marne for 1841 and

³⁷⁷ A.F.M. The house accounts book of the Hermitage of Our Lady of expenditure and receipts for the year 1826: numerous mentions of sums received as school fees for day students and weekly boarders (1 to 5 francs per month), probably for the school at La Valla which was dependent on the Hermitage; also for the boarders, (60 francs per month).

³⁷⁸ P. Zind, *Bienheureux Champagnat*, p. 281.

³⁷⁹ *Letters*, n. 79.

³⁸⁰ *Letters*, n. 193.

³⁸¹ *Letters*, nos 194 and 199.

³⁸² *Letters*, n. 204.

³⁸³ *Letters*, nos 268, 278.

³⁸⁴ *Letters*, nos 219, 241, 293.

³⁸⁵ *Letters*, n. 319, 11th February 1840, to Cardinal de La Tour d’Auvergne. He said that “two new novitiate houses have just been set up” - Vauban and Lorgues, and that he was planning another in the diocese of Arras which would in fact be established at Saint Pol-sur-Ternoise.

another at Cuers (Var) for 1840.³⁸⁶ This was the period when ecclesiastical authorities were hoping to compete with or even take over the setting up of the teacher training colleges envisaged in each Department by the Guizot Law.

These more specific requests, the aim of which was to set up, not just schools, but diocesan or even departmental networks, came in addition to the impressive number of requests for individual schools, with figures for these listed in 1839³⁸⁷ at 85. These were not only in the area already partly occupied – Loire, Rhône, Isère, Ardèche, and Haute-Loire – but also in the valley of the Rhône and on the Mediterranean Coast. Thus, at the time of his death Champagnat had succeeded in marking out a territory for expansion which his disciples would be called on to fill.

Although several of Champagnat's letters included the formula "All the dioceses in the world enter into our plans" or equivalent expressions, he was mindful of the need for prudence in taking on new works.³⁸⁸ He sent just a small number of Brothers to Oceania and abandoned the idea of sending any to America.³⁸⁹ To the parish priest of Ganges (Hérault), who was asking for Brothers, he even gave a point blank refusal. It was too far away, "to remedy any abuses or meet any needs which might arise, like illness or cases of incompatibility, etc. ... We are trying to obviate this danger by expanding only very gradually."

In the final analysis, apart from Polynesia, Marcellin Champagnat did not risk his enterprise outside of a region centred on Lyon. He made just one exception, the house at Pas-de-Calais, founded in order to obtain his legal authorisation.³⁹⁰ Good administrator that he was, he knew how to combine broad vision with great realism.

The foundation of the Marist Brothers as an association for popular education was therefore a remarkable achievement for this son of a peasant, coming only late to basic education himself, who at his death left a society of nearly 300 members staffing some fifty branch foundations. All the same, Champagnat's repeated failures to obtain legal recognition were a sign that the days of private initiatives were coming to an end. The State was willing enough to tolerate private associations already in existence but not to recognise new ones. Not only that, but the accelerated creation of public teacher training colleges was starting to supply a body of teachers, who were trained, motivated and lay, although not on the whole at this stage anti-religious. Society would gradually come to recognise itself more readily in this type of teacher, whose way of life and hopes of rising in society were closer to its own, than it would in semi-monastic religious institutes. By the time Champagnat died (1840) the model offered by the congregations had succeeded in bringing modern pedagogical practice into primary school teaching, but now the State as educator was intending to snatch that heritage from them.

³⁸⁶ *Letters*, nos 296, 299.

³⁸⁷ *Circulars*, Vol. 1 p. 312.

³⁸⁸ *Letters*, 43, 70, 93, 112.

³⁸⁹ *Letters*, n. 109.

³⁹⁰ The Ministry wanted to impose on him an authorisation limited to very small communes and a high official demanded he found a school in an important urban centre. By accepting this school Champagnat put the Ministry in contradiction with itself, but even so he did not obtain his authorisation.

9.

SPIRITUAL FORMATION AND UP TO DATE PEDAGOGY

The Rule of 1837, a small book of 117 pages published in Lyon, reiterated the practices already in use in the congregation while at the same time adapting them.³⁹¹ Its statutes concerning the admission of postulants and the foundation of schools (Ch. 1) present few changes when compared with the 1824 Prospectus, but give a detailed daily timetable.

After the rising at 4.00 am and Prayers, “at 5.30 am there is Handwriting practice or writing models may be prepared, if any are needed. At 6.30 am on Mondays, Tuesdays and Wednesdays the Brothers study Grammar or prepare Dictation. On Fridays and Saturdays this half-hour is used for Arithmetic or for Manuscript reading.³⁹² If need be, the half-hour of free time before the Evening Office may also be given to the study of these subjects”. These exercises were presided over by the Brother Director who had the responsibility of training in knowledge those who were with him (Ch. 2, Art. 8). Between 7.30 and 8.00, the time when the pupils would arrive, the Brother had some time at his disposal to use “as he wished according to the needs of his class”. In the evening from 6.00 to 7.00, the Brothers studied the Catechism.

Thus a school of two or three Brothers was functioning as a formation centre where each day one and a half to two hours of time were devoted to learning the various secular subjects being taught and another hour to catechism. This programme was of particular importance for the Brother appointed as cook, who was only just out of the novitiate and still did not have very much education. The Brother Director had to give him a timetable and “organise his time in such a way that he can spend a good part of it in the classroom”. In this way, the young cook continued his novitiate on the spot, thus combining manual work with completing the primary syllabus and being initiated into the art of teaching.

³⁹¹ On this question see Pedro Herreros, *La Regla del Fundador*, Casa general, Roma, 2013.

³⁹² This was the last stage in learning to read.

An integrated programme – novitiate, school, and ongoing formation

It can be presumed therefore that the time of the novitiate served to bring the novices up to an acceptable level of reading ability, which was moreover necessary for reading the Office, the Mass, the Gospel and books of popular piety. Writing seems to have been less advanced since provision was made for further practice. In short, the Brother Director, who normally took the Writing class, had two kinds of pupils – the children, and certain Brothers assisting him who, it seems, did not know much more than the children. More specialised subjects like Line Drawing, History and Geography, proper to upper primary teaching are not mentioned.

These rules then are a confirmation of the system of formation that had been put in place with some moments of hesitancy back in 1825. It will be recalled that the 1824 Prospectus required the postulants to be able to read and to have a passable level of writing, and that Father Courveille reproached Father Champagnat with not putting enough emphasis on the novices' education. In 1834 the chaplain, Father Pompallier, was making the same complaint.³⁹³ Father Mazelier, Superior of the Congregation of the Brothers of St Paul-Trois-Châteaux, himself also noted in 1835: "Your novitiate programme is almost the same as ours, except that [at our place] the time given to manual work is not long."³⁹⁴ And Brother Avit, describing the programme at the Hermitage in 1840, implicitly says the same thing:

"After making their beds, the postulants and novices went to manual work until 11.30. They had been studying the Method of Mental Prayer or the Gospel between the Little Hours (of the Office) and breakfast [6.30 to 7.00 am]. In the afternoon there was Rosary at 1.00 pm, manual work to 5.00 pm, Singing class from 5.00 to 5.30 pm, then Office and the study of Catechism."

A table of the staff at the Hermitage in 1838 seems even to show a regression in the amount of teaching being done when compared with 1828.³⁹⁵ There were no longer any priests teaching. The Master of Novices was forming them more "by his example than his lessons" and his assistant, Brother Etienne, "often caused amusement to his disciples by his naïve comments, his scruples and his hesitations during his catechism classes." It is true that some Brothers gave lectures and also lessons in politeness and good manners.³⁹⁶ Brother Sylvestre, who took the habit in 1831 at the age of twelve and a half,³⁹⁷ described the novitiate as it was in his time:

"The staff consisted of some twenty older Brothers, who were employed in various workshops or elsewhere, and some ten or so young Brothers or novices, who were given lessons for two hours a day in Reading, Writing, Spelling, Arithmetic and especially Catechism and Writing in large letters."³⁹⁸

³⁹³ *Annales de l'institut*, Vol. 1, p. 147.

³⁹⁴ *Ibid.* p. 159.

³⁹⁵ *Ibid.* p. 235.

³⁹⁶ A manuscript on Good Manners very much inspired by the work of Jean-Baptist de la Salle still features in our General Archives.

³⁹⁷ *Annales de l'institut*, Vol. 1, p. 105.

³⁹⁸ *Mémoires du F. Sylvestre*, p. 299.

Even Brother Louis-Marie, the future Superior General and Sylvestre's novitiate companion, who entered in 1832 when he had almost completed his seminary studies, had to spend the greater part of his time in the garden and later in the tailoring shop (making soutanes, etc.). He even had to practice writing in large letters alongside two mischievous young Brothers who would bump him with their elbows so that he would have to erase his mistakes.³⁹⁹

A novitiate of this type was more realistic than it would appear since Champagnat was recruiting adolescents, but also older men about whom he knew very little, save that they almost all came from very modest milieux and were scarcely able to pay the full cost of their novitiate. Aside from the fact that it was providing the house with its means of survival, this time of intense and unrewarding work allowed Champagnat to see if his candidates had upright intentions, the taste for work, as well as piety and docility. On the other hand, his goal was to form Christian educators rather than just school teachers and, for that, he needed men of tried and proven character, because, as he saw it, example came before all else.

The Rule of 1837, however, was also taking account of the ambitious teaching programme envisaged by the Guizot Law⁴⁰⁰ which not all schools were able to implement because many children left school before even learning to write. All the same, Article 19 of Chapter VI of the Rule (p. 51) foresaw:

“Geometry, Line Drawing, and Book-keeping will be taught in places where there are eight pupils paying 8 francs per month. In these cases the Mother House will provide an extra Brother. A class of this type is required to be opened in the principal centre of each district.” (These were central schools overseeing the surrounding primary schools).

In order to realise such an objective the Institute had at its disposal Brothers who were entering with a more developed intellectual formation, in particular, former seminarians.⁴⁰¹ These were a real godsend and were quickly employed in key posts. Letter 108 of Champagnat, however, points out a problem:

“We really do appreciate the attainments of those who enter our house after completing their studies; but the fact remains that most of them are totally new to the subjects which we teach, and find themselves obliged to return to the fundamentals, especially for penmanship.”

With regard to the Brevet (Teaching Certificate) required by the University, up to 1833 it was more of an administrative formality than a real examination. As the Guizot Law required that candidates be examined before a University Commission and that the person in charge of a school had to hold the Brevet,⁴⁰² requests to found schools had sometimes to be refused for lack of qualified Brothers. Besides

³⁹⁹ Ibid., pp. 149, 312.

⁴⁰⁰ The Prospectus of 1824 makes no mention of Weights and Measures, nor of Geometry, Line Drawing or History and Geography.

⁴⁰¹ This was the case of Pierre-Alexis Labrosse, the future Superior General, Br Louis Marie, who entered in 1832. (AA. *Op. cit.*, p. 103). Brother Etienne, Director of Chavanay, knew Latin: he gave a retort in that language to a parish priest who was making some offensive remarks while visiting his class. (AA. *Op. cit.*, p. 5).

⁴⁰² *Annales de l'institut*, 1833, para. 254-256.

that, since the Institute did not yet have official recognition, the Brothers needed the Brevet if they were to avoid military service.⁴⁰³ This is why Marcellin Champagnat used the September-October holiday period to upgrade their formation:⁴⁰⁴

“From the time the community moved down to the Hermitage, (May 1825) the holidays had been and were still two months long, as they had been before. Father Champagnat used them to have the Brothers learn the branches of knowledge contained in the primary curriculum, and ways to develop the most effective methods for obtaining good discipline in their classes. [...] To initiate them into the primary subjects, he had the most capable ones give lessons to the others and he also gave lessons himself. [...] He established commissions of which he was a member and before which each Brother or postulant had to undergo an examination.”⁴⁰⁵

The same Brother Avit adds:

“For the rest he strove with all his might to have all the Brothers study the subjects contained in the primary curriculum at that time. For quite a long time, he even had secular teachers come to the Hermitage to give lessons in Drawing and Book-keeping.”⁴⁰⁶

The Guizot Law passed in 1833, provided for just one month of holidays, during October. This created a problem, and from 1836 onwards the Brothers only spent ten to twelve days at the Hermitage to do their retreat, hand in the financial accounts and replace any items of clothing.⁴⁰⁷ As well, around 1836 a sort of scholasticate was starting to function, with the teaching being done by Brothers who had their Brevet or who had drawn a lucky number in the ballot for military service.

“During the holidays some of them would be going on and on endlessly about the rules of three or the square root. They gave interminable demonstrations of which their listeners didn’t understand a thing and in which they themselves sometimes got lost.”⁴⁰⁸

It was in this school that Brother Louis-Marie taught Mathematics for a time. The seriousness of the teaching did not prevent some amusing things from occurring. Brother Eleazar was confronted with a problem in fractions. It was suggested he “invert the divisor fraction”, whereupon he took the blackboard and turned it upside down.⁴⁰⁹ Two other anecdotes are also told of this school. When a Brother came to ask the Founder to buy him a treatise on geometry, he left with a treatise on humility.

⁴⁰³ A reminder: Brothers who did not have their Brevet and were under threat of doing military service were sent to Drôme and employed by Father Mazelier, Superior of the Brothers of Saint Paul-Trois-Châteaux, whose congregation had official authorisation.

⁴⁰⁴ *Abrégé des annales*, op. cit., p. 96.

⁴⁰⁵ A table with 9 columns, dated 1828, listing the names of 56 Brothers and 7 postulants and evaluating their capacities in piety, catechism, character, submission, regularity, knowledge, arithmetic and handwriting, is taken by Brother Avit as representing the results of this examination.

⁴⁰⁶ *Abrégé des annales*, op. cit., p. 312.

⁴⁰⁷ *Abrégé des annales*, op. cit., p. 174.

⁴⁰⁸ *Abrégé des annales*, op. cit., p. 251. What Brother Avit is describing is not clear. It could be supposed that these Brothers were studying and teaching while awaiting appointment to a school. A note in 1839 seems to confirm this. It indicates that 139 Brothers were assigned to 45 positions and that “twelve Brothers remained in reserve.”

⁴⁰⁹ *Abrégé des annales*, op. cit., 261, year 1839.

On another occasion Champagnat found among the effects of a Brother a roll of papers entitled “Grand Means of Success” which contained “flourishes, figures of birds and pages with drawings of all kinds”. The Brother got a sharp reprimand and the “Grand Means of Success” were tossed into the fire.⁴¹⁰ Champagnat’s great fear was that the professional side of the Brothers’ work would supersede its spiritual motivation. Caught between his ideal and necessity, he seems at times to have taken contradictory positions.

As these special classes did not fully solve the problem of formation, the Rule of 1837 (p. 30) organised the schools into districts to be inspected by a Brother “First Director”,⁴¹¹ and a Circular of 10th January 1840⁴¹² instituted conferences to be held in each district. Its preamble is a veritable manifesto aimed at reconciling professional obligations with spiritual motivation:

“Handwriting, Grammar, Arithmetic, History, Geography, and even, if needed, Drawing, Geometry and Bookkeeping, will be the object of our studies and the subject matter of our conferences. We will use them as innocent bait to attract the children and then teach them to love God, and save their souls. Before all else, we will be good catechists, but we will also strive to become skilful teachers.”

In spite of notable evolutions occasioned principally by the law of 1833, the practice and the study of pedagogical techniques and teaching subjects were as much as possible combined together, with as their foundation the manual work that was indispensable for Brothers’ survival in a work/life situation where expenses had to be kept to the barest minimum. None of this stopped the Brothers from becoming increasingly more professional, a situation imposed on them by the need to have the Brevet and the numerous subjects they were teaching, and also by their concern to respond to society’s increasing demand for knowledge, all of which could not but cause anxiety to the Founder.

Putting an up to date pedagogy on a stronger footing

Although the choice for a modern pedagogical approach was evidenced very early by the adoption of the Simultaneous Method (1819), it took some time before the Brothers could break free of the traditional understanding of a Brother as the parish teacher-cantor-sacristan-town clerk and public letter writer, which almost everywhere was still considered the normal thing.

To this end, the Founder gave particular attention to the formation of his Directors, who constituted the structural framework of an enterprise that was scattered about in small schools of two, three or four Brothers. Chapter 17 of the *Life* of Marcellin Champagnat, (p. 449) offers numerous examples of this professional formation in

⁴¹⁰ *Life*, p. 446, p. 284.

⁴¹¹ Brother Avit mentions (*Annales de l’institut*, Vol. 1, p. 281, the year 1840) some nasty-minded Brothers had given them the nickname of “*grands boudras*”, a term coming perhaps from a verb in the Lyonnais patois “*bougrasser*” meaning to move around a lot without accomplishing anything useful.

⁴¹² *Letters*, n. 313.

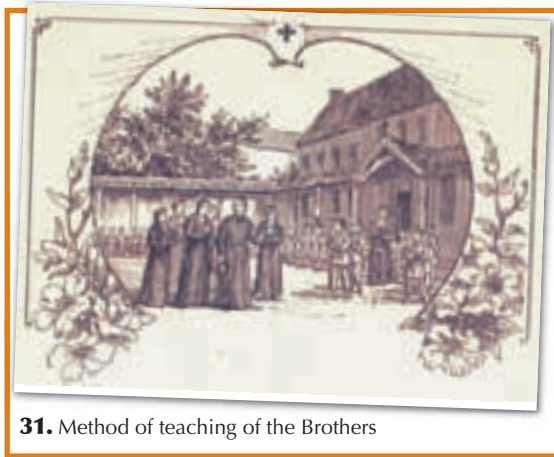
which the Founder did not spare the sensitivities of his disciples. He picked out four faults of Directors – habitual scolding, moodiness and sulking, bad temperedness, and easy-going softness or weakness of character. The qualities Directors needed were common sense, great devotedness to the Institute, a good deal of tact, love of order, fidelity to the Rule, genuine piety, charity, humility and prudence. Although such a programme was not easy to translate into reality, the Founder took the matter very seriously and the Directors were put to the test. One had to spend the two months of the holidays at the mother house washing dishes, another had to get down into the cesspit and pull out a dead calf that had been thrown into it, and a third had to spend the entire holidays in the kitchen doing the cooking. A fourth was moved without explanation and stripped of his position as Director.⁴¹³

Apart from this harshness of treatment, which was inspired by the monastic model, the Founder gave his Directors friendly instructions during which they could raise objections or ask him questions without notice.⁴¹⁴ Topics they discussed covered the government of the houses, the administration of temporal affairs, and classroom management, as well as more spiritual matters. These efforts were more or less fruitful:

“There are some Brother Directors who make the exercise of their authority consist in teaching the advanced class; controlling the purse strings; taking for themselves the best of everything in the house; providing themselves with a thousand trifles and superfluities; cutting a fine figure in public; availing themselves of all sorts of privileges; seeing they receive service from the Brothers, and in some cases tyrannising over them.”⁴¹⁵

Nevertheless, by wisely striking a balance between idealism and realism Marcellin Champagnat was gradually forming his Directors and teachers. Thus, in an instruction reported later⁴¹⁶ we are given a list of the types “of Brothers Father Champagnat did not like.” (Ch. 5, p. 49)

“I don’t like Brothers who are preachers,” he said, because they confuse catechism with giving sermons. Catechism should avoid giving long explanations and asking difficult questions. “These things should be left to the clergy and the Brothers should limit themselves to having the catechism learned by heart.” By doing this, Champagnat was drawing attention to the



31. Method of teaching of the Brothers

⁴¹³ *Life*, pp. 446-448.

⁴¹⁴ *Life*, p. 452.

⁴¹⁵ *Life*, p. 455-456.

⁴¹⁶ *Sentences, Leçons, avis du vénéré Père Champagnat*, Lyon 1868. (English translation, *Listen to the words of your Father: opinions, conferences, sayings and instructions of Marcellin Champagnat*, translated by Br Leonard Voegtle FMS).



32. Rule handed over to the Brothers by Saint Marcellin Champagnat in 1837

tendency of Brothers to use their knowledge to compete with the clergy, thus challenging the proper order in the transmission of the Word. The Brother's role was to remain as the one helping the children to learn the Catechism by heart.

This division between teaching and catechising was, however, beginning to disappear. Specialists in preaching were themselves recommending that simple language be used. The role of rote learning was diminishing as the teaching Brother became aware that he was himself exercising a full catechetical ministry while at the same time exercising his teaching profession. Thus, the rise of a laity equipped for catechising was tending to dispossess the priests of their monopoly.

The Founder had no love for “the self-important Brothers”, because they stride gravely around the classroom leaving the children to fool around, even to lead each other into evil.⁴¹⁷ The Brother should always remain at his desk on the dais in the front⁴¹⁸ so as to keep the whole class in

view,⁴¹⁹ in this way avoiding two opposite vices, that of those “soft” Brothers who do not preserve their dignity, caress children suggestively and spoil their character”,⁴²⁰ and the “executioners”, Brothers who hit children with the signal⁴²¹ or the pointer (used for reading).⁴²² It does seem, however, that Champagnat found it difficult to persuade certain Brothers that correcting children did not involve beating them.⁴²³ Others not suited to be teachers are “Brothers who have sore elbows”, that is to say the lazy ones, and those who behave like employees who have “no zeal, no devotedness to the common good”, “for, to teach others, ability and devotedness are a necessity.”

⁴¹⁷ See *Life*, pp. 526-527: the Founder reproached a Director with not maintaining discipline: “You encourage chaos in your class by not remaining at your desk” ...

⁴¹⁸ *Annales de l'institut*, Vol. 1, p. 261. See also *Annales des Maisons*, at St Didier-sur-Chalaronne: One day Brother Sébastien got down from his desk on the dais and everyone could see he was not wearing any stockings!

⁴¹⁹ This was also a criticism of the Mutual Method which envisaged that the teacher would be moving about in the classroom.

⁴²⁰ The *Life* pp. 538-539 contains very strong injunctions against private friendships which “spoil the character”.

⁴²¹ The signal was a wooden handle furnished with a clicker that was in use among the Brothers of the Christian Schools. It allowed the Brother to give directions to the class without speaking by using a series of clicks.

⁴²² The Rule of 1837 (Ch. V, 3rd part, p. 45) required the pointers used with the reading and writing charts to be attached to the board by a string, principally to prevent them from being used to strike the children. See also the *Life* p. 530.

⁴²³ *Listen to the words of your Father* p. 52.

From the very beginning Marcellin Champagnat included the learning of Plain Chant in the programme. This was, moreover, a traditional area of learning because from the time of the High Middle Ages, schools had been destined for the preparation of young clergy. With the Brothers being formed in the Church's chant, many parish priests were calling on their services and for a long time the Founder was willing to go along with them on this. For example, writing to the parish priest of Saint Paul-en-Jarret in 1834,⁴²⁴ with whom he had had a difference over a financial matter, and who was planning to call on the Brothers of the Christian Schools, he pointed out to him:

"The Brothers of the Christian Schools will never sing the Mass for you" (the sub-text being that the Marist Brothers would).

However, the 1837 Rule (p.40) was to impose some restrictions:

"Even when the Parish Priest requests it, the Brothers will never carry out any function in the Church, such as subdeacon or other, unless they have the permission of the Superior. However, if no cleric is available they may serve at Mass or act as cantor, being careful at the same time not to leave the children unless a second Brother can provide sufficient supervision."

This measure is explained in Letter n. 216 (31st October 1838) to the parish priest of Sury-le-Comtal:

"The reasons which made us include in our regulations the article forbidding our Brothers to carry out any ecclesiastical function have come to the fore again through the departure of two or three of our Brothers, who despite having made their vows, are now beginning their studies for the priesthood."

Nevertheless, applying the measure was difficult. Father Champagnat wrote to Brother Antoine at Perreux on 13th January 1839:

"You cannot continue to sing at Mass or act as subdeacon without damaging your health. Break the news to the parish priest in such a way that he will not insist any further. We are about to inform him also."

The issue of the Brothers acting as sacristans came up when Father Champagnat received proposals from diocesan authorities offering to confide the sacristies at the Basilica in Lyon and the Cathedral at Belley to the care of his Brothers.⁴²⁵ Even though a refusal might have been taken as an affront, Father Champagnat declined the offer. Teaching must be sole task of the Brothers. This explains why, just at the time he was refusing Brothers for the sacristies, he agreed to provide a Brother for the Teachers College at Montbrison.⁴²⁶ Likewise, in 1840 when the commune of Saint-Etienne made an official request for him to take over its establishment for the deaf-mute, he obtained admission for two Brothers into the Institute for the Deaf-Mute in Paris in order to undertake training there.⁴²⁷ However, the project was not followed up.

⁴²⁴ *Letters*, n. 35.

⁴²⁵ *Life*, pp. 477-478 and *Letters*, n. 55 (1835).

⁴²⁶ *Letters*, n. 64, 12th April 1836, to M. Arquillière, director of the *Ecole Normale* at Montbrison: "We are extremely flattered by the honour which the Prefect and the Supervisors of the *Ecole Normale* have done us" ... This proposal never came to anything.

⁴²⁷ *Letters*, n. 320, 14th February 1840. This project was never realised. Champagnat's acceptance of the proposal was connected with his concern to obtain official recognition from the State.

A non-clerical ministry

Little by little, therefore, Marcellin Champagnat was declericalising his Brothers. This evolution anticipated that of the lay teachers who at this stage still remained largely under the thumb of the parish clergy and who were beginning to find the yoke heavy. The Brothers, because they were an organised body within the Church, were more protected from the demands of the clergy and were able to have the specific nature



33. The Hachette Method of writing of the Marist Brothers. It was first edited by Hachette (an editor of laicism spirit) and later by Vitte (a Catholic editor)

of their vocation recognised earlier. Besides that, although he was a priest, Champagnat did not have the clerical mindset. His biographer⁴²⁸ quotes these words addressed to Brother Louis, when around 1826 he was tempted by the priestly vocation:

“My dear friend, to love Jesus Christ and win souls for him, it is not necessary to be a priest. [...] There is no more excellent work than that of teaching catechism to little children, forming them in piety, preparing them for their First Communion, and preserving them in innocence.”

For Champagnat the education of children was a “ministry” distinct from that of a parish priest but fundamentally its equal in dignity. As well, the Brothers were having reasonable success in offering a model of the teacher that was a distinct departure from that of the traditional village school master. Nothing is more significant in this regard than the testimony of Brother Avit, who was a young boy at Saint Didier-sur-Chalaronne, in the Ain, and who later gave a rather colourful account of the arrival of the Brothers in his village:⁴²⁹

“We do not know what schools St-Didier had before the Revolution, but afterwards it was very poorly provided for up to 1836, the year that the Brothers came. The only school for boys that existed around 1820 was run by a man named Baune. This man had been an employee on a farm.

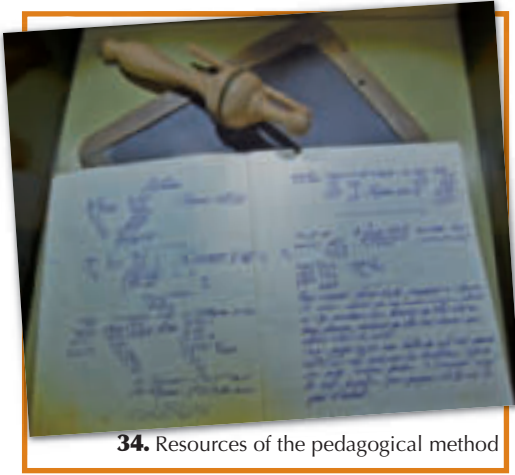
While busily pruning an oak tree, he cut off the branch he had been sitting on, came down with it and broke his leg. The bonesetter failed to do his job properly⁴³⁰ and so he became lame and had to use a crutch for the rest of his days.⁴³¹ So he set himself up in a small room and became a school teacher. We were among the number of his pupils. His way of running the school was very lax. You came when you wanted to and left when you wanted to. [...]

⁴²⁸ *Life*, Ch. 14, p. 150.

⁴²⁹ *Annales de Maisons*, Saint Didier-sur-Chalaronne.

⁴³⁰ The word “rhabillé” used in Brother Avit’s text is from the local dialect word “rhabilleur” (“rebouteur” a “bonesetter” in standard French).

⁴³¹ Brother Avit had ankyloses (a fusion of the bones resulting in partial paralysis) in one arm, which may have been what led him to choose the life of a teacher.



34. Resources of the pedagogical method

This “mentor” could hardly read and had never handled a pen. The rest is obvious. He followed the individual method. He would sit on an old armchair, patched with a hundred pieces of cloth in a thousand colours, which had at one time been new, and beside him was a rather large bundle of sticks cut from the hazelnut trees, which he provided himself with during the summer. While each child was reading beside him, the others played up and made a great racket;⁴³² the sticks were wielded often and sometimes broke.”...

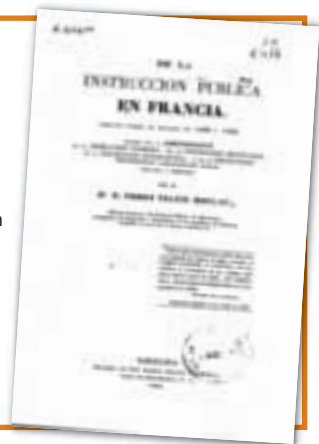
Brother Avit indicates that four other teachers came after him. They were more educated but none of them had any clear pedagogical method. Finally, Father Madinier, the parish priest, installed the Marist Brothers.

“The pupils were taken to Mass every day. Catechism, the Gospel, even the Passion, Sacred History, Grammar, Arithmetic, History and Geography were all energetically taught. We made more progress in eight months than we had made in the eight winters before that with the lay teachers.

The first four Brothers were: Brothers ex-Sebastien,⁴³³ the Director, Marie-Augustin, Côme and Vitalien. The others used to play tricks on Vitalien, the Director especially; we saw them doing it. [...] ex-Sebastien, (the Director) [...] was a small man, a bit stooped, rather ugly, a good teacher, but not very edifying. He loved playing jeu du bouchon (a card game using corks to count the score) with one hundred sou coins, and he used to run races with the pupils”...

This long extract, the childhood memories of a Brother, is similar to other testimony we have on the educational situation at that time and shows clearly how different the Brothers were – a body of men equipped with a rule of life, a method, a programme, and with Christian evangelisation as their objective.

35. This publication contains the first mention in Spanish of the existence of the Institute of the Little Brothers of Mary written by someone foreign to the Marist Institute. It was published in Barcelona in 1840



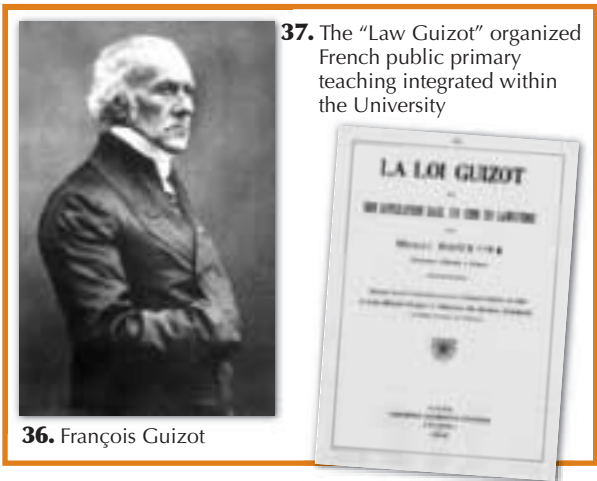
⁴³² “Faisaient le ‘bastringue’” in the original literally means they were ‘sowing disorder’.

⁴³³ The prefix indicates that the Brother had later on left the congregation.

So, in spite of some real limitations, which the author does not try to hide, these men obtained remarkable results. This was the time when the religious congregations were in their heyday. The Guizot Law had imposed a requirement on every commune to provide a school for boys, and the teacher training colleges in the Departments had not yet had the time to train large enough numbers of competent lay teachers. Many parish priests, anxious to avail themselves of worthy and well-trained catechists, favoured the religious congregations. The authorities in the communes, who did not as yet have much interest in education, either left it to the priest, or else were delighted that these initiatives taken by the clergy were relieving them of expenses and negotiations with which they had little familiarity.

By populating the rural areas of the Lyonnais region with schools staffed by Brothers who were catechists and teachers, and equipped with an up to date teaching method and an exacting professional ethic, Marcellin Champagnat had made a strong contribution to the success of a catechetical and pedagogical current that had originated in the Sixteenth Century and was now the bearer of a modern definition of the school and of those who would be teaching in it.

As has been emphasised already, the religious objectives of this modern pedagogical approach were only partly in line with the objectives of the State. The State itself was keen to provide moral formation and good instruction, but had very much less interest in the teaching of religion. The Church's concern had mainly been to have exemplary and competent lay auxiliaries. The general population was beginning to put more value on education and less on catechism, and could not see very clearly why the teaching of children should require such a high degree of commitment. Even among the Brothers, the conviction that they were invested with a specific vocation was not strong. So now, by the very fact of its own success, this educational model which Champagnat had struggled so much to establish was entering a new phase. Education would soon become a national passion but its objectives would be primarily social, economic and political rather than religious. What had originally been a mystical vision of education now threatened to degenerate into politics, a process which, in the opinion of this author, would reach its culmination in France during the period around 1965 with the crisis that engulfed the secular education system set up by Jules Ferry at the end of the Nineteenth Century.



36. François Guizot

37. The “Law Guizot” organized French public primary teaching integrated within the University

PART 2

1840-1879

Dinamism and Identity Crisis

A preliminary note in the Rule of 1837 warned: “This Rule leaves much to be desired, as will easily be seen” and the project to “put it into a better order and make it more complete” was put off to another day. The essential elements of Champagnat’s teaching had been expressed orally or in material (letters, etc.) written in response to particular circumstances. The links of the Brothers with the Society of Mary were problematical and, even though the Brothers of Mary were well positioned in the educational market, the absence of official government authorisation was leaving them in a vulnerable situation. Champagnat had therefore left behind him⁴³⁴ an incomplete work. In 1879, at the death of Brother Louis-Marie, second Superior General, almost all of the challenges of 1840 had been met. There is no doubt that such an outcome could not have been achieved without there being many eventful moments both internal and external.

At the political level France was living in a state of instability

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very like what Father Champagnat had known in his lifetime. After 1840 the July Monarchy, which had at first been very liberal, became conservative. It was a time when the leading figures of the bourgeoisie found themselves being more and more challenged by the democratic and republican elements in society who were demanding reforms. Then a revolution in Paris from 22nd to 24th February 1848 toppled King Louis-Philippe from his throne and a republic was proclaimed. The Marist Brothers had few tears to shed for a regime that had refused them legal authorisation. Nevertheless, there followed a period of disturbances originating among the working classes and the socialists (the Hermitage was once again under threat), but there was only a moderate degree of anticlericalism. Finally, at the end of the year a Second Republic was inaugurated, democratically elected and conservative in character. It was the first time elections had been held based on universal male suffrage. The President was Louis-Napoleon

Bonaparte, nephew of the Emperor Napoleon I. On the 15th March 1851 this conservative and republican regime passed the Falloux Law, which broke the state monopoly over secondary education and favoured the religious congregations. Thanks to this new political climate, the decree of authorisation of the Little Brothers of Mary as an association of public utility was issued on 20th June 1851. But the Republic did not last long. On 2nd December 1851 a coup d'état by Louis-Napoleon Bonaparte imposed an authoritarian regime which became the Second Empire on 2nd December 1852. This new regime was viewed with the utmost contempt by the Republicans and Socialists, but a good number of the ordinary people, along with the bourgeoisie and the Church, were pleased to see in power a government able to ward off the danger of a revolution like the one that had caused them so much suffering in 1848. The years between 1848 and 1852, however, saw a fault line develop between republicans and conservatives, with the Church supporting the

conservatives. When the Republicans came to power in 1879, their first thought was to make the Church pay for its support for the conservatives. All the same the Second Empire underwent a series of evolutions in its political position. From 1852 to 1860 it favoured the Church and the religious congregations, but later, in difficulties because of the Roman question,⁴³⁵ and worried about the progress the congregations were making, it shifted towards Liberalism, made a rapprochement with the worker movement, took the state teachers under its protection and allowed a powerful spirit of anticlericalism to develop. In spite of all this, Brother Louis-Marie, who seemed to have retained a deep feeling of gratitude towards the man who had signed the decree of authorisation of the Institute, remained faithful to a regime that seemed the lesser evil. The Franco-Prussian War of 1870-1871 brought grave defeats in its wake, and the Empire fell on 4th September 1870. Immediately, revolutionary disturbances broke out, notably in Paris and Lyon. The provisional

government of the National Defence, which tried to carry on the war, imposed restrictions. The Mother House at Saint Genis-Laval was requisitioned to house the French troops, but with the war being mostly fought in the North, the Institute suffered little damage and no Brothers were mobilised. The ultra-revolutionary and antichristian Paris Commune, in power from 18th March to 28th May 1871), was finally crushed, but even so, minds and hearts remained troubled for a long time afterwards. With the return of peace, thought had to be given to setting up a new political regime. But what kind of regime? Republic or monarchy? In 1873 an attempt to restore the Monarchy failed and in 1875 political power was defined as republican. But a conservative republic favourable to the Church, or an anticlerical one inheriting the spirit of the Revolution? Between October 1877 and January 1879, the most antireligious elements among the Republicans were able to persuade public opinion that they could ensure both public order and liberty. They gained control of the Chamber

History of the Institute

of Deputies, then the Senate and finally the Presidency. Brother Louis-Marie, who died on 9th December 1879, lived long enough to see his worst fears realised. Contrary to the expectations of many, however, the Republic endured and from then on the Marist Brothers would find themselves ceaselessly confronting a hostile government.

Over the period 1840-1880 the Institute appears to have evolved in much the same way as most of the Church in France, moving from what had been, when all is said and done, an attitude of reserve in political matters to an open involvement with the conservative current. It is clear that Brother Louis-Marie had a preference for any regime that guaranteed public order and Brother Avit reproached him for his Bonapartism. It seems his anti-republicanism was guided more by metaphysical and opportunistic principles than by anything political in the strict sense of the word. Brother Avit, himself a staunch anti-republican in his *Annals*, was a *légitimiste* (supporter of the Bourbon monarchy).⁴³⁶ As for Brother François, as far as we know, there is no text indicating

what political opinions he held. But was this conservatism shared by the bulk of the Brothers? For the period 1840-1880 we have few indications one way or the other. Nevertheless, Brother Avit,⁴³⁷ who deplored the fact that the first elections with universal suffrage, were held on the “holy day of Easter”, acknowledged that the citizenry, including the Brothers, “were generally in a great state of jubilation”, and that the parish priests were often the ones heading up processions of their parishioners going off to vote at the main town of the canton. And even, Brother Apollinaire, from the novitiate at Vauban, accompanied the people from his commune (to the main town of the canton) mounted on a white horse. He looked like a Colonel commanding his regiment.” A little later, in 1852, one of the Directors in the Province of Nord, apparently an anti-bonapartist, reproached his superiors with carrying out the elections for the Chapter “like the President when he, so to speak, imposed on us the candidates he wanted us to nominate.”⁴³⁸ Would the Brothers’ involvement in the religious

schools, which were supported by the party of order and under attack from the Republicans, have been the reason they gradually shifted towards a more conservative stance? Before 1880 it seems the situation was very fluid and that the Brothers out in the schools took a pragmatic approach to these matters and, quite the reverse of their Superiors, were not too much concerned about general principles. In any case, it seems it was only slowly that political positions became more radicalised. But there was another revolution the Brothers themselves were experiencing at much closer quarters, namely, the economic and technical changes in society that were having a profound influence on social equilibrium. It is true that one cannot properly speak about an Industrial Revolution in France of the kind that occurred in

England. It was more a case of a continuous growth. An important step came with the change made on 11 June 1842 to the law on railway lines, which launched a systematic development of this mode of transport especially after 1850. By the time Brother Louis-Marie died France was covered with railway lines, and Brother Avit would often deplore the way they would serve as a vehicle for unbelief, vice, evil newspapers and ... the republic. These considerations did not, however, stop the Brothers from making use of these new means of transport, which furthermore made the business of managing the Institute much easier. As for the question of the workers and their rights, the Brothers would encounter it many times, especially where they were in schools that had been set up by industrial and mining companies.

⁴³⁴ *Life Part I, Ch. 23, p. 251*

⁴³⁵ *The movement for the unification of Italy was threatening the position of the Pope, who was being protected by France.*

⁴³⁶ *He was very negative in his judgements on the regime of Louis-Philippe. See Annales de l'institut. Vol. 2, 1848, no. 4.*

⁴³⁷ *Annales, Vol. 2, 1848, no. 13.*

⁴³⁸ *Annales de l'institut, Vol. 2, 1852, no. 35. This is an allusion to elections that had been largely manipulated by the government.*

10.

TAKING UP THE HERITAGE

Anchoring the tradition within a definitive rule

Although they still did not have legal authorisation, the Marist Brothers did have a considerable advantage. They constituted a body of men religious drawing on a strong identity, whilst other congregations which did have authorisation were often handicapped by the very weak perseverance of their members and were only just struggling along.⁴³⁹ This was the case with the Brothers of Christian Instruction of Saint Paul-Trois-Châteaux, with whom Father Champagnat had established fruitful contacts.

Fusing with and absorbing other congregations (1842-1844)

As well, from 11th December 1840 the Bishop of Valence had let it be known discreetly that he would view with a favourable eye a fusion between these Brothers and the Marist Brothers. This took place in March 1842. The new congregation of “The Little Marist Brothers of Christian Instruction” would now comprise two Provinces, namely, the Hermitage and Saint Paul-Trois-Châteaux. It was in fact a takeover. Four Marist Brothers⁴⁴⁰ were sent to Saint Paul to initiate some forty or so Brothers of Christian Instruction into the spirit of the Hermitage and to develop the novitiate. Furthermore, the Marist Brothers were able to benefit from the authorisation the Brothers of Christian Instruction had obtained in 1823 for the departments of Drôme, Isère and Hautes Alpes.

The agreement between Valence and Lyon had hardly been signed when on 23rd June 1842 Bishop Guibert of Viviers proposed to Reverend Brother François a union with his Brothers. The negotiations were rapid and on 15th April Bishop Guibert signed a contract of union that was approved by Father Colin. A novitiate was to be established at La Bégude. On 2nd October 22 former Brothers of Valence made their Vow of Obedience and 9 their Perpetual Vows. Brother Louis-Bernardin came from the Hermitage as Provincial and Father Besson as chaplain. So, including

⁴³⁹ *Annales de l'institut*, Vol. 2, 1844, nos 58-63: History of the Brothers of Viviers; 1841, no. 82.

⁴⁴⁰ *Annales de l'institut*, Vol. 1, 1842, no. 32.

the Province of Nord (in the North of France), which had been erected in 1842 and was still quite modest, the Institute now had four Provinces and five novitiates. A set of statistics recorded by Brother Avit⁴⁴¹ gives us a good idea of the state of the congregation after the death of the Founder:

	HERMITAGE	NORD	VAUBAN	ST-PAUL	LA BÉGUDE	TOTAL
Professed	171	2	0	20	9	202
Non professed	130	1	13	19	22	185
Novices	93	0	7	21	12	133
Postulants	50	3	12	15	10	90
TOTAL	444	3	32	75	53	610

The numbers had almost doubled in a very short space of time. The Hermitage, with its extensions of Nord and Vauban, was providing four fifths of the total, but the novitiates at St-Paul and La Béguide gave hope of numerous recruits.

The tradition is stretched: Father Colin imposes the Vow of Obedience

Chapter 23 of Part I of the *Life* of the Founder gives an excellent historical account of the Institute from 1840 to 1854. But, allowing for the fact that it presents a somewhat idealised picture, it almost completely conceals a fact of major importance, namely, that up to 1845 the Marist Brothers had as their Superior Father Colin. Nothing of importance could be done without his agreement, and the Marist Fathers, as chaplains in the houses of the Brothers, had particularly important functions. After that date, and up to 1854, this dependence continued in a more flexible but still real way.

Although very careful to respect the traditions going back to Champagnat, Father Colin made considerable changes to the practices around the making of vows. Brother Avit⁴⁴² gives us the details when he informs us that on 11th October 1840 at the end of the retreat:

“The novices ceased to emit the three temporary vows. Henceforth they replaced them with the simple Vow of Obedience made ... according to the end and Constitutions of the Order, to the Superior of the Society of Mary with the intention of living and dying in the said Society.”

⁴⁴¹ *Annales de l’institut*, Vol. 2, 1844, no. 97.

⁴⁴² *Annales de l’institut*, Vol. 2, 1840, no. 24.

Normally quite forthcoming on events of some importance, he gives no explanation as to who took this decision or why, and this silence betrays his disapproval. Furthermore, right throughout his Annals, he notes the Receptions of the Habit and the Professions but he makes very little mention of the Vows of Obedience, which seemed to him to be a state of “non-professed”,⁴⁴³ an ill-defined state between novitiate and Profession.

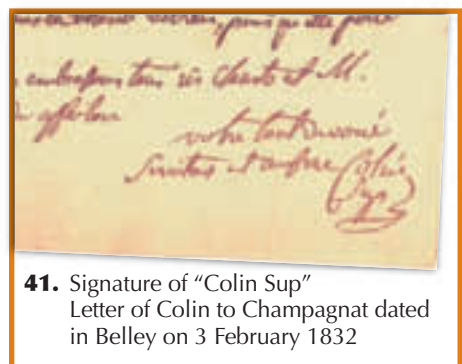
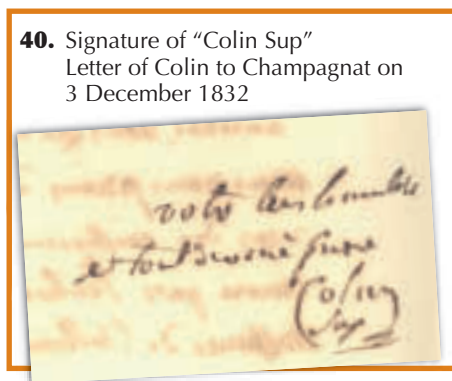
Brother Sylvestre clearly attributes the decision to Father Colin but adds that “these vows were at first made without any ceremony; later⁴⁴⁴ they were given the solemnity they still have today.” Indeed, the Rules of Government, written in 1854, present in detail a ceremony which includes, first, the giving of the cord, the symbol of chastity, and then a set of questions focusing on the willingness of the novices to make a definitive commitment to remain in the Institute and, in the case of any doubts concerning their vocation “to make these known to the Brother Superior and to rely on what he decides on this important point.” And finally, the formula of commitment underlines the willingness to obey “particularly in what concerns my vocation.”

So, from 1840 to 1854 the Vow of Obedience was made in the spirit of Father Colin, as a second time of probation, during which the subject would withdraw or be dismissed without any great difficulty. After 1854 the Institute once again gave it the sense of a deeper commitment, equivalent to temporary vows.

This was because in the eyes of Jean-Claude Colin and the Marist Fathers, the Marist Brothers were nothing more than a Third Order without any fundamental difference in



39. Letter of obedience



⁴⁴³ *Annales de l'institut*, Vol. 2, 1844, no. 97.

⁴⁴⁴ Probably after 1854.

nature from the Coadjutor Brothers who also made the Vow of Obedience one or two years after their entry and the three Perpetual Vows at the age of 25 years at the earliest. In a letter of 1846 in which he described the Society of Mary,⁴⁴⁵ Father Eymard was completely in that line of thinking when he spoke of “the appearance in our days of a society of Marist Priests, that is to say a society under the name of Mary, a Third Order of the same society which already counts more than 800 lay Brothers who [...] devote themselves [...] to the education of children, especially in the country areas.”

But Father Colin’s decision came principally because of pastoral reasons.⁴⁴⁶ He had realised that the Brothers were only adolescents or people not yet very capable of observing the vows, particularly the vow of chastity. In 1846 he was to say:

“I do not approve at all of what Father Cholleton⁴⁴⁷ wanted to do when he was in charge of the Brothers. If a Brother fell; he was out the door immediately. On the contrary I opened my arms to hundreds of Marist Brothers of Christian Instruction who had fallen.⁴⁴⁸ Today they are doing well and are very edifying.”⁴⁴⁹

He was thus criticising a certain rigour on Father Cholleton’s part, but he was also implicitly taking aim at Champagnat and the Superiors of the Brothers whom he reproached in 1841 with too easily sending subjects away.⁴⁵⁰

In any case, this decision by Father Colin was a considerable modification of the position of the branch of the Marist Brothers because Father Champagnat had established a very clear system of recruitment, namely, that just about anyone could enter but he would be relentless in sending away any who to him did not appear to fit in with the aim of his Society. From now on, dismissals became more problematical and above all the Brothers felt they were thought of as members of a second tier of the Society of Mary.

The relative union of the Director General and his Assistants

The election held on 12th October 1839 had indeed established a Director of the Brothers and two Assistants⁴⁵¹ but without defining their respective powers, which resulted in some tangled situations. In a letter of 26th May 1841 Brother

⁴⁴⁵ *“Colin sup”*, Vol. 3, p. 160.

⁴⁴⁶ On this question see Bernard Bourtot s.m., *Frères et pères de la Société de Marie* when Br François was General, 1840’1860. Saint Priest, 1999, p. 13-15.

⁴⁴⁷ Provincial in charge of the Brothers.

⁴⁴⁸ This expression seemed exaggerated to Father Mayet, and he replaced “hundreds” (centaines) by “certain” (certains). The important thing to understand would be rather that Father Colin had helped a great number of Brothers who had been in difficulty.

⁴⁴⁹ *Ibid.* p. 272.

⁴⁵⁰ *“Colin sup”* Vol. 1, doc. 267 no. 12, 26th May 1841, Letter of Brother Louis-Marie to Brother François.

⁴⁵¹ This is not properly speaking a matter of an election. We may wonder rather if this organisation was not copying the rule of the Tertiary Brothers which foresaw a Brother Rector in charge of the establishments, a Brother Master of Novices and a Brother in charge of temporalities (Lay Marists, Doc. 26, Pompallier to Gregory XVI, 1836) governing in council under a Father Director.⁴⁵² *“Colin sup”*, Vol. 1, doc.267.

Louis-Marie related some comments made by Father Colin regarding the Society of the Brothers at the time that a project was being formulated to set up a workshop for the washing and treating of the cloth being produced in their other workshops. This would improve its quality. It appears that this project had the support of Brothers François and Jean-Marie but was not viewed with favour by Brothers Jean-Baptiste and Louis-Marie.⁴⁵² Father Colin's refusal was clear



42. The “three in one”

and unmistakable. The Society had debts of 60 000 francs, it was in a precarious situation with regard to both Paris and Rome, that very same year there had been a big number of departures – Brother Sylvestre notably was asking to become a priest⁴⁵³ – and members of the public were waiting to see “how everything will go after the death of Father Champagnat.” Colin then went on to criticise the Brothers’ manner of governing. The matter should have been submitted for deliberation to the Council and the principal Brothers before the plans and estimated costs had been submitted to him. Finally, “Each of you is travelling in his own direction; you do not get on with each other even when you are together”. Their first priority had to be the debts and then to be less severe with the Brothers: “Never give them the impression that whether they stay or leave is a matter of indifference to you” ...

The picture is not brilliant, but already while Father Champagnat was still alive Jean-Claude Colin had been harbouring some reservations about his adventurous way of administering⁴⁵⁴ and it is only natural that he should now be ruling in favour of a more prudent style of management. This document also invites questions as to the nature of the relationship between the Director General and his Assistants and the various conceptions they had concerning government. If we are to believe Brother Avit⁴⁵⁵ who trusted the tradition of the Brothers and also his own memories, Brother François did not have the charism of a leader:

“Although he was greatly esteemed by everyone, Brother François did not have the character, the initiative, the energy and the drive of Father Champagnat. He could not capture their hearts nor could he master their wills. [...] They found him too fussy about little things, attaching too much importance to slight failings” ...

⁴⁵³ “Colin sup”, doc. 331, Letter of Father Colin of 28/3/1842 to Brother François on this question. In “Brother Sylvestre speaks about Father Champagnat” pp. 214-215 Brother Sylvestre explains that this temptation had come to him in 1840 but as Father Champagnat lay dying he had reassured him. Finally Brother François confirmed him in his vocation whereas Father Collin’s advice had been rather to let him go on to the priesthood.

⁴⁵⁴ “Colin sup”, Vol. 1, doc. 15, letter of 9/8/1837 to Champagnat.

⁴⁵⁵ *Annales de l’institut*, Vol. 1, 1840, no. 684.

Brother François' title of Director General thus seems to be a primacy of honour within a triumvirate in which the Superior was somewhat distant. Provided one is careful how one reads it, the myth of "*les trois un*" (the three-in-one), formulated in *Avis, Leçons, Sentences* Chapter 33, powerfully corroborates this situation:

"This perfect union, which was to their glory, was so well known that all three exerted the same authority, and it was known that there was no going back, no appeal from whatever was decided, promised or done by any one of them."

A gradual specialisation of tasks can be perceived with the creation of the Provinces. From 1842 Brother Jean-Baptiste was in charge of the Provinces of the Midi (the South of France), and Brother Louis-Marie the finances.⁴⁵⁶ Brother François, in addition to his main responsibility, took on the care of the Province of Nord from 1844.⁴⁵⁷

Thus, through a succession of small and tentative steps, a definitive administrative organisation was gradually being set up. We have an example of this with the establishment of the position of Visitor⁴⁵⁸ in 1846: "Up to that year the visitations to the houses had been done on an informal and friendly basis, without any regularity or established method [...] sometimes by the Brother Assistants, sometimes by other Brothers." The Superiors therefore appointed some "regional" Visitors equipped with a set of precise instructions which would later constitute the main content of the chapter in the Constitutions on the Brother Visitors. However, since they were only carrying out their responsibilities on a part-time basis, they were not very effective. Finally, in September 1848⁴⁵⁹ Brother Avit was appointed the sole Visitor for the Provinces of the Centre and the Midi, which was almost the totality of the houses.⁴⁶⁰

It seems that from 1848-1850 onwards Brother François and his Assistants specialised more in the central administration, the organisation of Province retreats and the regular correspondence with the Brothers. Brothers First Director were required to write once per month, ordinary Directors once every two months and the Brothers second in command once every four months.⁴⁶¹

Failure of a further attempt at definitive union with the Society of Mary

Whilst Father Colin was still hesitating about the opportuneness of uniting the Brothers to the Society of Mary, it seems that among the Brothers one party was

⁴⁵⁶ *Annales de l'institut*, Vol. 2, 1842, no. 97.

⁴⁵⁷ *Ibid.* Vol. 2, 1854, no.46.

⁴⁵⁸ *Ibid.* Vol. 2, 1846, nos 96-108.

⁴⁵⁹ *Ibid.* Vol. 1, p. XXX.

⁴⁶⁰ *Circulaires*, Vol. 1, p. 118. A letter to the Brothers dated 1st December 1846 announced his appointment without specifying what areas he would be responsible for. In fact, in his biography (*Annales de l'institut*" Vol. 1, p. XXVI) he was the Director at Mondragon and "visited the houses of the Province of Saint Paul when he could". The following year he was also put in charge of the Province of La Bégude.

⁴⁶¹ *Règle de 1837*, Ch. VII.

decided on pushing for this union. On 19th April 1842⁴⁶² Brothers Louis-Marie and Jean-Baptiste, in the name of “all the Brothers of Mary” addressed a petition to the General Congregation of the Society of Mary meeting in Lyon, to give their solemn approval for the union of the Brothers and the Fathers under the same Superior General, to request Rome to approve the Brothers, not as a congregation in its own right but conjointly with the Fathers, and to establish for that purpose all necessary rules and constitutions. This text, however, makes no mention at all of Brother François, who was detained at that time in Vauban,⁴⁶³ which suggests some divergence of viewpoint between himself and his two Assistants. Cardinal de Bonald appears to have been no stranger to this manoeuvre for, in his attestation of 27th July 1842 in favour of the canonical authorisation of the Marist Brothers⁴⁶⁴ he recalls that “the aggregation of the Brothers to the Marist Fathers is an act of completion which seems to us urgent and necessary in the interests of the work of God as much in Europe as beyond the seas”.

Armed with these supporting documents, Father Colin addressed a memorandum to Rome which outlined a unitary vision of the society since its origins⁴⁶⁵ “in 1815 and 1816”.⁴⁶⁶ However, Cardinal Castracane,⁴⁶⁷ who had already in 1836 refused to support a Society of Mary with several branches, managed to persuade Father Colin not to present the matter of the union of the Fathers and the Brothers. This refusal would have been a defeat for Brothers Louis-Marie and Jean-Baptiste and success for the more reserved attitude of Brother François. We may also legitimately ask whether a good part of Brother François’ illness may not have had institutional causes, with an ill-defined power permitting his Assistants to govern as they wished with the support of Father Colin. In any case, *Avis, Leçons, Sentences*⁴⁶⁸ goes much too far in its description of his self-effacing role:

“Brother François, who was almost always sick and unable to act, was forcibly obliged to leave the entire burden of administration to his Assistants, who divided the work between them, took care of business matters, directed the Brothers, decided everything, and provided for everything, with such a perfect spirit of unity, and such abnegation, that Brother François’ authority, far from diminishing, continued to increase” ...

This text seems to confirm a certain lack of unity between the Superiors rather than laud an untarnished unity.

⁴⁶² “Colin sup” Vol. 1, doc. 344.

⁴⁶³ As is made clear in a letter written by Brother Louis-Marie to Father Mazelier on 24th April 1842, which adds moreover that it was Father Colin who had called the two Brothers to the General Congregation of the Fathers “to come to an understanding with us on this important matter.”

⁴⁶⁴ “Colin sup”, Vol. 2, docs 285, 390.

⁴⁶⁵ OM2, doc. 544, p. 319: Canon Crociani had had the petition arranged “in such a way as to show that the Priests and the Brothers formed just one society. What he said was true, but he was remaining silent about some circumstances. Father Colin had a great deal of trouble leaving that document in that form” ...

⁴⁶⁶ Colin was certainly thinking of the academic years starting at All Saints: 1814-1815 and 1815-1816. In giving these two dates he seems also to be pointing to two distinct influences. Perhaps he was thinking of the priests’ group starting in the seminary (1815) and that of the Brothers (1816).

⁴⁶⁷ “Colin sup”, Vol. 2, doc. 544, nos 17-22.

⁴⁶⁸ ALS, Ch. 33.

Father Colin, therefore, played a key role in the years 1840-1844 in restoring the Brothers' confidence and reassuring the general public. He played a major part in the union with the Brothers of St-Paul and the Brothers of Viviers. In spite of his doubts, he had loyally attempted to secure a canonical union between the Fathers and the Brothers. As he had not been able to get Rome to accept a union between the Brothers and the Fathers⁴⁶⁹ in April 1844, he began to envisage more and more clearly a "managed separation",⁴⁷⁰ in which the Brothers could become a branch of the Marist Third Order, they would remain "under the protection of the Marist Fathers", and the Superior General of the Society would continue to enjoy certain rights. These rights would include presiding at the election of the Director General, admonishing the Brothers in cases of infidelity to the spirit of the Society, and receiving the vows. On 8th May he wrote to Cardinal Castracane of his decision to remove the Brothers from dependence on the Superior General of the Society of Mary. In that same year he persuaded the Superiors of the Brothers of the validity of that option. In September 1845⁴⁷¹ the Chapter of the Marist Fathers ratified his decision. Brother François now began using the title of Superior General.

Legal Recognition and General Chapter

Brother Gabriel Michel has provided us with a fundamental study of this long process.⁴⁷² A first attempt encouraged by the Archbishops of Arras, Lyon and Paris began in January 1841 but failed in 1842 and a second fizzled out in 1846. On 28th February 1848, with the Monarchy having fallen in 1848 and the accompanying revolutionary disturbances now over, Brother François made approaches to Count de Montalembert, an ardent defender of freedom of teaching, and Monsieur Falloux, who was putting forward a law which would soon do away with the University's monopoly over teaching in 1850. Besides that, a good part of public opinion had turned against the state lay teachers, who were accused of having paved the way for the Revolution in 1848. In January 1851 Bishop Parisi, Bishop of Langres



43. Decree of legal authorization of June 20, 1851 by which the President of the French Government Louis Napoleon recognizes the Institute of the Little Brothers of Mary as an establishment of public service

⁴⁶⁹ The pioneer work of Bernard Bourtot (*Frères et Pères de la Société de Marie sous le généralat du F. François, 1840-1860*, St Priest, 1999), from which a part of the information provided above has been borrowed, has permitted us make a rapid summary of this history.

⁴⁷⁰ *Ibid.* p. 33.

⁴⁷¹ *Ibid.* pp. 35-42.

⁴⁷² F. François et la reconnaissance légale des Frères Maristes (1840-1851), a manuscript of 112 pages, Rome, 1991.

and a deputy in the National Assembly, took the Marist cause very much to heart. In March of that year Brothers François and Louis-Marie went to Paris to move the matter along and on 20th June the Decree of Authorisation was signed by the Prince-President Louis-Napoleon. For the Institute it was a sort of second birth.

At the start of the first true General Chapter of the congregation in 1852 the address given by Father Colin on 4th June 1852 formalised a separation which, in terms of day to day life, had already been largely realised.⁴⁷³ Recapitulating the history of the Society of Mary and its spirituality, reminding the Brothers of the care he had taken to involve himself as little as possible in their affairs, and affirming finally that “it is the Will of God that you have a Superior to govern you in everything”, he went on to pronounce a veritable Spiritual Testament which contradicted the one left by Champagnat in 1840, but which at the same time restored Champagnat to his position as Founder, since Father Colin was thereby renouncing any claim he may have had to be heir to Champagnat.⁴⁷⁴ Even if this decision was the fruit of a long discernment on Colin’s part, it conforms to the original vision of a tree with three branches and even conceives of the Marist Fathers as a trunk rather than just one branch.

On 11th June 1852 the members of the General Chapter then addressed a letter to all the Brothers, the first signatory of which was “Brother François, Superior General”. The Rules of Government approved in May 1854 made two provisions: the first (Part 1, Section 2), “The Brother Superior has complete authority over the Brothers, but he must not govern except according to the Rules and Constitutions of the Institute.” and the second (Part 2, section 2) concerning the Assistants, “Having only a dependent authority and being there only to assist the Brother Superior and to direct things under his orders, they must never conduct themselves or their administration as if they are in charge, but always act in the name of and under the authority of the Brother Superior and carry out his intentions in all things.” Numerous complementary articles insisting on the union necessary between the Superior General and his Assistants point in the same direction.

The period 1840-1854 is therefore marked by an extraordinary growth both numerical and territorial, the establishment of independence from the Marist Fathers, legal recognition and the writing of a definitive rule. The role of Father Colin had been decisive, essentially because he had been able to adopt a correct position in regard to the Brothers. If it can be maintained with a certain truthfulness that Father Champagnat was the Co-Founder of the Marist Fathers, it may also be claimed that Father Colin was the Co-Founder of the branch of the Marist Brothers. For the Brothers, however, the years 1852-1854 were going to be very difficult, because their new status as an independent congregation would oblige them, in writing their rule, to interpret the tradition handed down from Champagnat, and this would come at a cost.

⁴⁷³ “Colin sup”, Vol. 4, Rome, 2009, doc. 340, p. 574.

⁴⁷⁴ This period of government under Father Colin largely explains why the Circulars of Brother François before 1857 never quote Father Champagnat even though they are full of his spirit.

Crisis time: the generalate of Brother François and the General Chapter (1852-1860)

The General Chapter took place over three sessions between 1852 and 1854. At the time the Brothers were holding their third session (5th to 15th May 1854), the Marist Fathers were also holding a General Chapter which accepted the resignation of Father Colin and elected Father Julien Favre in his place. This reinforced the separation of the Brothers, since Father Colin, the charismatic leader who had been seen as Father Champagnat's companion and his heir, was now leaving the forefront of the stage. It was also, for Brother François, a fearfully difficult period because the situation of the congregation was to undergo a great deal of disturbance. The Brothers would have to be brought to understand and accept the new rule, a great many new aspirants who had never known Father Champagnat needed to be formed, and the Hermitage, too out of the way and too small, would have to be replaced by a new Mother House. Finally, the separation from the Marist Fathers would oblige him to seek the canonical recognition of the Brothers by Rome.

The big positive point was the growth in numbers of the Institute, a particularly tangible sign of the blessing of God. The rhythm of Receptions of the Habit, Profession of Vows, and Brothers leaving the Institute gives an excellent indication of the broad evolutionary phases and also of possible future problems.

Evolution of the Institute from 1852 to 1860							
Year	Receptions	Obedience	Professions	Foundations	Deaths	Departures	TOTAL
1817-1840 ⁴⁷⁵	421		110 in 1839 ⁴⁷⁶	53	49	92	280-300
1817-1849 ⁴⁷⁷	440			49	106	280	
1840	16	21	6	5	7		
1841	31	21	6	3	4		
1842	58	33	5	17	7		
1843	77	51	43	8	7		
1844	115	62	30	5	7		
1845	130	59 ⁴⁷⁸	48	15	8		
1846	173		25	14	11		
1847	70 ⁴⁷⁹		24	1	23		
1848	51		18		11		

⁴⁷⁵ Evaluation of Brother Avit, Vol. 1, 1840, no. 656.

⁴⁷⁶ Avit, Vol. 1839, no. 517.

⁴⁷⁷ Avit, Vol. 1851, no. 20

⁴⁷⁸ After this date Brother Avit no longer gives numbers for the vow of obedience.

⁴⁷⁹ This drop is no doubt the effect of the Circular of 6th November 1846, which requested Brother Directors not to bring postulants for admission without the agreement of the Superiors. This measure was due to the economic crisis which was rampant in France at the time and had resulted in very high prices for basic foodstuffs.

1849	78		36		10		
1850	92		28	10	19		
1851	117		49	22	12		826
Total 1840-1851	1008		318		100	111	
Estimates of Br Avit⁴⁸⁰	917	80 Brothers Viviers and St Paul		101	111	345	826 Professed and Novices

Although some approximations are revealed, these three sources which all come from the same author, highlight one major fact, namely, that in the space of ten years the Little Brothers of Mary had almost tripled in their total numbers, the number of their professed Brothers and the number of their schools. And this in spite of the economic and political crisis of the years 1847-1849, which were marked by a clear drop-off in the number of entries, an increase in the number of departures and a quasi-cessation in the opening of new schools. Since, in a very short space of time the Brothers who had been formed by Father Champagnat had become the minority, it was high time that the congregation was given some solid institutional bases. The civil authorisation arrived just at the right moment to allow this to happen.

The Chapter did not take place without some tensions which are described by Brother Avit⁴⁸¹ who gives us the detail that the Superiors had been working on the rule for six years. Consulted by Brother François, Father Lagniet replied in a letter dated 14th April 1852⁴⁸² with some relatively severe remarks on their project. The rules were too full of minute detail and the chapter on the vows would have to be revised, etc. It was around the election of the capitulants, however, that the first difficulties would appear because the number of professed Brothers was now too great and they were too widely dispersed to permit a General Convocation, as had been the case in 1839. Also, the Superiors had drawn up a list of 68 eligible Brothers based on three criteria:

- The “seniors” who had 15 years of Profession, and who had been or were currently Directors.
- For Viviers and St-Paul, the Brothers from those Provinces who had been Directors at the time of the union with the Marist Brothers.
- The Directors of the principal houses if they were professed (certain Directors had the Brevet but were not professed) and at least 10 years in community.

The Province of the Hermitage would thus have 41 eligible, Saint Paul 11, Viviers 12, and Nord 4. But this method of election aroused criticism.⁴⁸³ According

⁴⁸⁰ Vol. 2, 1851, covering the period June 1840 to January 1851.

⁴⁸¹ Vol. 2, 1852, nos 8-69.

⁴⁸² Avit, Vol. 2, nos 9-20.

⁴⁸³ Certain ones wanted all the Professed to be eligible which, according to Brother Avit “would have been a huge mess.” One Brother from Nord, “one of the most capable and deep down a good religious” accused the system of preventing the professed Brothers from nominating those who had their confidence because they were not eligible.

to Brother Avit, who indirectly gives his opinion on this method of election: "In general the Brothers would have wanted all the Professed Brothers who had been in community for ten years, whether they were Directors or not, to be eligible as having the same rights." The regime had therefore privileged a system favouring the most senior Brothers and those in positions of responsibility, a decision which can be explained by the desire to safeguard tradition and authority in the face of the rising tide of young ones. External causes can also be noted. The recent revolutions in Europe in 1848 was still very much in the forefront of people's minds, and on 2nd December 1851 there had been the eruption onto the scene of the authoritarian regime of the man who was soon to become the Emperor Napoleon III.

During the first session of the Chapter, from 31st May to 15th June 1852, the Superiors seemed to be fearing some strong opposition. But Brother Avit, who was the Chapter Secretary, stresses the fact that several members of the Chapter had no experience of debating matters. Two of them wanted "to vote for everything the regime (the Superiors) wanted" and, even more importantly, two thirds of the capitulants "did not dare to speak up, even to bring forward decisions that they wanted." Brother Avit boasted that he had been among those who had been willing and able to speak against motions, who had prevented the three Superiors from forbidding the use of watches, and who had got the vote on the wearing of the cloth stocking passed by acclamation.⁴⁸⁴ In the autobiography he gives at the start of his *Annales*,⁴⁸⁵ where he declares that he had been to all the capitular assemblies from 1852 to 1883, he seems to be referring principally to this Chapter: "There was a lot of comment going around about his attitude in these meetings. He spoke according to his conscience and his lights, and did not worry about the flattering remarks or the insults coming at him from right and left. The ones who were already being called the Reds⁴⁸⁶ at times counted him as one of their own, although they had no reason to do so."

The sessions had therefore been stormy at times. At the end of the Chapter, on 11th June, Father Colin transmitted to Brother François complaints that had come to him from different sides "of which some even are very long and anonymous" and which were based on two distinct sources of grievance, namely, that the Suffrages for the Deceased did not conform to the rules laid down by Father Champagnat, and that not enough attention had been paid to the health of the young Brothers. In fact this letter seems to have been picking up again a campaign which had been led by the Director of Lavalla and to which Brother François had replied with a public letter condemning the Brother in the harshest of terms. Brother Avit's judgement was that the letter had provoked a painful impression and that, "a large number imagined that the Superiors wanted to stifle discussion on this matter."

But, according to Brother Avit, of the eight or ten capitulants, himself included, who were considered to be the opposition, only two, one being the Procurator General*, persisted in their intransigence and they would be leaving the congre-

⁴⁸⁴ *Annales de l'institut*, Vol. 2, 1850, nos 49-54.

⁴⁸⁵ *Ibid.* Vol. 1, p. XXXI.

⁴⁸⁶ The atmosphere of the 1848 Revolution was still around at this time. During the Revolution the 'Reds' were the extreme left.

gation after the third session, as also did the Director. The rumour went around that he himself would not be long in doing the same (no. 53).⁴⁸⁷ When he stood up to go and make the Vow of Stability at the retreat of 1856, there was “an almost general reaction of astonishment” (1854, no. 53). (*Translator: this title was later changed to that of *Econome General*.)

Brother Avit does not give us very much on the second and third sessions. He makes allusion to the creation of the Vow of Stability, which he seems to have supported, but he does record⁴⁸⁸ that during the Chapter, Brother François called the capitulants together without the knowledge of his two Assistants, to ask their opinion of the choice of a Vicar General. In the end, the election of Brother Pascal as a third Assistant, partly resolved the problem. This step, however, betrays a certain lack of trust among “the three-in-one”.⁴⁸⁹ Brother Avit makes it clear that the events he reports were never recorded anywhere – Brother Louis-Marie was keeping tight control over the recording of the Minutes⁴⁹⁰ – and, even if he does have a tendency to emphasise his own role in matters, the greater part of what he asserts is credible.

In the end, the Superiors succeeded in rallying the majority by posing as the guardians of healthy tradition, even when they were implementing important innovations. Brother Sylvestre,⁴⁹¹ who declared that he had never heard the Vow of Stability spoken of by Father Champagnat, recalls that “a document in the Venerated Founder’s own handwriting... [was circulated among the capitulants] ... which each capitulant saw with his own eyes and which spelt out clearly: the Brothers of this Institute will make the three Vows of Poverty, Chastity and Obedience and the Vow of Stability.”

Nevertheless, this Chapter, with its rather heated discussions and debates, seems to have deeply affected Brother François. Brother Avit went on to establish a link between this event and a decline in Brother François’ health: “His headaches became more and more numerous, and the problems and complications of administration became more and more painful for him [...] Again he left all the official business matters to this Assistants, just reserving to himself the exercises of the interior life and the religious direction of the Institute.”⁴⁹²

Brother Avit is certainly exaggerating the degree of this withdrawal, since it was Brother François who again undertook the negotiations with Rome starting in 1858, and he did not have a monopoly on problems with health – Brother Jean-Baptiste was a bad asthmatic and Brother Louis-Marie, although possessing a more robust constitution, was occasionally ill. It is nevertheless possible that Brother François interpreted the Chapter of 1852-1854 as being the way the mission confided to him by Father Champagnat had turned out, and that this had involved a certain personal failure on his part.

⁴⁸⁷ He again recalls when commenting on 1856 that the rumour was going around that he had “thrown the habit into the bush” (a colloquial expression meaning to leave the religious life or the priesthood). Vol. 2, 1856, no. 50.

⁴⁸⁸ *Annales de l’institut*, Vol. 2, 1854, nos 46-48.

⁴⁸⁹ Brother Avit states that one of the Assistants wanted to have him (Avit) elected but his outspokenness on the articles under discussion had antagonised the majority. (Vol. 2, 1854, no. 51).

⁴⁹⁰ *Annales de l’institut*, Vol. 2, 1852, no. 67.

⁴⁹¹ Brother Sylvestre speaks about Father Champagnat, p. 152.

⁴⁹² Avit, 1854, nos 46, 54.

Brother Louis-Marie and the building of St-Genis-Laval

Brother Louis-Marie had shown himself more resolute and this attitude was symbolically expressed in the construction of the new Mother House, which broke with the model of the Hermitage conceived of as a holy city⁴⁹³ situated in a relatively isolated location. Brother Louis-Marie had not spent much time living at the Hermitage in Father Champagnat's time, so it was without too many qualms that he opted for a house at St-Genis-Laval near Lyon, an infinitely more strategic location for a rapidly growing congregation.

It was the Parish Priest of St-Genis-Laval who got the Superiors out of their difficulty. Having come to make negotiations for the opening of a primary school,⁴⁹⁴ he offered to act as intermediary for the purchase of a fine property of almost 12 hectares. On 1st July the Little Brothers of Mary bought the property of "Le Montet" for 230 000 francs. From 1854 to 1858, under the orders of Brother Louis-Marie, first Assistant, a large and spacious building was erected there, and between August and September the community of the Hermitage moved to St-Genis-Laval.

The building had a grandiose appearance that posed a problem for Brother François.⁴⁹⁵ When he relinquished the exercise of power in 1860, he retired to the Hermitage to live in what he called "the great reliquary of Father Champagnat."⁴⁹⁶ From now on, the congregation would have its inspired valley distinct from its command centre. Brother Avit stresses that most of the Brothers were in a hurry to come and see the construction and, always ready with a caustic remark, he adds, "One (Brother Louis-Marie) showed oneself very ready to grant them permission."⁴⁹⁷ He admits that he himself was in no hurry to see it and criticised Brother Louis-Marie's attachment to that house, the construction of which he had directed from end to end. "It is only natural for the cow to stay close to its calf," as Brother François was to say later.⁴⁹⁸

This very beautiful calf, however, was not just the new Mother House but the congregation itself. From 1852 Brother Louis-Marie had in fact been exercising a co-directorship of the Institute with Brother François. Brother Jean-Baptiste was busy with the Provinces of the South and the writing of the foundational texts of the Institute and Brother Pascal, the new Assistant, was directing the small Province of Nord. At the Capitular Assembly of 18th to 20th July 1860, when Brother François handed over the administration of the Institute to Brother Louis-Marie, the capitulants were only formalising what had already become a de facto situation.

Accelerated growth but a doubling of departures

The various episodes associated with the Chapter of 1852-1854 may help to explain a significant drop in the number of professions in 1855-1856. Likewise,

⁴⁹³ Brother Sylvestre, *Mémoires* ... roneoed folio, p. 153.

⁴⁹⁴ C2, p. 485.

⁴⁹⁵ Avit, 1858, nos 38-39.

⁴⁹⁶ Abbé Ponty, *Vie du F. François*, p. 230 ; Br Sylvestre, *op. cit.*, p. 135.

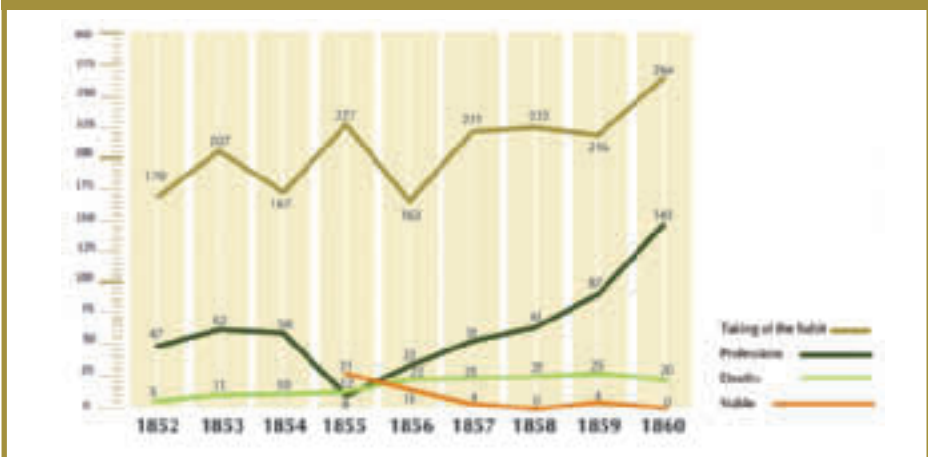
⁴⁹⁷ *Annales de l'institut*, Vol. 2, 1855, nos 14-15.

⁴⁹⁸ Avit, Vol. 2, 1858, no. 40.

Brother Avit notes that from March 1851 to January 1856 the number of departures had risen to 66 per year whereas from 1840 to 1851 it had only been 35. The fact remains, however, that the time of Brother François was the time of the most rapid growth of the Institute. In his assessment of the twenty years of Brother François' generalate, Brother Avit estimates that he opened 331 schools and closed 12. In 1860 there were 1385 Brothers, that is those fully Professed and those with the Vow of Obedience, teaching in 379 schools and boarding establishments and 60 in the novitiate houses. The sick Brothers, those doing studies and the novices were not included in those statistics, so the total number would be broadly speaking higher than 1500. In twenty years the Institute had seen the total number of Brothers and schools increase by a multiple of seven.

Year	Receptions	Professions	Foundations	Deaths	Stability	TOTAL
1852	170	47	22	5		
1853	207	62	41	11		
1854	167	58	29	10		
1855	227	8	33	12	21 ⁴⁹⁹	
1856	163	32	19	22	13	1.043
1857	221	51	27	21	4	1.106 Br employed
1858	222	61	19	22	0	
1859	216	87	7	25	4	
1860	264	145 ⁵⁰⁰	17	20	0	1.445 Br employed
TOTAL	1.857	551	214	148	42	

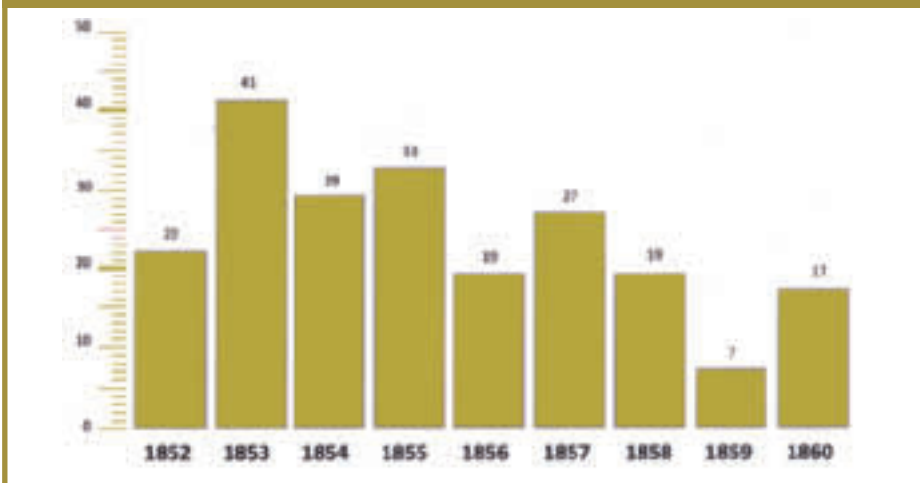
STATISTICS 2. Evolution of professions and deaths in the Institute from 1852 to 1860



⁴⁹⁹ Following the establishment of the Vow of Stability by the General Chapter.

⁵⁰⁰ The Brothers of St-Paul thus expressed their gratitude to Brother Jean-Baptiste (cf. Avit).

STATISTICS 3. Foundations from 1852–1860



This was not only a change in size but also a change in nature, since the years 1851 to 1858 have the appearance of a line of demarcation between a time of continuity and a period of profound reorganisation which was generating ongoing unrest. Brother François symbolises the first period when the Brothers' lives were largely lived according to oral traditions and customs sustained by the memory of Father Champagnat. Brother Louis-Marie incarnates the following phase, the phase of the Rule, the writing of which had given rise to quarrels and disagreements. The introduction of the Vow of Stability⁵⁰¹ without any serious foundation in tradition seems to be the sign of a certain fear that the primitive spirit may have been dissolving before the rising tide of young ones. It may also have been a sign that those governing the Institute did not have the authority needed to ensure the cohesion of the body. It was, too, the choice for a very hierarchical form of society.

⁵⁰¹ Rules of Government, Ch. VI, Section 3.

11.

ELABORATING THE DOCTRINE (1840-1856)

From the teachings of Champagnat to the Life of the Founder

The elaboration of the Institute's legislation had not been something improvised. It had been based on the collection of the Founder's teachings that had been begun in 1840.⁵⁰² Brother Jean-Baptiste is regarded as the principal one involved in collecting these memorabilia because he has left an account of the birth of his vocation,⁵⁰³ the Founder having invited him several times, but especially at Christmas 1837, to write a chronicle of events. His work as a historian and biographer would not have begun, however, had it not been for a visit of Father Maîtrepierre – eighteen months after the death of the Founder – who requested him, in the name of Father Colin, to gather notes on Father Champagnat. Reverend Brother François, Director General and one of his very first disciples, had not wanted to take on this task because of his various occupations and his headaches, so Brother Jean-Baptiste set to work.

A work of remembering starting in 1840 – the role of Brother François

The account given above does not, however, fit with other documentation we have. Indeed, starting with the circular letter of 6th June 1840 announcing the death of the Founder, Brother François informed the Brothers that “a detailed account of the circumstances of the death of our good Father Superior” would be sent from the Mother House to each establishment,⁵⁰⁴ and on 8th September 1840⁵⁰⁵ the Circular convoking the Brothers for the Retreat reminded them:

⁵⁰² In *Origines Maristes* (Vol. 2, pp. 729-763) Fathers Coste and Lessard have set out a scenario of the gathering of the source materials on Marcellin Champagnat after his death.

⁵⁰³ Preface to *Biographies de quelques frères* (1868).

⁵⁰⁴ It seems that Chapters 21-21 of Part I of the *Life* of the Founder took their inspiration from this document of which no trace now remains.

⁵⁰⁵ *Circulaires*, Vol. 1, p. 43.

“We will encounter him (the Founder) again in this monument to his zeal and his devotedness to us, in the memory of his holy instructions, in sharing together our stories about his virtues and his saintly example.”

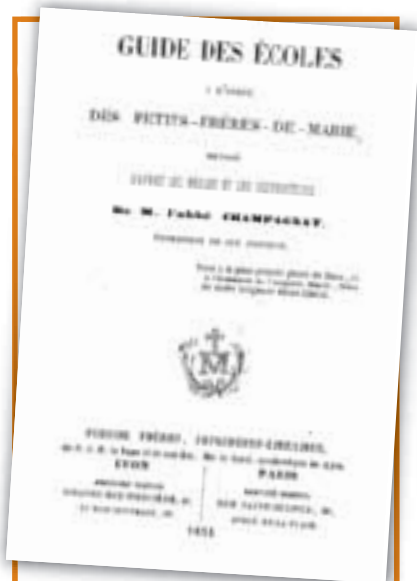
More especially, the Circular of 10th August 1841,⁵⁰⁶ that is to say, fourteen months after the death of Champagnat, enjoins on the Brothers:

“to carefully collect and send us all the memories which may be used for the history of our dear and holy Founder, letters of his that may be found in the houses, private letters he may have written unless they contain confidential material; anything that remains of his instructions, his sayings and the details of his life.”

The Preface to the *Life of Father Champagnat*⁵⁰⁷ vouches the existence of this first collection of source materials by making it clear that it was in this collection that the Founder’s words had first been gathered together and his instructions analysed. Only then does the Preface go on to remind us that the events reported come from four sources: written notes from the Brothers further expanded by conversations with them; testimonial statements from those who had known him, particularly priests; Father Champagnat’s own writings, in particular his correspondence both sent and received, and finally the author’s own recollections. It was from this complex corpus that the Superiors prepared the Rule that appeared in the forms of⁵⁰⁸ the *Common Rules* (1852), *The Teacher’s Guide* (1853) and the *Rules of Government* (1854).

“It (the regime) is consulting with great care all the writings, all the notes, all the instructions on the Rules left by the holy founder, they are collecting them, they are taking from them everything that can properly throw light on or explain certain points of the Rule, linking them with one another and completing them.”⁵⁰⁹

Father Mayet, a Marist Father very much concerned with gathering source materials on the origins of the Society of Mary, has given us information on how the work was being carried out with a view to writing the *Life of Father Champagnat*. In 1842 he noted:



44. *Guide of the Schools* (1854). Codification of the Marist pedagogy, which served as a guide to the Marists of the first centuries

⁵⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 58. The circular of 25th August 1842 renewed the invitation.

⁵⁰⁷ The 1989 edition, pp. XVIII – XIX.

⁵⁰⁸ *Life*, Part I, Ch. 23, p. 259.

⁵⁰⁹ In the letter of 1852 introducing the Common Rules, the members of the Chapter voiced a slightly different opinion which recognises three sources: “Not all (the rules) have come in written form from the hand of our holy founder, but they are all from him; for either we heard them from his mouth, or we have assembled them from among his writings or from the practices he had established among us.”

“Their history has to be found in the recollections which the Brothers are recording following the advice of Father Maîtreperre.” After staying at the Hermitage from 19th to 25th March 1847, Father Mayet wrote on his return:

“Reading the life of Father Champagnat seemed like reading the life of one of the desert fathers: I found in it superb traits of contempt for the world, and deeds that are not of this century.”

In 1853-1854, (OM2, p. 72) at the beginning of an article on Father Champagnat, he wrote, alluding to his visit of 1847:

“The Marist Brothers [...] have in their hands magnificent materials on the life of this admirable man and they propose, after having arranged them in a suitable way, to publish them in an extended form. The voluminous notebooks containing these edifying details were lent to us for some days by these good Brothers.”

In 1847 the teachings and the testimonies on the life of Champagnat were only in the form of “voluminous notebooks”. But in 1854 he would note again: “Life of Father Champagnat by the Marist Brothers, manuscript.” From this we can deduce that in 1847 the life of Father Champagnat was not yet being written even if there were in existence some complete accounts such as the one by Brother François in 1840 announcing the illness and death of Father Champagnat. In contrast, by 1854 a draft was in progress if not already complete. However, the authorisation of the congregation by the government must have interfered with the completion of the process because of the need to give the priority to establishing the congregation’s definitive Rules.

The Manual for Directors, providing evidence on the writing of the Life of the Founder

Hidden behind this somewhat mysterious title there lies a collection of ninety-three sets of written records of conferences given at the Brothers’ retreats from 1853 to 1862, at St Paul-Trois-Châteaux up to 1860, and after that at Saint Genis-Laval. The first fifty seven were given by Brother Jean-Baptiste. The bulk of the subsequent material came from Brother Louis-Marie. The author of these records is almost certainly Brother Terence who had responded to the request for documents made by Brother Louis-Marie at the time of the death of Brother Jean-Baptiste in 1872. Director at Suze-la-Rousse, near St Paul, and something of a chemist when the fancy took him, he accidentally poisoned two young Brothers who were passing through and whom he had wanted to refresh with a drink of his own concoction, and one of them had died as a result. Subsequently ostracised from his Province of origin, he was attached to the Province of St Genis-Laval, which accounts for why the notes were taken at retreats given at St Paul and then later at St Genis. His biography makes a discreet reference to this incident, but a more detailed account appears in the *Annales des Maisons* of Brother Avit.

One of the riches of this *Manual* is its rather large number of references to Father Champagnat. The most interesting are those of Brother Jean-Baptiste in 1854-1855, hence before the publication of the *Life* of the Founder, because one can feel how full he is of his subject matter and he gives quotations that are often

found again in the *Life* and even in later writings. Thus, speaking of vocation in Instruction No. 1 of 1854, he was already developing the theme “the misfortune of losing one’s vocation” which appears again in almost identical form in 1868 in Chapter 3 of *Avis, Leçons, Sentences*. Most notably, when he is giving a conference on obedience to the Brothers at St Paul, he uses a story, only changing the place names to ones familiar to his listeners, which appears once again in the *Life* on pages 350-352 of Chapter 8 of Part II, the chapter which deals with obedience.

“Listen to this comparison given by Father Champagnat. A soldier is going from Lyon to Marseille, and his superior officers have signed his route map. Is it not true that the more this soldier sticks to the route marked out for him, the more he will receive protection, lodgings, food and everything he needs wherever he goes, and it will be at the government’s expense; but if he decides to go via Gap and Bordeaux, well, then! he will have to meet the cost of his food and all his other travel expenses himself, and, what’s more, everywhere he goes the gendarmes will take him for a deserter and will demand to see his papers, and so it will only be after a great deal of trouble that he will reach Marseille.”⁵¹⁰

In the same year there is an examination of conscience on failures in the supervision of children (Conference No. 3), which foreshadows a passage in Chapter 22 of the *Life*:

LIFE, CH. 22, P. 532	CONFERENCE
<p>“Suppose you are absent from the class for five minutes; those minutes, multiplied by the forty or fifty pupils that you have, give three or four hours of wasted time. Is the fault, then, so insignificant after all? But that brief span of five minutes is enough time for the enemy to throw a spark into your class capable of becoming a conflagration; considered from this point of view, your fault is far more serious.”</p>	<p>“See this Brother who leaves his class, but it is only for two minutes. My Brothers, your children will be doing nothing during those two minutes, 50 pupils each one wasting 2 minutes, which makes 2 hours of time wasted and is it nothing to cause you children to lose 2 hours? Is this not a theft? Is it not an injustice and you are not telling it in Confession? But that is only the lesser evil; when the Brother [118] comes back to his class, are the children just as he left them? Oh, my God! Who can assure him of this? Who will tell him? They are nothing more now than demons; they have communicated their vices to one another, and they have all been corrupted.”</p>

In the same conference Brother Jean-Baptiste gives us some words coming from Father Champagnat which, although they do not appear in the *Life*, could well be authentic:

“Oh my God,” he was saying as he was dying, “What remorse will the Brothers feel if, through their fault, a single mortal sin has been committed within their

⁵¹⁰ Compare this text with the *Life*, Part II, Chapter 8, pages 351-352. Brother Jean-Baptiste mentions towns that would have been well known to the Brothers at Saint Paul.

house! If the children cannot be supervised, send them away: it is better they commit evil away from your house than inside it.”

Finally, with Conference No. 10 from 1854 the author indicates: “reading of a chapter from the life of Father Champagnat (his great spirit of faith).” He does not develop it, but his text is certainly close to what is in Chapter 2 of the *Life* (Part II). And thus it was that certain parts of the *Life*, already in an advanced stage of development, were being tried out on the Brothers.

In 1855 Brother Jean-Baptiste continues: Conference No. 6 consists of a “Reading of the life of Father Champagnat. The lukewarm religious does more harm than the scandalous religious... 5 reasons...” As we do not find in the *Life* a chapter of that name, Brother Jean-Baptiste must have withdrawn it or combined it with elements of Chapter 18 of the *Life* dealing with vocation. He probably used it later, however, just as it was, in the Preface to *Biographies de quelques frères* (1868) on pages XIV-XVII (*Our Models in Religion*, Grugliasco, 1936, PP. 16-18). There we find a long passage offering five points in answer to the question: “Who are those who do not live as religious?” The reading given to the Brothers at Saint Paul in 1855 is not therefore the actual text of the *Life*, but it is more or less what we read in the Preface to the *Biographies*.

Similarly, we find the essential content of Conference No. 8, on authority at the start of Chapter 16 in Part II of his *Life*: “Care taken by Father Champagnat to correct his Brothers’ defects” ... (p. 438)

CONFERENCE (1855)	LIFE OF FATHER CHAMPAGNAT, CH. 16, P. 439
<p>Oh, how well our Father founder knew how to do things: he was feared the way fire is feared, but he never scolded; he passed by; he saw something that was out of place, he would look at it and, shaking his head, he would simply say, ‘That’s not a very edifying thing to do’ or, ‘I was expecting that from you, Brother.’ After hearing that, the Brother was troubled for half a day; he then went to see Father in his room to ask for a penance. Father kindly said to him, ‘What! Are you still thinking about that? Brother, I’ve already forgotten about it. Go now, and just try to do better. The Brother left happy and was completely changed. Father was a man of great severity, but his [210] kindness was even greater; that’s what won the hearts of us all.</p>	<p>“Father Champagnat thoroughly detested a scolding disposition and he was never known to be guilty in this regard. Once a reproof was given, he forgot the wrongs involved and if the offender happened to raise them with him, his replay would be: ‘That will do, my dear friend, Enough said! I have forgotten your fault; don’t go on worrying about it and think only about doing better in the future.’ If he came upon someone doing wrong, most of the time he would simply give a reproving look or speak a few words of blame. One day he went into the kitchen, and there was the Brother in charge, up on the stove, busy reciting jokes for the benefit of his confrères; the only comment of the Founder was to say: ‘That’s not a very fine way for a Brother to set a good example’.”</p>

At the Retreat of 1856 the *Life* of Father Champagnat, which had recently been published, was to be read out to the Brothers in the dining rooms. This did not prevent Brother Jean-Baptiste from reading out or orally elaborating some passages and giving them a different sense, unless the author did not transcribe them correctly. This would be the case for a conference given in in 1857 or 1858 on irregular Brothers:

“Do you know what name Father Champagnat used to give those Brothers who were irregular? He called them the Revolutionaries. ‘Yes,’ he would say, ‘when I was still little, I would hear my old uncle talking about the Revolution. I said to him, ‘Uncle, what is the Revolution? Is it a man or a woman?’ The Revolutionaries are the people who want to create disorder everywhere, who don’t find anything good in the way the State is constituted.”

Now, in the *Life* (Part I, Ch. 1, p. 4) the question was put to his aunt to find out if the Revolution was a man or a beast, to which the aunt replied that it was more cruel than a beast. It is not unthinkable that Father Champagnat should compare Brothers who were irregular to revolutionaries. We find, moreover, in Collection 307 of Brother François (pp. 13-14) an instruction with the title “Rule”, which declares; “A good religious is a treasure; a bad religious is a scourge, a plague, a revolutionary.” This, however, was a reference to the Revolution of 1830, which had just occurred, and the *Life*, wisely, did not retain this term.

What the *Manual for Directors* shows us is that Brother Jean-Baptiste was making use of a provisional version of the *Life* of the Founder, which had certainly been begun much earlier, and which he then modified for the 1856 edition, notably by removing some chapters or passages which he used later in other works.

Have the “voluminous notebooks” survived?

Neither the draft version of the *Life*, nor the “voluminous notebooks” seen by Father Mayet have come down to us. This does not mean that they were deliberately destroyed. The transfer of everything from the Hermitage to St Genis-Laval, plus poor conservation conditions, may explain their disappearance. Besides that, in an Institute focused on action and not having an intellectual tradition, draft materials of this sort could well have seemed not worth keeping now that the official versions were available. Nor must we forget either, the concern felt to respect the confidentiality of the testimony provided. In any case these source materials seem to have disappeared before Brother Avit began writing his *Annales de l’institut* in 1884, because it would be difficult otherwise to understand why, since he had access to the archives at St Genis-Laval, he would not have made some allusion to them. Nevertheless, if we do not still have the “voluminous notebooks”, we do at least have voluminous collections of Conferences, some copied by Brother François, others put together from papers left by Brother Jean-Baptiste at the time of his death, all of which have strong links with the original doctrine.

Retreats and note-taking

To explain this fact, it is important to remind ourselves of the importance of the retreats in the oral and written transmission of the Marist spirit. Brother François (Notebook 301, p. 65; notebook 303 “Retreat of 1832”) gives us a daily timetable which continued in use well after the time of Father Champagnat. In the course of

the day, there were three meditations, certainly given by the preacher, followed by a quarter of an hour of reflection time during which “Brothers write just a few words on things that have made the most impression on them”. After the conference, “or other matters relative to the retreat” from 9.15 am to 10.00 am,⁵¹¹ – always given by Father Champagnat, according to Brother Jean-Baptiste – “Brothers reflect, or write a few notes up to 10.15 am”. After the midday meal and evening supper, there is recreation in silence, during which Brothers “may write or do something else of the same sort as they do in the free time.” From 2.15 pm to 2.45 pm there was reading in common, after which “Brothers will be able to write some notes on the same subject.” After the Conference, which took place at 4.15 pm, again there was “time for reflection or for writing a few notes.” In the four short periods of free time during the day Brothers could also “write notes”. It is obviously these notes that Brother François is referring to in his Circular of 10th August 1841⁵¹² which asked for not only the Founder’s letters but also “anything they had remaining from his conferences, his sayings and the details of his life.”⁵¹³

In Father Champagnat’s time there was only one retreat, usually preached by a Marist Father, but the union with the Brothers of Saint Paul (1842) and Viviers (1844) made it necessary to multiply the venues and in 1846 there were four retreats spaced out over the period from 15th August to the end of September.⁵¹⁴ From 1852 onwards there were two retreats at the Hermitage, the first at the end of August, the second beginning in mid-September. From 1853 the first of these was reserved for Brothers in the full-time boarding schools, as well as in schools taking weekday boarders only. In 1855 and 1856 retreats also took place in the Province of Périgueux, that is at Hautefort, the future Province of Lacabane. In 1857 the number of venues came back to four, with St Genis-Laval replacing the Hermitage from 1858.⁵¹⁵ For the Superiors these retreat times constituted a crushing workload, without counting the time taken up with travelling and with the need to prepare the conferences and instructions. But it was also the occasion when they could deliver to the Brothers the original doctrine, even if the spiritual teaching properly so called was given by the retreat preachers. They therefore built up compendiums of conferences taking as their starting point the notes they had personally taken back in Father Champagnat’s time, as well as drawing on the materials contained in the “voluminous notebooks.”

We also have in our possession the preparations made by Brother François in Notebook 309 for his “Summaries of Conferences” where he details his topics and gives the references to the sources he would be drawing on in his treatment of them. We get a glimpse of them in the following table.

⁵¹¹ The precise time for the end is not given in the text.

⁵¹² Volume 1, p. 60.

⁵¹³ See the life of Brother Louis in *Our Models in Religion* compiled from exercise books containing his spiritual notes. (p. 21).

⁵¹⁴ In the Province of Nord on the octave of the Assumption; at the Hermitage from 31st August; at La Bégude on 14th September.

⁵¹⁵ *Circulaires*, Vol. 1, pp. 173,192, 227, 256, 293, 323, 367, 402.

RETREAT AT BEAUCAMPS, 1856	RETREATS AT ST PAUL AND LA BÉGUDE, 1859
I/ 1. Knowing oneself; 2. Making oneself known to one's Superior, to one's confessor.	I/ Perfection in the religious state.
II/ Poverty	II/ The pleasures of the religious. Three states one may find oneself in during the retreat: 1. Fervour; 2. Dryness; 3. Trials.
III/ Charity. 1. Loving oneself; 2. Putting up with oneself; 3. Examples of O.L., the Saints; 4. Advantages of charity.	III/ Spirit of the Institute. Morning, midday and evening: resolving to make the retreat well.
IV/ Fraternal correction; 1. Doing it; 2. Receiving it.	IV/ Filial spirit towards God; 1. Gratitude; 2. Compunction; 3. Avoiding anxiety.
V/ Obedience	V/ Abuse of graces: 1. Treating them with contempt; 2. Receiving them without making good use of them; 3. Making use of them to offend God.
VI/ Visits, travels	VI/ Zeal, excellence, advantages; 1. J.C.; 2. The Apostles; 3. Missionaries, the price of the soul.
VII/ Vocation; 1. Necessity; 2. Importance; 3. Losing it.	VII/ Education. Necessity; 1. Parent's lack of concern; 2. The children's ignorance; 3. The children's passions.
VIII/ Joy. Sadness.	VIII/ Discipline, supervision, correction. 1. Without discipline, no education; 2. Without supervision, no discipline; 3. Correction, the sinews of discipline.
IX/ Constancy, discouragement.	

Concerning the conferences given by Brother Jean-Baptiste, the *Manual for Directors* gives us the topics dealt with in 1853-1855.⁵¹⁶

⁵¹⁶ For the retreat of 1856, 4 instructions only; 8 in 1857; none in 1858; 11 in 1859; none in 1860; 6 in 1861.

RETREAT OF 1853	RETREAT OF 1854	RETREAT OF 1855
1. On the Rule	1. On vocation	1. How to make the retreat well
2. What a good religious owes to his Sup	2. On the predominant passion	2. Purpose of religious bodies
3. The trust the good rel. owes to his Sup	3. The predominant passion, cont.	3. Sacrament of Penance
4. On the Brother Director.	4. Principal defects of Brothers	4. Education
5. Advantages, pitfalls of rel. life	5. Direction: necessity, advantages	5. Venial sin
6. Continued . 4. Pitfall: gossip	6. Vow of Poverty	6. Discipline.
7. Instruction owed to children	7. How to sustain oneself during the year	7. The lukewarm religious ⁵¹⁷
8. Regularity	8. Love of O.L.J.C.	8. On authority
9. On the choice of discipline	9. Developing one's judgement	9. Continued: 6. Source of authority.
10. Aim of our vocation: zeal	10. Vow of Obedience ⁵¹⁸	10. Vow of Stability
11. Zeal continued: means	11. How to find happiness	11. We must love our Institute

In any case, today we have eight manuscripts remaining, five of them from Brother Jean-Baptiste⁵¹⁹ and three from Brother François,⁵²⁰ which seem to have close connections with the notebooks that were seen by Father Mayet, since when we compare numerous passages from the *Life* or the Rules, or even from later works, with certain ones of the conferences contained in these manuscripts, the connections are obvious. Likewise, many of the conferences collected by Brother Jean-Baptiste are found again in Brother François' material, formulated in terms which, while not identical, are very similar in their expression, as if the two Superiors, each acting on his own, had recorded the recollections of different Brothers.

⁵¹⁷ Reading from a chapter of the *Life* of Father Champagnat on this subject.

⁵¹⁸ And reading from the chapter in his *Life* on his spirit of faith. This is in 1854. The work did not appear until 1856.

⁵¹⁹ AFM/5201. 21: composed of 97 meditations on the great truths; AFM/5201. 22: composed of 88 subjects for the examination of conscience; AFM/5201. 23: collection of conferences, summaries of conferences, letters, examination of conscience; AFM/5201. 24: Collection of conferences; AFM/5201. 25: *Treatise on Education*.

⁵²⁰ AFM 5101/307; AFM 5101/308; AFM 5101/309

It can therefore be reliably supposed that a good part of the corpus of documents used to compose the foundational literature of the Institute has been preserved for us, even if they have been mixed in with additions and later modifications. In this work of preserving the memory of the Founder the role played by Brother François is particularly important. Further even than that, it seems that the materials he collected, a task largely completed before 1850, may be closer to the original sources than those collected by Brother Jean-Baptiste.

The Circulars of Brother François: the first spiritual literature widely disseminated

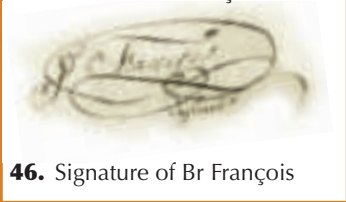
If, as has just been shown, most of the work done in preparation for the writing of the Rules of the Institute and its books remained in manuscript form and was treated as confidential, the Circulars of Brother François were the first official manifestations of the spirituality of the Institute since Brother François continued Father Champagnat's tradition of twice a year sending out Circulars containing a mixture of administrative matters and spiritual teaching.

Let us pause for a moment and think about the technical aspects involved in the production of these texts. Brother Avit mentions⁵²¹ that Father Champagnat had first written them by hand and had then "had them transcribed by some Brothers who were more or less skilled (in handwriting)". Later he had them lithographed by Brother Marie-Jubin. The first one produced in this fashion was the Circular of 21st August 1838,⁵²² but still it was very short. After 1842, Brother François had the Circulars printed.⁵²³

Starting in 1848 the Circulars began to get longer and were often linked to an event. For example, the Circular of 1st January 1853 on the Rule⁵²⁴ was occasioned by the publication of the *Common Rules* of 1852. That of 2nd February 1855 (pp. 302-222)



45. Portrait of Br François



46. Signature of Br François

⁵²¹ *Annales de l'institut*, Vol. 2, p. 176.

⁵²² *Ibid*, Vol. 1, p.393; *Letters of Father Champagnat*, No. 210.

⁵²³ But before 1848 no thought was given to putting them aside in order to make up volumes which would then have constituted a first collection of Circulars preceding the one published in 1917.

⁵²⁴ *Collection of Circulars* (English ed.), Grugliasco 1932, Vol. 1, pp. 101-124. Note that the English edition of 1932 is based on a selection of Circulars first published in French in Lyon in 1885. A fuller and later French edition produced for the Centenary of the Congregation in 1917 has never been translated into English. (Clarification received from Br André Lanfrey on 6th April 2016).

celebrated the proclamation of the Immaculate Conception as a dogma in 1854. The Circular of 31st December 1859 (pp. 376-394), developing the theme that we are all temples of the Holy Spirit and that the Church is a spiritual edifice, came out in connection with the announcement of the start of construction of the chapel at St Genis-Laval. Instructions not directly linked with particular events no doubt reflect the difficulties of the time, like the one of 8th December 1857 on Confidence in God (pp. 302-309), or the one of 21st June 1857 on Charity (pp. 293-297) which may well have been a response to the unsettled state the Brothers were in subsequent to the Chapter 1852-1854.

The Circular on the Spirit of Faith occupies a quite exceptional place, both because of its length, and also because Brother François came back to the same theme over several years. A first part, issued on 15th December 1848 (Eng. Ed. pp. 10-29), develops the necessity of this spirit, especially in the task of education. The Circular of 16th July 1849 (pp. 31-43) presents the Spirit of Faith as the foundation on which all Christian virtues rest, and which urges the Brothers to love their vocation, to be zealous in their care for the children, and to bear with the trials of life. On 21st December 1851 (pp. 45-71), the Circular again presents the Spirit of Faith as the foundation of all the Christian virtues, but this time in a more doctrinal manner; Faith allows the human being to render glory to God and to form Jesus Christ in us. The practical aspect is never missing; respect for the Rule, for Superiors, fraternal charity, and zeal for the education of the children are all consequences of the spirit of faith. The Circular was only concluded on 9th April 1853.⁵²⁵ This part treated the means of acquiring the spirit of Faith – prayer, spiritual reading, meditation and the Eucharist.

Spread over five years, and comprising a total of sixty-five pages, this text is the great doctrinal work of Brother François' generalate and the first synthesis of Marist spirituality. The name of Father Champagnat is not invoked even once, even though the text is full of his spirit. Certainly, with Father Colin being the Superior, it would not have been fitting to make any reference officially to his predecessor, all the more so since the projected definitive union with the Marist Fathers would have made Father Colin the one and only Founder, with Champagnat as a sort of precursor.

A certain amount of time would be needed before Father Champagnat would return to centre stage. Up to 1855 he is not quoted in any Circular and before 1860 the only important passage on him is the Table of Maxims taken from the *Life* in 1857.⁵²⁶ The publication of the *Life* in 1856 played a decisive role in the reaffirmation of Champagnat as Founder. Once he took up his responsibilities as Superior General in 1860, Brother Louis-Marie would refer to Champagnat repeatedly and in an explicit fashion.

This concealing of Champagnat at the official level is revelatory of a somewhat strange period in the history of the Marist Brothers, who at the time were trying to integrate the spirituality of the Hermitage into that of the Society of Mary. This no doubt is why Brother Avit, who, by the way, had little esteem for Brother François,

⁵²⁵ After the appearance of *Common Rules* (pp. 145-168).

⁵²⁶ *Circulaires*, Vol. 2, pp. 264-284, 6th January 1857.

states in his *Annales*,⁵²⁷ “the two Circulars on the Spirit of Faith”⁵²⁸ “were principally the work of Father Matricon and Brother Louis-Marie”.⁵²⁹ However, if the rather composite character of the Circular does suggest there were several writers, there is no reason to doubt that Brother François had a key part to play in it since he had given an oral presentation of the theme of the first part, the Necessity of the Spirit of Faith, at the retreat of 1848.⁵³⁰

An explicit relationship between the Common Rules and other texts

The numerous points of correspondence between this Circular and the *Common Rules* demonstrate a strong relationship of one to the other. Let us take just one example:

RULE OF 1852, PART 2, CH. 1, “ON THE SPIRIT OF FAITH” P.39	CIRCULAR ON THE SPIRIT OF FAITH, VOL. 1, P. 50*
<p>“5/ It will teach them to find God everywhere, to lift up their minds and hearts to him, to see him, love him and bless him in all his creatures; it will lead them to submit to his Will in all the setbacks and afflictions of life, such as illnesses, persecutions, temptations, annoying events and pressing needs whatever be their nature; to adore the hand of God who strikes them and humiliates them, and to count on nothing other than his kindness to receive succour in the evils that afflict them or to be delivered from them.”</p>	<p>p. 80 (21/12/1851): “Faith will fix our gaze on the Providence of God, who presides over all events, [...] directs the endless procession of states,⁵³¹ empires and families [...] Thus in unfortunate setbacks, public calamities, illnesses and persecutions, in pressing needs whatever be their nature, faith will teach us to turn our eyes up from the instruments God uses in order to afflict us, and to consider only the fatherly hand which strikes us and wounds us in order to heal us, and to count on nothing other than his kindness in order to be delivered from evils besetting us, or to receive succour in our need.”*<i>Collection of Circulars of the Superiors General</i>, English edition, Grugliasco, 1932.</p>

This Circular also finds numerous echoes in the *Life*, for example in this passage which treats of the charity between Brothers.

⁵²⁷ Vol. 2, p. 221, year 1850.

⁵²⁸ Probably Parts 1 and 2 dated 1848 and 1849.

⁵²⁹ Later on he repeats this statement (p. 431) but adds a further detail: “Reverend Father Matricon and above all Brother Louis-Marie had collaborated on the Circulars with the Very Reverend François.”

⁵³⁰ We should not trust Brother Avit’s judgement on Brother François, which always seems disparaging.

⁵³¹ The Revolution of 1848 had occurred very recently.

<p>LIFE, P. 128</p>	<p>CIRCULARS, VOL. 1, P. 65</p>
<p>“The Brothers should never forget, therefore, that by entering a Community and uniting to form a single family, they have undertaken to love one another as brothers, to edify one another, to engage in fraternal correction and to be of mutual assistance in reaching salvation. Charity, which Jesus Christ calls his own commandment, must be one of their principal virtues [...] towards their Brothers, by being of service to them on every possible occasion, by glossing over or making excuses for their faults” ...</p>	<p>“We will see in them only the members of the same body of which J.C. is the head, [...] children of the same family of which the Blessed Virgin is the Mother. [...] This same charity we will make to consist principally in putting up with the faults of our Brothers with a patience full of gentleness; taking an interest in whatever concerns them; being of service to them on every occasion, as much as in our power, never saying anything but good about them; and, above all, lifting them up to God in prayer and doing all within our power to procure their salvation.”</p>

Brother Jean-Baptiste has left us a voluminous treatise on education, very much inspired by the teachings of our Founder, to which Brother Paul Sester has given the title of *Apostolat d'un Frère Mariste* (A.D.F.M.) (*The Apostolate of a Marist Brother*). A certain number of its passages are close to the Circular and to the Rule of 1852. The example given below, dealing with our relationships with the children, will suffice.

<p>CIRCULARS, VOL. 1 P. 38</p>	<p>Rule of 1852, p. 96</p>	<p>A.D.F.M.⁵³² PP. 98-104</p>
<p>“How unceasingly this good and zealous Brother tries to do more good among his children, to gain their confidence by his kindliness when <i>teaching even the secular subjects</i>; their esteem and their respect by an exemplary conduct that is consistently even-tempered; their affection, by words and ways of acting that are <i>always upright</i>; by a limitless devotedness which is extended to all without distinction.”</p>	<p>“2/They must neglect nothing to gain the esteem, the respect and the affection of the children, so as to win them more easily to J-C. The means for accomplishing this are: 1. to be always even-tempered, to have a demeanour that is cheerful and kindly, as well as serious; [...]; 4. to manifest towards the children the kindness of a father, [...] showing them by his zeal and devotedness to their instruction and their advance-ment, that he seeks nothing other than their interest.”</p>	<p>p. 98 “a teacher must witness to his love for his pupils:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. by <i>his devotedness</i> to instructing them in the truths of religion and by the way he applies himself to giving them all <i>the knowledge which may be useful to them</i> [...] 2. His zeal in forming them to virtue [...] 3. By his attention to preventing their faults [...] 4. By his <i>kindly way of teaching</i> using <i>emulation, words of praise, rewards</i> [...] 5. By his affability and by his great uprightness in all his relations with them and with their parents. 6. By the <i>fatherly sentiments</i> he must have for all his pupils [...]

⁵³² *Apostolat d'un Frère Mariste ou Traité sur l'éducation*, (Apostolate of a Marist Brother or Treatise on Education) written by Brother Jean-Baptiste.

A passage from the Circular (English edition, 1932, p. 27) resonates in a very particular way with the Founder's teaching and numerous other passages from Marist literature both in manuscript form and printed:

*"We may add, very dear Brothers, a further and very special reason which urges us to embrace the Spirit of Faith, the life of faith; it is the **very spirit and characteristic proper to our congregation**. In fact, the spirit of the Marist Brothers, their distinctive characteristic, should be **a spirit of humility, simplicity**, which, after the example of the Blessed Virgin, their Mother and their Model, will cause them to have **a particular predilection for a hidden life, lowly offices**, for the poorest class and localities. This same spirit will induce them to do their work in a quiet and modest way, and will engage them to impart to their pupils a plain yet solid and religious education."*

The *Life*⁵³³ says the same thing:

"Their life should be humble, hidden and unknown to the world" ... Humility must be their favourite virtue"; p. 402: "The one who possesses this virtue (humility) lives unobtrusively in community" ... "He does good without fanfare."

Brother François in "Characteristics and Spirit of the Little Brothers of Mary"⁵³⁴ takes up the theme:

"Our life must be one that is humble, hidden, unknown to the world. Humility and simplicity must always be the principal, favourite and characteristic virtues of each one of us" ...; "Mary, model of humility"⁵³⁵: "Humility must be the cherished and special virtue of the Little Brothers of Mary. [...] the hidden life, humble activities, employments that are difficult and unpleasant, contempt from others; in one word, to always practise humility must be their delight."

It is very apparent, therefore, that Brother François played a much greater role in the process of gathering together the elements of our tradition and making them known than was previously thought. In particular, he is the author, at least in part, of the first text to develop the theoretical foundation of Marist spirituality. Finally, the handwritten materials we have from Brothers Jean-Baptiste and François bear witness even today to the effort made to collect and preserve the primitive teaching of Father Champagnat. We will see, too, that Brother Jean-Baptiste made very good use of that material well beyond the time of writing the *Life* of Father Champagnat in 1856.

The Manual of Piety (1855), ancestor to The Principles of Perfection

Over and above the *Common Rules* of 1852, *The Teacher's Guide* (1853), the *Rules of Government* (1854) and the Circulars of Brother François, we find a small work which today is practically unknown, the *Manual of Piety*, (1855).

⁵³³ Ch. XII, p. 402.

⁵³⁴ Notebook 307, pp. 147-150. Note the correspondence between this title and the terms employed in the Circular.

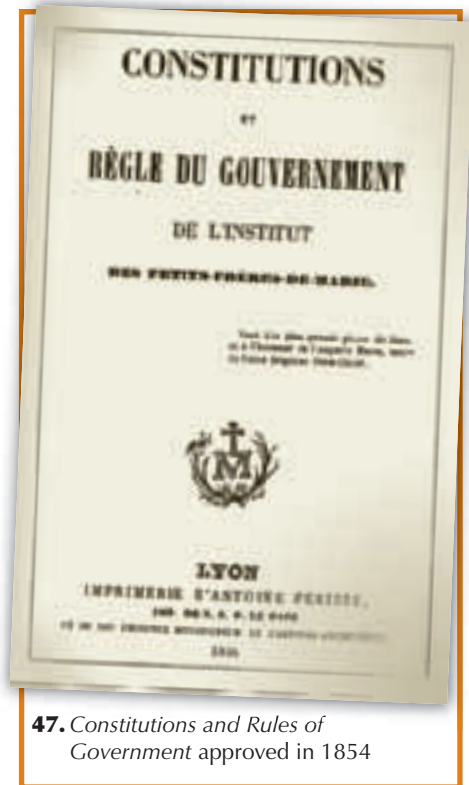
⁵³⁵ Notebook 308, pp. 544-554.

Its introduction⁵³⁶ is very clear as to its purpose, namely, to obtain uniformity in the prayers of the Institute and the formation of the young Brothers at a time when the Institute already had several novitiates in operation. Novices and young Brothers would have been required to learn its contents by heart, which is why it is in the form of a catechism and is composed of questions and answers. But this work was more ambitious in scope. Its purpose was to “give all the Brothers an easy means of forming themselves to virtue, of becoming more deeply penetrated with the spirit of the Institute and the principles of our holy Founder”.

The first part contains “Principles of Christian and Religious Perfection”,⁵³⁷ a short presentation on the spiritual and religious life. The second part develops the “Qualities of a good Brother” and the third, “Various prayers for sanctifying the day”. In 1863 a second edition with the title *Principles of Christian Perfection* (1863), kept just the first two parts of the *Manual*, although notably augmented, whilst the *Directory of Solid Piety* (1865) encompassed a very great number of prayers and devotions. These two works would be used by the Institute until well into the Twentieth Century. As for the *Manual*, despite its catechetical format, it merits a good deal of attention.

Thus, one of its chapters (Part 2, Ch. XIV) gives us a list of fifty-two maxims or sayings of Father Champagnat which are all found again in his *Life*. It consists of a sort of synthesis of the spirit of the Institute as it was being taught to the Novices before 1855. It demanded of them a character that was pleasant, cheerful and even-tempered, trusting in God and in Mary, filled with the spirit of prayerfulness and faith. Obedient, humble, mortified, filled with zeal, the Brother would be fit to do good among the children. By his openness of heart, his detachment from family, and his faith in the greatness of his vocation, the Brother would be sure of persevering in virtue.

The thirteen preceding chapters had given in detail “The Qualities of a good Brother”. At the end of the Nineteenth Century the *Notices Biographiques* (published on the death of a Brother and giving a short account of his life) would often follow this list when listing the virtues of those Brothers who had died.



47. *Constitutions and Rules of Government* approved in 1854

⁵³⁶ This can be found in *Circulaires* Vol. 2, pp. 227-232. It would partly be picked up again later in editions of *The Principles of Perfection*.

⁵³⁷ The work would later be known among the Brothers by this title.

I	Piety
II	Love of Jesus Christ
III	Devotion the Blessed Virgin and Saint Joseph
IV	Zeal for the Sanctification of the Children
V	Sincerity and openness of heart towards the Superior
VI	Obedience
VII	Regularity
VIII	Devotedness to the Institute (detachment from family)
IX	Family Spirit (Spirit of the Institute)
X	Cheerfulness and Holy Joy
XI	Having a sociable spirit; too easily taking offence
XII	Gratitude
XIII	Constancy
XIV	Maxims of the Reverend Father Founder

The question remains, namely, who was the author of this *Manual of Piety*? Brother François is certainly one of them, since we find in his notebooks several of the *Manual's* chapters such as:

SUMMARIES OF INSTRUCTIONS (NOTEBOOK 303 B)	MANUAL OF PIETY
p. 116: Devotedness to the Institute	Part 2, Ch. VIII p. 120: Devotedness to the Institute
p. 119: Holy Joy. Gloomy Sadness	Part 2, Ch. X p. 126: Cheerfulness and Holy Joy
p. 122: Constancy. Discouragement	Part 2, Ch. XIII p. 137: Constancy

On the theme of Vocation situated in Part 1 of the *Manual* (Ch. 2 p. 4-1) we can also recognise many borrowings from instructions transcribed by Brother Jean-Baptiste or Brother François. The closeness of the content clearly indicates a common origin. The table below recapitulates the data.

MANUAL OF PIETY: CH. II – VOCATION, P.4	INSTRUCTIONS OF BRS JEAN-BAPTISTE AND FRANÇOIS
Section 1 : Vocation in general	Br Jean-Baptiste: Doc 3, pp. 103-110; Doc 4, pp. 338-345; Br François, Instructions Notebook 307, pp. 131-135 Notebook 307, p. 1
Section 2: Means used by God to make a vocation known	Br François: Instructions
Section 3: Religious Vocation and its excellence	Br Jean-Baptiste: Doc 4, p. 345 : « The Religious Spirit »
Section 4: What must be done to know one's vocation and persevere in it.	Br Jean-Baptiste: Doc 3 pp. 25-26 ; 111-120 ; Br François : Instructions Notebook 307, pp. 2, 44-46 ; Instructions Notebook 309, p. 9

We find also that Chapter IX of “The Qualities of a Good Brother”, which has the title “Family Spirit”, is related to a series of instructions given by Brother Jean-Baptiste on “The Spirit of the Institute”.

MANUAL OF PIETY, CH. IX, P. 123	BR FRANÇOIS, NOTEBOOKS – INSTRUCTIONS	BR J-B, “Doc 3” “Doc 4”; A.D.F.M.⁵³⁸
<p>“Family Spirit”</p> <p>Section 1 – What this spirit consists of and what must be done to acquire it.</p> <p>Section 2 – What the spirit of humility requires of the Brothers</p>	<p>Instructions No. 1 (307): Characteristics and spirit of the Society of the Little Brothers of Mary.</p> <p>Instructions No. 2 (308): Mary model of humility</p>	<p>Doc 3, pp. 123-130: Spirit of the Institute; pp. 349-356: Spirit of the Institute.</p> <p>A.D.F.M., Ch. 15, Part 3, pp. 281-286:⁵³⁹ “Humility is necessary if we are to merit the protection of Mary.”</p>

We could multiply examples but these extracts are sufficient to demonstrate that the *Manual of Piety* was not some anodyne or lightweight catechetical compilation, but that it largely went right back to the Founder and that Brothers François and/or Jean-Baptiste preserved and adapted the oral teaching of Champagnat. Neither must we neglect the importance of the Novice Masters, Brothers Louis and Bonaventure, who must have already had at their disposal a handwritten catechism for the formation of the novices.

The Biography of Brother Bonaventure gives some indications on this point. Thus, replying to a priest who was shocked to see a Brother continuing to work on in the garden when the postulants were going to a religious exercise, Father Champagnat answered that he was only obeying an instruction and that besides, “he knows his Catechism of Religious Perfection”. (*Our Models in Religion*, p. 133).⁵⁴⁰

Thus, at least from the 1830’s onwards a programme of formation for the novices had been elaborated, strongly inspired by Father Champagnat, which reached a first stage of completion in 1855 with the *Manual of Piety*, which combined in one text a treatise on the theology of the religious life, a systematic exposé of what constituted the spirit of the Institute, as well as an outline of Marist spirituality, especially through the maxims of the Founder and the official prayers of the Institute.

⁵³⁸ A.D.F.M. is the treatise on education composed by Brother Jean-Baptiste.

⁵³⁹ The numbering is that of the handwritten copy and not that of the original.

⁵⁴⁰ The same biography relates a conversation between Brother Bonaventure and Father Augry, a Jesuit, who preached the retreats held in 1832 and 1833, who advised him, in order to form good religious, to “watch particularly over their spirit, their heart, their conscience and their character” (p. 128). Brother Bonaventure set himself to implement this programme. The biography does not give us any details of his teaching but it may be surmised that the thirteen “qualities of a good Brother” would correspond quite closely to it.

The Life of the Founder (1856) – the crowning achievement of the work of remembering.



48. Title page or cover
of the *Life* edited in 1856

The *Life* is the most complete and the most accessible presentation we have in our possession on the identity of the Marist Brothers, on who they were, now that they were clearly independent of the Colinian tradition. It was, furthermore, not reserved just to the Brothers but was aimed at a wider audience.

It belongs therefore very much in the hagiographical tradition which, from the Seventeenth Century, had aimed to present an account of a holy person's life while at the same time composing a treatise on the spiritual life. It was also a "body of doctrine".⁵⁴¹ At the same time, this genre of hagiographical writing had little fondness for miracles and marvels. Instead, it was solidly rooted in the history of a time and place. A critical reading can easily detect, beneath the edifying interpretations, the power games, hesitations, contradictions, successes, failures, inspirations and evolutionary processes that are the part and parcel of every human enterprise.

This work also falls into the category of catechetical literature. Each chapter, especially in the second part, is an instruction on such and such a virtue. The plan would thus almost always be along the lines of a catechetical lesson or an "informal talk", starting with the definition of a truth to be believed, backed up by "proofs" taken from Scripture or from the Desert Fathers, adorned with "comparisons" taken from daily life at the time, "parables", that is to say, stories designed to appeal to the Christian imagination, and "histories". Since this work had Father Champagnat as its subject, many of the "histories", "proofs" and "comparisons" would have been taken from his life and teachings. This is why in the *Life* we have a veritable anthology of his instructions, letters, opinions given orally, maxims and sayings.

In composing this work, Brother Jean-Baptiste used the written and oral testimonies of Brothers who had known the Founder. We can count 105 of them. But he took care also to draw up biographical sketches of some of his principal disciples, who died shortly after Champagnat, and who were both eyewitnesses

⁵⁴¹ Brother Avit, Introduction to the *Annales de l'institut*.

and companions. Thus, Brother Stanislas, who died in 1855, and Brother Louis, who died in 1847, enjoyed a double status, having been both disciples and companions of Champagnat. Brother Jean-Baptiste, himself an eyewitness although a little later to the origins – he arrived in 1822 – kept a discreet silence about his own memories, but they certainly constituted a major part of the material used in the text. As for the testimony given by lay people or priests, they are much fewer and often quite succinct, which indicates that they were most often given orally. In short, this biography comes essentially from the Brothers. More than the work of one author, it is more the work of a group of disciples, and we have seen, moreover, that the handwritten source materials were rather numerous.

Brother Jean-Baptiste

The man who brought this work to fruition⁵⁴² was born in 1807 in Saint-Pal-en-Chalencon (Haute Loire), about one hundred kilometres from Lavalla. From his childhood he suffered from asthma, which made him unfit for agricultural work. He was part of the group of eight young men, who arrived at Lavalla in the spring of 1822. Without being part of the very first group of disciples, he was all the same very close to the origins of the Institute.

At first appointed to Bourg-Argental (1822-1823), where he was so ill that the Founder went to see him and almost perished in the snow in his return journey, he was the Director in various schools or was called back to the Hermitage to help Father Champagnat in the administration of the congregation. He then went to the North to found the school at St Pol-sur-Ternoise. In 1839 he was appointed Assistant, a sign of the prestige he had acquired among the Brothers. He directed the Provinces of the Midi from 1842 to 1860, then that of Centre (Saint Genis-Laval) from 1860 until 1872, the year he died. Brother Louis-Marie dedicated a Circular to him and asked the Brothers to gather his writings, and particularly his letters, with a view to preparing his biography.⁵⁴³ He presented him as “a second founder”, because “our Venerated Father owes it to him that he has lived on for another thirty two years after his death”, and he paid homage to him as the legislator of the congregation who had written the *Life* and *The Teacher’s Guide* (1853), and who had had a large hand in the composition of others of our foundational texts. He mentioned also Brother Jean-Baptiste’s extraordinary authority in the Provinces of the Midi, his lively character, the incisive nature of his instructions, and the immense good done through his innumerable letters. He described also a man who was extremely active despite the illness that accompanied him all his life and

⁵⁴² We would hesitate to consider him the author.

⁵⁴³ Brother Amphiloque Deydier then made use of hundreds of letters that had been collected and added to them the testimony of Brothers who were still alive, but his work never got past the manuscript stage. In 1953 Brother Jean-Emile, in “our Superiors”, a collection of succinct biographies of the principal Superiors of the Institute, utilised the two preceding works, but added very little new information to them. In 1990-1991, in *Marist Notebooks* Nos 1 and 2, Brother Paul Sester offered an historical synthesis which appears to be the first piece of scientific work on Brother Jean-Baptiste.

had condemned him to a severe diet, solitude and immobility during the 1860's. It was this illness, moreover, which, because it had prevented him from moving around, obliged him to do a good deal of writing and had given him the time necessary to compose numerous works in the years 1860-1872.

The writing of the *Life* of the Founder, done between 1854 and 1856, came therefore at a time when he was at the height of his powers. Still young and yet very much appreciated by the older Brothers, he was a self-taught man who had accumulated a wide-ranging culture of sufficient solidity to enable him to produce a well-structured and well-documented work that even today is still very readable. Even though the first edition mentions that this *Life* was written by "one of his first disciples", it cannot be excluded that he had received help from other persons.

The *Life* was written at a delicate moment in the history of a congregation that was undergoing rapid expansion, but which had also been troubled by the Chapter of 1852-1854 and was engaged in the implementation of a new Rule. One function of the *Life* therefore was to make the origins known and to maintain the common spirit in a body which was being submerged by young ones and was spread over several Provinces. Another function it had to serve was to give legitimacy to the recently published 1852 Rule, to which it makes a great many allusions. It was therefore a veritable manual of the perfect novice, the good Superior, and the good teaching religious. In short, it was aiming to speak to all categories of Brothers in the congregation. Father Champagnat, in part "shorn" of his priesthood, became the model for the Marist Brother no matter what might be his situation.

Commitment in the lay state and Marist sanctity – presenting the theory

Reference had already been made to how the Preface to the *Life* located Champagnat in the lineage of the monastic founders – the Desert Fathers, Saint Benedict and Saint Francis of Assisi – whilst in the Introduction which follows, Brother Jean-Baptiste demonstrated that the catechetical ministry defined the apostle in a more fundamental way than did the priesthood. So, in summary, it might be said that the Marist Brothers were a two-fold society – both monastic order and apostolic congregation – without the links between the two being capable of being coordinated in a very satisfactory manner. The Institute was aspiring therefore towards a Church conceived as the People of God whilst employing traditional models which at bottom were not very satisfying.

The order of the chapters in the second part of the *Life* may be seen as a theory of Marist sanctity, which is carefully set out in four fundamental elements framed within two major characteristics – joy (the introduction) and constancy (the conclusion). It can also be noticed that apostolic zeal is developed at the end as if that virtue is now a little bit apart.

CHAMPAGNAT, MYSTIC	CHAMPAGNAT, ASCETIC	CHAMPAGNAT, SPIRITUAL MASTER	CHAMPAGNAT, APOSTLE
Introductory Chapter:	1. Portrait and character of Father Champagnat. Joy	15. His love for his Brothers and his attachment to them	20. His zeal for the glory of God and the salvation of souls
2. Father Champagnat's Spirit of Faith	8. His obedience and his respect for the clergy	16. Care he took to correct his Brothers' defects and to form them to virtue	21. His charity towards the poor.
3. His trust in God	9. His love of Poverty	17. Care he took to train his Brother who were Directors	22. What he did for the primary instruction of children
4. His love for prayer	10. His detachment from his parents and from the goods of this world	18. What he did to preserve the Brothers in their vocation	23. His views on the education of children
5. His recollection and the care he took to keep himself in the presence of God	11. His love of mortification	19. Steps he took to preserve the Brothers in their vocation in the spirit of their state. His firmness in upholding the Rule	
6. His love for Our Lord	12. His humility		
7. His devotion to the Blessed Virgin	13. His love of purity		
	14. His love of work		
Conclusion: 24. His constancy in doing good			

Some later but important additional works

The *Annales de l'institut* of Brother Avit and the *Mémoires* of Brother Sylvester largely covered the same ground as the *Life*, but they added some further details and clarifications. Brother Avit made some enquiries into the Champagnat family, and it is through him that we learn that the Founder's father had been an adherent of the Revolution, something Brother Jean-Baptiste had been very careful not to mention. On the whole Brother Avit was concerned to date, document, and to take into account the oral tradition of the Brothers, and his work largely corroborated what Brother Jean-Baptiste had written, but also provided some nuances.

Brother Sylvestre's memoirs are much more rooted in the oral tradition, especially that coming from Brother Stanislas, who was for him "one of the Founder's three providential supports".⁵⁴⁴ Fond of the miraculous, he is the spokesman for the tradition given to seeing miracles just about anywhere, notably around the *Memorare* in the snow. Deeply imbued with an eschatological mindset, he believed that the Marist Brothers would see the end of the world and that they would participate in final battle against the Antichrist.⁵⁴⁵ Brother Avit would himself also echo that tradition.⁵⁴⁶

Brother Sylvestre also permitted himself a few veiled criticisms of the Founder. He thought him too rigid on the subject of mortification (if you ate something between meals, you had to confess it), excessive in the matter of respect for the sacred vessels, and too ready to use public penances. He therefore presents us with the image of a more complex Father Champagnat than one revealed in the *Life*, a man torn between the rigorism still traditional among the French clergy, and the more moderate approach, influenced by the thinking of St Alphonsus Liguori, which made him very compassionate and understanding when hearing confessions.

The destiny of a foundational book

It was at the time of the introduction of the Process for the Beatification of Father Champagnat, beginning in 1886, that the *Life* would become an issue because the Canonical Biography required by the process was based on it. But for that it was necessary that those giving testimony recognise it as authentic. Now, there were some criticisms voiced by Father Bedoin, parish priest of Lavalla, who recalled notably that at the seminary Champagnat had been part of the "happy crowd", the group of undisciplined young seminarians. He mocked the story of

⁵⁴⁴ Along with Archbishop de Pins and Father Gardette.

⁵⁴⁵ See the *Mémoires* of Brother Sylvestre, p. 236. This conviction seems to have come from the Marist Fathers, particularly Father Pompallier, and from Brother Stanislas.

⁵⁴⁶ Introduction to the *Annales de l'institut*, at the end.

the flame over the cradle of the baby Marcellin, and reproached the Marist Brothers for thinking that they alone were capable of regenerating the world.⁵⁴⁷ Among the Brothers the criticisms were more moderate but they did show up some omissions on Brother Jean-Baptiste's part and some instances of inexactness.

The Superiors' reaction to these criticisms was virulent and they were successful in having the *Life* accepted as the basis of the Canonical Biography. It seems all the same that some lasting suspicion had been thrown on the *Life*. There was a persistent rumour which suggested that Father Champagnat was more a personage created by Brother Jean-Baptiste rather than the real Champagnat. This is not so. The *Life* is, in fact, solidly founded on the primitive sources, even if a certain number of its interpretations do pose some problems. For example, the consecration at Fourvière in July 1816 scarcely rates a mention and the way Father Courveille is depicted only confirmed the very reductionist tradition existing among the Brothers concerning the role he had played before 1824.⁵⁴⁸ Its biggest drawback is, perhaps, the lack of exactness in its chronology and its tendency to pile in together accounts of the same event which come from different sources. This latter is particularly evident for example in Chapter 13 of Part 1.

In spite of these limitations, this *Life* of Father Champagnat does reflect the teaching of the Founder and the traditions collected by Brother Jean-Baptiste. Just a minimum of method is required in order to read it with profit and to approach it with both sympathy and circumspection. The most important thing, however, is to see that the 1856 *Life* is just one piece, albeit the most important one, in a veritable system of source materials which allow us to go back well before the years 1848-1856. This is particularly true of the manuscript materials that have been preserved. It needs to be said, too, that in the setting up of this system Brother François played a particularly important role, one that would merit a more thorough evaluation.

⁵⁴⁷ A sign that Father Bedoin had well perceived the utopian regenerationist beliefs of the Marist Brothers, who believed they were called to battle Evil until the end of time.

⁵⁴⁸ Moreover, in a general way, the influence of the Marist Fathers did not receive much development, the *Life* in this respect bearing traces of the state the congregation was in as it moved towards full autonomy.

12.

CODIFYING THE EDUCATIONAL THINKING

From the teachings of Champagnat to *The Teacher's Guide*

Brother Jean-Baptiste has left us a “Treatise on Education” published by Brother Paul Sester under the title of “The Apostolate of a Marist Brother”.⁵⁴⁹ This treatise exercised a decisive influence on the works published by the Institute and in a very particular way on *The Teacher's Guide*. The first part, entitled “Means for doing Good among Children” was a treatise on the end or purpose of the Institute and the virtue of zeal, presented in sixteen chapters. This certainly comes from the teachings of the Founder.⁵⁵⁰ The second part, which remained incomplete, was entitled “On Education” and consisted of twenty two chapters. Only part of this comes from Champagnat.

The Teacher's Guide and the “Treatise on Education”

Two important manuscripts of the *Guide* have come down to us, over and above what is contained in the Acts of Chapter of 1853.⁵⁵¹ The Superiors had been

⁵⁴⁹ This manuscript consists of 402 pages in the original and 866 in the copy made after the death of Brother Jean-Baptiste.

⁵⁵⁰ We still possess a bundle of 67 pages (Ecrits divers No. 8 or ED8) containing the end of the first part of the “Treatise on Education”, but they are not from the hand of Brother Jean-Baptiste. They appear to come from notes taken by a Brother during conferences given by the Founder. They would therefore be part of the “voluminous notebooks” spoken of by Father Mayet. The bundle includes moreover a Chapter 17, which is completely absent from the Treatise, on: “Devotion to the Blessed Virgin is a powerful means of winning children to God”, which we find reproduced almost exactly in the *Life* of Father Champagnat in the chapter on devotion to the Blessed Virgin.

⁵⁵¹ A bundle of 17 pages in 19 x 28.5 format entitled, “Guide de écoles ou méthode d’enseignement à l’usage des Petits Frères de Marie”, is held under the classification 371.110-1. Probably from the hand of Brother Jean-Baptiste, it deals with part of the organisation and discipline of the school, that is, from the first part of the *Guide*. The second bundle, classified as 371.120-1, in 21 x 29 format, which also seems to be from the hand of Brother Jean-Baptiste contains 169 pages. Chapter 1 is missing, as is also the greater part of Chapter VII from the second part (pp. 86-92). Apart from these relatively important sections and some minor editing details, this text corresponds to the printed version of the *Guide*.

working on it from 1845⁵⁵² and the Acts of the Chapters of 1852 and 1853 give us an indication of the process involved in arriving at the definitive version. On 14th June 1852 at the end of the first session of the Chapter:

“On a proposal from the Second Working Group, it has been agreed that a certain number of copies of the Guide des écoles will be made and sent to Brothers who are the most capable and the most experienced in the Institute, capitulants and others, so that they may examine them and make their observations before the second session of the Chapter.”

The *Guide* was therefore already known to the capitulants and its chapters were subsequently examined and voted on very easily, after just a few relatively minor modifications. Only one point appears to have seriously divided the capitulants, the use of the *férule*,⁵⁵³ which was retained, albeit with many restrictions, by just 18 votes to 14.

Nevertheless there was much discussion on the first part of the *Guide*, which dealt with organisation and discipline. On the second part, “On the Teaching of Religion and Education”, therefore the more theoretical and more fundamental section, the voting was almost unanimous. Many chapters were not subjected to a secret ballot. Instead they were accepted by a process of standing and sitting, that is, those in favour stood whilst those not in favour remained seated. Chapters 2 and 3 on Catechism, First Communion and Education were passed by acclamation; the same with Chapter 7 proposing to the Brothers the example of the Guardian Angel. Finally, the *Guide* as a whole was adopted 29 votes to 4. The votes against appear to have been from those implacably opposed to the use of the *férule*.

There then followed:

“One member called for a vote of thanks to be offered to the Brother Assistant who had prepared work; Brother Jean-Baptiste stood up and stated that the Guide had been the work of the regime, seeing that he had discussed it with them and had done so on several occasions: a vote of thanks to the regime was then passed unanimously.”

The votes passed by acclamation and the vote of thanks were a tribute to Brother Jean-Baptiste but were also a sign that the work had been faithful to the Founder. A comparison between the text of the Treatise and that of the *Guide* show endless instances of the connections between the two. The text of the *Guide* is more moderate and more succinct, clear evidence that it was an improvement on the original text.

⁵⁵² Danilo Farneda Calgaro, “Guide des écoles”. 1817-1853, estudio historico-critico, Rome, 1993, p. 132.

⁵⁵³ A device made of leather (so a strap) or of wood used for striking the hands of the pupils.

GUIDE	TREATISE
<p>Correction and punishment together constitute an element so indispensable that without them school rules and supervision will be largely ineffectual. It is the backbone of discipline. [...]</p> <p>Correction is therefore necessary.</p> <p>1. because it is part of education; also, nothing is more recommended to fathers and mothers by the Holy Books, and even by the same token to those charged with the education of children, to make them feel the restraining effects of discipline and not allow these muscles needed by authority to grow flabby and weak at their hands</p> <p>[...] Saint Paul, while forbidding all harshness, is equally insistent that children be raised in docility and correction.</p>	<p>Ch. 212 p. 607 “On Correction, which is the backbone of discipline.”</p> <p>P. 609 1st Part. Necessity of Correction.</p> <p>Correction is necessary</p> <p>1. because it is part of education. To warn, reprimand, correct and punish are essential parts of education. Also nothing is more recommended to fathers and mothers by the Holy Books and even by the same token to those charged with the education of children, to make them feel the restraints of discipline and not to allow the muscle needed by authority to grow flabby and weak at their hands (Cardinal Giraud).</p> <p>P. 611 Saint Paul did not want fathers to irritate their children through harshness, but he still intended that they be raised in docility and correction according to the Lord. (Eph. 6:4)</p>

It seems the redaction process may be reconstituted in the following fashion; at the start came one or two collections of instructions given by Father Champagnat and organised by Brother Jean-Baptiste, to which he added more recent works such as “On Education” (1850) by Bishop Dupanloup. These latter are the foundation of several chapters. The Treatise remained unfinished, no doubt because it was regarded as *passé* once the *Guide des écoles* had been published. It was no doubt one of the items in the “voluminous notebooks” seen by Father Mayet.

The Jesuit influence

The Treatise was largely inspired by Rodriguez, a Spanish Jesuit born in 1526. In 1615 he published his *Pratique de la perfection chrétienne* (The Practice of Christian Perfection), translated into French beginning in 1621.⁵⁵⁴ Saint-Jure (1588-1657), a French Jesuit, wrote notably *De la connaissance et de l’amour du Fils de Dieu* (On the Knowledge and Love of the Son of God), published for the first time in 1633. More than sixty passages are copied from Rodriguez. The influence of Saint-Jure, although important, appears here to be less strong.

The first part of the Treatise on Education is particularly influenced by, “On the end for which the Company of Jesus has been founded ...” (Part 3, 1st treatise)

⁵⁵⁴ A new translation by the Abbé Régner-Desmarais at the end of the Seventeenth Century was re-published many times over. In his Preface the author indicated that this first translation had been re-published in 1667, 1670 and 1674.

which established the Company as a veritable model for founders of missionary congregations and set out a theory of apostolic action founded on three means; holiness of life, prayer and zeal towards one's neighbour. The first part of the Treatise of the Marist Brothers picks up this plan in three points, plus a good deal of the text, while nevertheless giving the priority to zeal.

But it is above all the first chapter ("What is the purpose of the institution of the Company of Jesus") which profoundly influenced Marcellin Champagnat and his disciples. Rodriguez here underlines that Saint Ignatius had instituted the Company to be "like a platoon of soldiers in temporary camp, ready always at the slightest sound of the alarm" to come to the defence of the Church, in imitation of the Desert Fathers who knew to leave their solitude when heresy threatened. And further, "God has raised up our Company in these deplorable times when the Church has such great need of help." We find a similar idea on the first page of the Treatise:

"In this century, most parents are not in a state to give their children religious instruction and training [...] and from this situation it follows that an infinite number of young people would remain in ignorance of the truths of the Christian religion and sunk in vice if God had not raised up good and pious teachers to care for them and bring them up in a Christian fashion."

Thus, in the face of "the philosophes and unbelievers" who "are striving to get hold of the youth in order to instil in them their deadly doctrine" God had raised up Christian schools "to throw up a barrier against this devastating torrent". (The 'philosophes' were adherents of Voltaire and other thinkers of the French Enlightenment period. Their views were in the main atheistic and anticlerical).

This reactualising of the Jesuit model⁵⁵⁵ was a delicate matter since a doctrine that had been intended for priests had to be adapted for teachers who were not clerics. Thus, on the role of Brothers in the two societies we can perceive a veritable opposition. Chapter 3 of Rodriguez stresses "that this enterprise (the salvation of souls by apostolic action) is a matter for the whole Company and those who are not priests also do not fail to have a part in it", with the Jesuit Brothers through their manual work, their prayers, their exhortations to lay people, also contributing to the salvation of souls.

The Treatise takes up Rodriguez without taking this distinction into account and attributes to an institute of Brothers the same task as the Jesuit priests. The Founder had found the idea of ministry in the conclusion of that chapter:⁵⁵⁶

⁵⁵⁵ André Lanfrey, *Marist Notebooks*, No. 10, "The Legend of the Jesuit of Le Puy", pp. 1-16.

⁵⁵⁶ This idea is also, notably, in Jean-Baptiste de la Salle.

RODRIGUEZ, PART 3, TREATISE 1, CH. 2	TREATISE ON EDUCATION CH. 3
<p>“From this we must draw three consequences for our spiritual advancement. The first is a great love of and attachment for our ministry, since it is so elevated, so pleasing to God and so useful to our neighbour. The second is an extreme feeling of confusion at seeing ourselves called to a ministry so sublime, we who are of so little account, and to see that at the very time we find it so difficult to give a good account of ourselves, we do not fail to be charged with the salvation and the perfection of others. [...] The third thing [...] is an extreme application to our spiritual advancement”...</p>	<p>“From all that we have said in this chapter and in the preceding one we must draw three fruits, 1st, a great love for our vocation and a great attachment for our ministry and for our work as catechists since they are so elevated, so pleasing to God, so honourable for us and so useful to our neighbour. 2nd, great humility at seeing ourselves called to so holy a vocation and such a sublime ministry, although we are so imperfect and we have neither learning nor virtue. 3rd, great application to our spiritual advancement”...</p>

It was the same with Saint-Jure who,⁵⁵⁷ in developing his “Advice to Preachers” recommended for them a good life, prayer, humility and learning. The Treatise picked up these ideas – and large extracts from Saint-Jure – when treating holiness of life (Ch. 12), prayer (Ch. 13), humility (Ch. 15), and catechism (Ch. XIX and Ch. XXI)⁵⁵⁸ but for Brothers who were school teachers and catechists. The type of Brother desired by Father Champagnat therefore took its inspiration directly from the Jesuit model but retained for Brothers a teaching intended for priests.

Cardinal La Luzerne

César-Guillaume de La Luzerne (1738-1821) inspired many of Father Champagnat’s educational ideas even though he could scarcely pass for a pedagogical author. Nevertheless, having been appointed Bishop of Langres in 1770, he developed a network of schools there and was a strong supporter of the Brothers of the Christian Schools.⁵⁵⁹ He was elected to the Estates General in 1789, but as one of the principal opponents of the Civil Constitution of the Clergy, he resigned at the end of the year. He emigrated in March 1791. An implacable opponent of the Empire, he only came back to France in 1814. From 1802 to 1814 he wrote numerous works thanks to which he came to be regarded as one of the best ecclesiastical writers of the century. In 1810 in Venice he published his *Considérations sur divers points de la morale chrétienne* (Considerations on Various Points of Christian Morality), which contained an instruction “On the duties of Fathers and Mothers”

⁵⁵⁷ *Connaissance et amour de J.C.* (The Knowledge and Love of Jesus Christ), Book 3, Chapter XIV, no. 28.

⁵⁵⁸ The chapters in Roman numerals are in the second part of the treatise.

⁵⁵⁹ See *Cœuvres complètes du cardinal De La Luzerne précédées d’une préface biographique et critique* by the Abbé Migne, 1855. Vol. VI, col. 1101-1188 treats his “Théologie pédagogique”. See also the notice in the *Dictionnaire de Spiritualité*.

and another “On the duties of Young Persons”. The work was republished in Lyon in 1816.⁵⁶⁰ His *Considérations sur l’état ecclésiastique* (Considerations on the Ecclesiastical State) appeared in Langres in 1809, and was reprinted in 1827.⁵⁶¹ Large extracts from these three works appear in the “Treatise on Education” and also in *Sentences, leçons, avis du vénéré P. Champagnat*.⁵⁶² The loftiness of his views, his fidelity to the Church and to the Monarchy made him one of the great moral authorities of the Church in France. Certain ones gave him the title of “the new Bossuet”. He died in 1821.

At the beginning of the Restoration, having become a Peer of France, he took the side of the Brothers of the Christian Schools in the fight against the Mutual Method with two resounding writings and the high profile and fame of the author contributed to the French Church’s involvement in the quarrel.⁵⁶³ His influence on Champagnat is clearly manifest.

The Treatise took its inspiration from his *Considérations sur l’état ecclésiastique*, which might truly be described as a theory of the priest according to the French School of spirituality, particularly its Parts 8 and 9, which deal with “Ecclesiastical Learning” and “The Instruction of the People”. In them La Luzerne inveighs against ignorant priests, “the scourge of the Church”, and one of his passages was the direct inspiration for the first chapter of the Treatise.

LA LUZERNE “ON ECCLESIASTICAL LEARNING”	TREATISE, CH. 1, PP. 1,3
“If in the Sixteenth Century heresy made such rapid progress and infected a great part of Europe, [...] it was to the ignorance in which the clergy were sunk that it owed its deplorable success. The barrier which should have held it back having been found to be weak and powerless, this terrible inundation spread its ravages on all sides without obstacle.	“An infinite number of young people would be remaining in ignorance of the truths of the Christian Faith and sunk in vice had not God [...] raised up good and pious teachers” [...] Christian schools are established to paralyse the efforts of the wicked and to raise a barrier against the devastating torrent of their deadly doctrine”...

The image of the barrier and the flood were thus taken up in an optimistic sense, namely, that in the Nineteenth Century the Brothers were there to instruct the young. Thanks to the Christian schools, therefore, the Church had the chance, this time, to build a flood barrier capable of resisting the tide of irreligiosity.

⁵⁶⁰ In Paris in 1829, in Besançon in 1838.

⁵⁶¹ *Œuvres complètes du Cardinal La Luzerne*, Migne, Vol. 1, LVII.

⁵⁶² Lyon, 1868. This work, compiled and written by Brother Jean-Baptiste, was largely inspired by the teachings of Father Champagnat. It was published in English in 1999 under the title of “Listen to the Words of your Father: Opinions, Conferences, Saying and Instructions of Marcellin Champagnat, and is based on the 1927 French edition of the work, although without attribution of the date or place of publication.

⁵⁶³ Tronchot, *op. cit.*, Vol. 1, p. 237.

La Luzerne therefore encouraged the clergy to instruct the people by means of preaching and catechising. In regards to the adults, the parish priest would exercise his preaching without confining himself only to those who are pious, without giving preference to the rich over the poor, and without watering down the message for those in power. He would be careful to avoid “affected and flowery discourses designed to display his learning” and flatter his vanity. In country areas, “his instructions should be simple, like those to whom he is speaking, adapted to their capacity, and proportioned to what they can take in.” To preachers who think that their efforts are in vain, he recommended, “It is by assiduously working sterile soil that it is finally rendered fertile”, an argument taken up in Chapter 16 of the Treatise to combat the discouragement of the Brothers. Finally, La Luzerne devoted two columns of his work to the instruction of children and develops what is truly a spirituality for the priest catechising children:

“Oh! How greatly do they fail to understand the grandeur of their ministry those proud priests who scorn, as unworthy of their talents, the instruction of children, and who abandon it as a task of no importance to junior ministers!” [...] Pastors who neglect this part of your duties, what great evils you are bringing on those children, on society and on yourselves!”

This theory of the primordial role of the instruction of children was one that was also Champagnat’s, who had certainly read it and put it into practice. It could be supposed also that his “We must have Brothers” of 1816 was in part inspired by La Luzerne. Nevertheless, this taking up of the theory – as was the case also with the Jesuits – was not just a matter of simply copying it. The theory of the parish priest as catechist became that of the Brother as catechist.

The Sulpician Faillon

In 1831, this professor at the Seminary of Saint-Irénée in Lyon, whom Father Champagnat may have known, published through the firm of Gaume in Lyon, a *Histoire des catéchismes de Saint Sulpice* (A History of the Catechisms of Saint Sulpice), but without naming himself as the author. Its opening discourse is very much in the tone of the times:

“Ignorance of religion and the corruption of morals are the natural causes of the extinction of the faith among peoples. The generation who were being raised forty years ago, and who were from the cradle deprived of the helps of Religion, has remained almost completely estranged from Christianity. Now that today it comprises the greater part of society, and that it is forming the rising generation, it is difficult not to feel fear at the thought of our future [...] Considering the progress being made by education and the diminution of faith, one may be tempted to ask with Fénelon if “the flame of the Gospel, which is supposed to go forth into the whole world, has not for us run its course.”

This text was taken up by Champagnat and his disciples,⁵⁶⁴ not in order for their arms to drop but to justify the urgency and the massive nature of the effort that needed to be made. Then Faillon showed how, in the Seventeenth Century, in the face of an equally disastrous situation, the Church had succeeded in re-establishing itself in spectacular fashion through the religious instruction of children,⁵⁶⁵ thanks notably to the initiatives undertaken by the religious congregations. The introduction to the *Life* of the Founder took up large extracts from this discourse (pp. XV-XXIX).

In 1832 Faillon published a *Méthode de Saint Sulpice dans la direction des catéchismes*⁵⁶⁶ (The Saint-Sulpice Method for conducting Catechism Lessons) in which he drew the portrait of the ideal catechist whose zeal had to be wise and enlightened, who was not to engage in any way in distinction of persons, who was to be constant, strong, generous, and so on – all qualities that were taken up again in the Treatise on Education. He then expounded how the catechism lesson was to be done in three stages – questioning, instruction and exhortation or advice. Chapter XXI of the Treatise is largely a recopy of Faillon.

The Brothers of the Christian Schools

The influence of Jean-Baptiste de la Salle appears to be relatively secondary. The Treatise on Education was nevertheless influenced by the *Méditations pour le temps de la retraite* (Meditations for a Time of Retreat), published in 1730 and published again at Langres in 1816. In this work intended for “the use of all persons engaged in the education of youth”, J-B. de la Salle affirmed notably that Christian Education is a ministry of capital importance which goes back to Jesus Christ; that parents are incapable of educating their children; that the teaching of catechism and Christian morality is the basis of this teaching vocation. These were ideas current among the Marists, but also in places where the “devout” school of pedagogical thinking was common.

“*Les douze vertus d’un bon maître*” (The twelve virtues of a good Teacher”) of Brother Agathon, written in 1785 and published in Rome in 1797, seems to have a more profound influence. Taking its inspiration largely from the celebrated *Traité des études* (Treatise on Studies) of Rollin,⁵⁶⁷ and to a lesser extent from the *Ratio Studiorum* of the Jesuits, it developed in turn: gravity, silence, humility, prudence, wisdom, patience, reserve, kindness (very much developed in the sub sections)⁵⁶⁸,

⁵⁶⁴ Treatise, Ch. 2, pp. 25-30; Ch. IV, pp. 412-426; Ch. XX: “On the religious instruction which is to be given to children”; See also *Life*, pp. 502-505. See especially the Introduction to the *Life* of Father Champagnat.

⁵⁶⁵ This discourse was partly taken up again by Dupanloup in his *Méthode générale de catéchisme* (General Catechetical Method), 1839, p. 144.

⁵⁶⁶ Anonymous, at Meyer and Company.

⁵⁶⁷ A Parisian academic (1661-1741), celebrated for his Jansenist views and for his *Traité des études* (Treatise on Studies) published in 1726 and republished in 1813.

⁵⁶⁸ How to become loved; forming the heart, the mind, the judgment; being firm without harshness or indulgence; avoiding familiarity; making correction and punishment rare events.

zeal, piety and generosity. Large passages from each of these chapters were taken up again in the Marist Brothers' Treatise. We know also that this influence was present from the beginning because the retreat notebook kept by Brother François, one of Champagnat's first disciples, makes mention of this work as far back as 1824.⁵⁶⁹ The *Conduite des écoles chrétiennes* (The Conduct of the Christian Schools), which we have already referred to earlier, and *Les douze vertus d'un bon maître* are therefore the two essential contributions of the Brothers of the Christian Schools to Marist pedagogy.

The Treatise on Education reveals many other influences from tradition such as those of John Chrysostom, Gerson and Fénelon and others but, as we have just seen, Champagnat also knew how to take up ideas from contemporary authors such as Faillon and La Luzerne.

Brother Jean-Baptiste did the same and attached great importance to Bishop Dupanloup (1802-1878), one of the great French bishops of the Nineteenth Century. A man of modest origins, but a brilliant student, he was very quickly noticed by his Sulpician teachers. Ordained priest in 1825, his catechetical instructions had all Paris running to him (1824-1836) and he was chosen by the royal family for the catechetical instruction of several of their children. He became a celebrity when in 1838 he received the retraction of Talleyrand, the apostate bishop and ex-minister from Napoleon's regime. After 1845, recognised as a great preacher and with a lively interest in the press (he attempted to start several newspapers), Dupanloup entered the political fray and was one of those responsible for framing the Falloux Law (1850), which restored liberty to secondary education. In 1849 he became Bishop of Orléans and from then on his life was divided between his diocese and Paris where he continued to wage unrelenting war on the enemies of Catholicism.

A conservative at heart, but never rigid in his position on issues (he was viewed as a Liberal), Bishop Dupanloup interests us here because of his numerous pedagogical works. We will focus on two of them: *La Méthode générale de catéchisme recueillie de Pères et Docteurs de l'Eglise et des catéchistes les plus célèbres depuis St Augustin* (General method of catechetics as gathered from the Fathers and Doctors of the Church and the most celebrated catechists since Saint Augustine), (2 volumes, Paris, 1839-1840) and especially his *De l'éducation* (On Education), (3 volumes, Paris, 1850-1857-1862). The first of these works had a very strong influence on the Treatise on Education and thus on *The Teacher's Guide*.

Numerous contemporary authors

Other authors had a more direct and specific influence. The abbé Pouillet, superior of the institution Saint-Vincent de Senlis published in Paris in 1851 a *Discours sur l'éducation* (Discourse on Education) which was largely copied in Chapters IX and XIV of the Treatise. The *Lettres sur l'éducation du peuple* (Letters on the Education of the People), published in Paris in 1850 by Laurentie, former

⁵⁶⁹ A.F.M. 5101.302, p. 8.

Inspector General of the University, were frequently quoted. The *Cours normal des instituteurs primaires* (Training course for primary teachers), published in Paris in 1832 by the Baron de Gérando, a specialist in education, and in particular the Mutual Method of teaching, appeared in a few places in the Treatise. Father Champagnat had dealings with the Baron when he was negotiating the authorisation of his Institute. The abbé Gaume, author of *Du catholicisme dans l'éducation* (On Catholicism in Education), published in 1835 and, in 1838, of a celebrated *Catéchisme de persévérance* (A Catechism of Perseverance) in eight volumes, were also important. Other pedagogical authors are quoted here and there. For example, the Abbé Blanchard (p. 565), who wrote *Ecole de mœurs* (School for Good Behaviour and Morals), in three volumes republished in 1822 at Besançon, a work comprising reflections on education and advice on moral behaviour for the upright man.⁵⁷⁰

The Treatise set great store by contemporary bishops. The prelate most often quoted was Cardinal Giraud, Bishop of Rodez from 1830 to 1841 and then of Cambrai from 1842 to 1850.⁵⁷¹ There were other bishops who were also in contact with the Marists, such as Alexandre Raymond Devie, Bishop of Belley from 1823 to 1852; Pierre Chatrousse, Bishop of Valence from 1840 to 1857; Louis Jacques Maurice de Bonald, son of the celebrated theoretician of the Counter Revolution, Bishop of Le Puy from 1823 to 1839, then Archbishop of Lyon from that date to 1870, and one of the first bishops to take cognisance of the situation of the working classes.⁵⁷²

Apart from Bishops and Archbishops two saintly persons from the Nineteenth Century figured among the models in the "Treatise". First of all, Mother Anne-Marie Rivier, foundress of the Sisters of Bourg-Saint-Andéol (1768-1838), an account of whose life was published by A. Hamon in 1842.⁵⁷³ The other was Marie-Thérèse de Lamourous (1754-1836), a disciple of Chaminade, and foundress of the Miséricorde in Bordeaux, whose life was published in 1843.⁵⁷⁴

⁵⁷⁰ Other authors quoted: Gobinet (quoted pp. 238 and 509) (1613-1690), Principal of the Collège du Plessis for 43 years, published numerous works on education in the 17th Century. Abbé Jean-Sébastien Dieulin (p. 399) wrote in 1845 *Le bon curé au XIX^e siècle* and in 1849, *Le guide des curés du clergé et des ordres religieux*. Abbé Nicolas Moitrier (p. 561) published an *Explication du catéchisme* in 1839, which was reissued several times; *Le livre des pères et mères de famille sur l'éducation physique et morale de leurs enfants*, Nancy, 1839, *Nouvelles instructions chrétiennes pour les jeunes gens*, 1838. Abbé Mérault de Bizy (p. 562) published *L'enseignement de la religion* in 1827. Abbé Théodore Combalot (p. 405), a well known preacher, published many works, notably his *Idées sur l'éducation à l'occasion de la nouvelle loi sur l'enseignement*, in 1850. Abbé Etienne Dauphin (p. 679) published speeches given at the distribution of prizes at the Institution d'Oullins 1838-1853. He seems to have put them out in a volume entitled *De l'éducation* in 1860.

⁵⁷¹ His *Instructions et mandements* from Rodez were published 1842- 1847 and his complete works appeared at Lille 1850-1852 in seven volumes.

⁵⁷² Also quoted are: Marie-Auguste Fabre des Essarts, Bishop of Blois from 1844 to 1850; Jean-Baptiste-Amédée Georges-Massonnais, Bishop of Périgueux from 1841 to 1860; Jean-Louis Lefebvre de Cheverus, first Bishop of Boston, then of Montauban (1824-1826), and finally Archbishop of Bordeaux from 1826 to 1836; Thomas-Marie-Joseph Gousset, a great theologian, at first a disciple of Lamennais, then Bishop of Périgueux (1836) and finally Archbishop of Reims (1840-1866); Jean-François-Etienne Borderies, Bishop of Versailles from 1827 to 1832.

⁵⁷³ *Vie de Mme Rivier*, Avignon, 1842, 424 pages. She featured on pages 267 and 662.

⁵⁷⁴ F. Pouget, *Vie de Mlle de Lamourous, dite la Bonne Mère*, Lyon-Paris, 1843, VIII, 446 pages. Her example is quoted on p. 72.

The Treatise reveals the breadth of culture of Brother Jean-Baptiste, who was able to reinvest that scholarship in the *Guide des écoles*. But it is important also not to overlook the contribution of Brother François whose notebooks of conferences and instructions contain numerous conferences relating to education, the main content of which we find in this Treatise and which even offer us a previously unpublished quotation from Father Champagnat (p. 54):

*“Teaching class must not be for a Brother just some extra thing he does; teaching catechism, forming children to virtue, having them avoid sin, in a word making them into Christians, these constitute his principal and essential function. This is what caused the holy Founder to say about the congregation when a parish did not want the Brothers to take the children for catechism or teach them to pray: **If they don’t want that, then they won’t be getting any Brothers. I would rather see this congregation collapse; it was only set up in order to teach children their religion. This entire community was only established for that and exists only for that; all the rest is just the bait we use to get the children to come**”.*

Thus, authors known before 1840 were for the most part used by Father Champagnat. Brother Jean-Baptiste added to them numerous other works from the years 1840-1852. The *Guide des écoles*, fruit of the Treatise on Education, was therefore a synthesis of Champagnat’s teachings to which Brother Jean-Baptiste had added more recent authors. The question that now remains is the role of Brother François, whose notebooks contain within them instructions and conferences which find their parallels in the Treatise.

APPENDIX 4: Table of the principal authors – Page 362

Theory and Practice – the teaching career of Brother Avit (Henri Bilon) 1819-1892

The writing of the *Guide des écoles* (published in English in 1931 under the title *The Teacher’s Guide*) could only have a progressive influence on the daily practice and the spirit of the Brothers who had come into teaching before 1853. It has already been seen that the partisans of the *férule* had succeeded in having it retained, although the *Guide* had made it clear: “This type of punishment is not in any way authorised in our schools, it is merely tolerated.” (*Guide*, Part I, Ch. XII). Paradoxically, we have scarcely any information on the daily practice of the Brothers, even though their lives as teachers are alluded to in a great many of their biographies. Brother Avit’s work, *Annales des maisons* (Annals of the Houses) could constitute a good basis for a systematic study in this area, but the autobiography provided by Brother Avit at the beginning of his *Annales de l’institut* already gives us a lively description of what training and practice were like in the day to day life of a school teacher in the France of villages and small towns in the years 1840 to 1860. One historian has acknowledged this work as “teeming with detailed infor-



49. Br Avit (Henri Bilon)
(1819-1892)

mation on the concrete life experience of a religious working at the level of the common people.”⁵⁷⁵

As with the vast majority of the Brothers Henri’s origins were rural. His parents had “little money, but they were honest farmers and good Christians.” Brother Avit informs us that, “He was only six years old and his sister five when they lost their mother.” He adds, “They did not have much to be happy about with the stepmother who replaced her.” In addition to that suffering so delicately referred to, he became somewhat lame following a dislocation of his right shoulder which was not properly repaired, with the result that his right arm remained weak and he “could not lift his hand high enough to make the Sign of the Cross.” So, being unfit for manual work,⁵⁷⁶ Henri Bilon benefited from an exceptionally long educational pro-

gramme from 1826 to 1836, that is to say, from the age of 7 years to 17, which made him the “best educated young man in the commune.”

About his personal spiritual life and the pastoral attitudes prevailing at the time, he gives some extremely interesting details:

“His parish priest, a saintly man,⁵⁷⁷ born at Rive-de-Gier, had retained some traces of Jansenism. Let the reader judge: Henri always went to him for Confession, even though there were two assistant priests who were kind men. One day he confessed to having taken twelve apricots that had fallen onto the ground under a neighbour’s tree. The parish priest obliged him to pay for them, and twelve times he sent him away without absolution. The child didn’t have a sou. He didn’t dare admit this theft to the neighbour, nor to his father, who would not have regarded it as a joking matter, and who had in fact cuffed him about the head when he saw that he had stopped going to Communion. Neither the confessor nor the father had any inkling of the dangerous position they had put him into, one his penitent, the other his son.”

This is an excellent piece of evidence on the changes in pastoral ministry being brought about at that time through the influence of the moral theology of Alphonsus Liguori. The parish priest, Father Madinier, was certainly not a Jansenist, but a rigorist

⁵⁷⁵ Gérard Cholvy, Yves-Marie Hilaire, *Histoire religieuse de la France contemporaine*, Vol. 1, 1800-1880, Privat, 1985, p. 334. One of these authors had read only a part of the annals. These *Annales de l’institut* were published privately in Rome in 1993.

⁵⁷⁶ At the start of his *Annales* he notes: “Without this infirmity so difficult for nature, would Henri have entered the religious state? It is very doubtful.”

⁵⁷⁷ Jean-François Madinier, see LMC, Vol. 2, Répertoire, pp. 352-354.

in the tradition of the clergy of the Ancien-Regime, who deferred absolution in cases where the penitent had not given tangible signs of repentance. His assistant priests, who were younger men, seem on the contrary to have been more accommodating but Henri Bilon gives us to understand that his father thought them too lax.

Around the same time papa Bilon, at the age of fifty, got it into his head “to learn to read and to take his son as his teacher.” But, Brother Avit adds:

“The pupil remained seated and the master had to stand behind his chair. He gave this lesson from 11. 00 pm to midnight, after the day’s work was over. The young teacher would have preferred to be sleeping. This lasted the whole of one winter after which the elderly pupil, to the great astonishment of the parishioners, was very exact in devoutly following the Offices of the Church in a book. Four fifths of the inhabitants would not have been able to do that.”

This is a good example of the low level of literacy among the rural inhabitants down on the plains⁵⁷⁸ around 1830 and also an indication of the prestige enjoyed by education not acquired through going to school but in a family environment characterised more by austerity and respect than by tenderness.

Faced with having to choose an employment other than manual, Henri Bilon followed the Brothers from St Didier-sur-Chalaronne when they went to their annual retreat at the Mother House of the Hermitage on 1st October 1837:

“The mountains, the Brothers’ house, silence for eight days, etc., were things completely unknown to him and no one said a word to him, except the kind Founder in Confession. He was extremely bored and was off as soon as the retreat was over.”

Nevertheless, he entered the novitiate on 9th March 1838 and on 13th May⁵⁷⁹ took the habit and the name Brother Avit. He was particularly fervent because at the end of his novitiate he took the three vows of Poverty, Chastity and Obedience for three years, whereas most new Brothers only took these vows after a certain number of years in community.⁵⁸⁰ Another sign of his determination was that he offered himself for the missions in Oceania, which had been founded by the Marists in 1836.

He was deemed to be sufficiently well educated not to have to spend time cooking at a school in order to complete his formation. Instead, in October he was placed at Pélussin, in the Pilat Mountains, to teach the beginners’ class. He complains that “his Director made fun of his inexperience and his piety in front of the pupils.” The older Brothers often tended to give a hard time to their younger confrères who were at times better educated than they were. Nevertheless, he must have given satisfaction and maintained his motivation because in October 1839 he made his Perpetual Vows,⁵⁸¹ and was sent to Terrenoire, in the suburbs of

⁵⁷⁸ The mountain areas often had higher levels of literacy.

⁵⁷⁹ In his *Annales* Br Avit speaks of 14th May but the Register of Receptions of the Habit indicates 13th May (OFM 3, p. 94).

⁵⁸⁰ Br Avit situates this Profession one year later but the Register of Temporary Vows does indeed bring it back to the year 1838.

⁵⁸¹ Register of Perpetual Vows OFM 3, p. 278.

Saint-Etienne to teach “a very numerous First Class”. (Translator’s note: this would have been the top class in a primary school). The following year he was at Viriville (Isère) to teach a First Class of 65 pupils and to see to a boarders’ study which occupied him from 6.00 in the morning to 7.00 at night. At night for six months he also had to prepare to take the examination for his Brevet, which he received at Grenoble on 9th March 1840. As Brothers with the Brevet were relatively few and far between, from May of 1840 he was given an advanced class at Charlieu (Loire).⁵⁸² Finally, on 15th August, just after the death of the Founder, and at the age of twenty one years, he was appointed Director at Saint-Genest-Malifaux (Loire). He recognises that he was somewhat young to have that position and indirectly gives us to understand that his manner of running the school did not meet with universal approval in the parish. In addition, victim of an “odious calumny”,⁵⁸³ he was downgraded to second in charge at Mornant (Rhône).⁵⁸⁴ As the children, despite the efforts of the parish priest and the Director, Brother Théophile, were very undisciplined in the church and at school, Brother Avit relates for us how he rapidly re-established order after observing the situation for the first two Sundays after his arrival there.

“The following Sunday the children had to come to the church two by two and in silence, something which had not happened for several years. This greatly astonished the numerous spectators who were already in the square. Father Venet (the parish priest) had come to the church earlier. He saw the pupils enter in silence, make a respectful genuflection before the altar, take their places in the pews in perfect order, make the Sign of the Cross, etc.”

Having thus established his authority and obtained the confidence of the parish priest, Brother Avit had no fear about informing the latter about failures in the behaviour of his assistants:

“One of them, named Perrichon, was smoking and hanging around with the six altar boys every morning before Mass. Four of these children were singing the Mass for the Dead, which they knew by heart, without any light. At the same time, they were talking, fooling about and playing tricks on each other. Brother Avit thought it his duty to inform His Reverence of this disorder. Father Perrichon got a severe reprimanding⁵⁸⁵ and consequently had a grudge against him.”⁵⁸⁶

He had also to reprimand the parish priest who had the effrontery to walk into his classroom to select the altar boys without any reference to him, and who was accusing him of wanting to run the parish in his place. Another day he grabbed

⁵⁸² A small number of schools at that time had a higher level class intended for the most advanced pupils.

⁵⁸³ According to Br Avit, it was revenge of the part of ex-novices from the Hermitage who were natives of St Genest.

⁵⁸⁴ He was not the Director but he taught in the top class. An older Brother had the job of supervisor of the youngest ones but he did not teach them.

⁵⁸⁵ Br Avit’s exact words are ‘*un bon galot*’, a variant spelling on ‘*galop*’. The ‘gallop’ was an old dance with a very fast pace. The expression was used metaphorically to mean a very severe reprimand.

⁵⁸⁶ He would have said to the Parish Priest, “You are letting yourself be led around by this scribbler of a Brother.”

the father of a family by the collar. The man was in a fury and wanted to give the Brother Director a good hiding because his son had been punished. Finally, Father Vernet got the Superiors to recall Brother Avit in September 1843 while, it seems, accompanying his request with this remark in his praise: “Keep a close eye on this Brother. He has the stuff in him of three men, but there is a lot to be done to smooth his rough edges.”⁵⁸⁷

Appointed to Bougé-Chambalud (Isère) in 1843, he stayed there for three years and admits that “there he made the rain fall and the sun shine and what he accomplished there was done more out of vanity than virtue.” He was the cantor at the church and formed up a group of some fifteen singers from among the young people:

*“He had them perform a few two part pieces. The parishioners, who had little familiarity with music, were all eyes and ears in their astonishment. They called it ventriloquism. In those days, when they were coming to Mass or evening Vespers, they would say among themselves, “It’s a big feast day today. They’ll be doing their ventriloquy.” The parish priest bought an ophicleide and Brother Avit succeeded in playing it; the parishioners said he was blowing down the pipes.”*⁵⁸⁸

(The ophicleide was a brass instrument, the predecessor to the tuba, invented around 1817, and in popular use in France mainly from 1820 to 1880 in brass bands, military bands and also in churches.)

Nevertheless, Brother Avit had to do battle with a merchant, a philosophe, who “regularly went to church but used to make a show of reading his newspaper.” He also had problems with a Countess who wanted him to fill in a water feature that was in a garden he was cultivating. He also used to go, in the presence of a Brother and the parish priest, to give lessons to the Sisters who were teaching the little girls in a convent the priest had founded. In short, although he confesses that he has a certain taste for glory, Brother Avit does not mind recounting his exploits and reveals a strong tendency to see the people in the villages as easy to manipulate so long as you were firm and used a bit of diplomacy.

In October 1846 he founded the school at Mondragon, in the valley of the Rhône, with two Brothers. The parish priest, Father Rey, gave them a rather cool reception and immediately demanded that one of the Brothers carry out the functions of sub-deacon in the church in spite of the rules of the congregation. In the end, Brother Avit, having been duly authorised, took on that function. As for the school:

“The two classes open on 2nd November. They soon had 110 to 115 pupils in winter; some twenty or so left during the summer. These children were very undisciplined and it took a great deal of energy to get them under control. From the first day, the Brother Director (himself) saw that the walls of his classroom were covered in inscriptions in pencil, that were insulting to the Brothers who had been there previously and even obscene. [...] When he gave out the homework for the next day, they protested loudly”...

⁵⁸⁷ *Annales de Mornant*, AFM, 214.56, pp. 10-13.

⁵⁸⁸ Br Avit’s exact word is ‘bourner’. In the Lyonnais dialect a ‘bourneau’ is a terracotta pipe used to carry water. The verb ‘bourner’ meant by analogy to blow air down the pipes.

But Brother Avit had the last word: "If anyone fails to do the work, he will have me to deal with [...] The pupils' eyes opened wide and they got down to work."

There is no shortage of entertaining and surprising anecdotes:

"The inhabitants thought Brother Avit was severe but they acknowledged that the children were making great progress. Indeed they put a lot of energy into their work. One day one of them approached Brother Avit's dais and said to him, 'If you don't give me a big slap on the face, laziness will get the better of me.' He got a big slap and he worked energetically for the next two weeks."

*"A child had received a punishment but was refusing to do his lines. Brother Avit had a stormy argument with the father who had to retire in confusion: Everyone around was saying to him, 'That Brother stopped you in your tracks. You were stunned, flabbergasted'."*⁵⁸⁹

But Brother Avit, as well as being Director, had become Visitor (inspector) for the schools of the Provinces of St Paul-Trois-Châteaux (Drôme) and La Bégude (Ardèche). His prolonged absences obliged him to resign his position as Director of the school and in September 1848 he was appointed sole Visitor for all the establishments of Centre and of Midi, that is, almost the entirety of the schools of the Marist Brothers.

At that stage he was only twenty nine years of age, but already had a long experience as a teacher. His account gives a good idea of the reality of the function of a schoolmaster at the end of the first half of the Nineteenth Century. It is necessary to use the word 'schoolmaster' here rather than 'Brother' because neither the parish priests and their assistants, nor the inhabitants seem to have accorded great respect to these men they regarded just as drudges engaged in teaching. For the clergy in particular, the Brothers were still semi-clerics who could be treated in offhand fashion and called upon to carry out the traditional functions of church cantor, supervisors of children and even bellringers. As for the parents, they were quick to come and settle matters in a brutal fashion if they thought that their children, who were always ready to play up, had been treated unfairly. To sum it all up, schools as we know them in their modern form had not yet become the norm.

To give him his due, however, Brother Avit's attitude is symptomatic of a profound change. Equipped with a Brevet qualifying him as a teacher, and protected from the local authorities through belonging, on the one hand to the University, and on the other to a teaching congregation, he was an institution in the parish. The parish priest found he would be a partner but not a slave. But also, the Brother Director, when he was a good cantor, a respected teacher and a good religious, may have been going to the point of reflecting unfavourably on the moral authority of the parish priest.

Around 1848, the social order was under threat not just from the "red" teachers, denounced at the time by Adolphe Thiers, who was a Liberal in his politics but

⁵⁸⁹ 'T'a ébouriffé lou fréro'. In Provençale dialect 'ébouriffer' means to completely get the better of someone. In standard French it would have been, 'Le frère t'a stupéfié, t'a laissé ahuri.'

had been frightened by the 1848 Revolution. In a less spectacular but no less effective way, the religious and their congregations, conscious of their dignity as Christian educators, were also working to destabilise the tradition of the school as an annexe of the presbytery whose existence was justified first and foremost by the teaching of catechism. French historians, too fixed on secularisation understood as anticlericalism, have done scarcely any research on this evolution which saw the school establishing itself as an entity that was independent of clerical authority, but not its enemy. As for the priests in the parishes, they were doing their best to put the brakes on this tendency, for example by asking the Superiors to change a Director, or by giving the preference to lay teachers who would be more submissive.

So Brother Avit now got down to his new task as Visitor and we can readily believe him when he says:

“Everything had to be started from scratch in this important job: to be on the move for eleven months, organising examinations for the Brothers and the pupils, the compatibility of appointments, furnishings, statements of accounts, writing up half of them twice per year, writing out in full the reports on the visits, preparing examination timetables, new foundations, the annual placement of personnel, etc., and devoting his days and part of his nights to all of this: such was his life for seven years.”

Exhausted by all his running around and by overwork, Brother Avit asked to take a rest from it in 1855 and was appointed to run the boarding school at Digoïn (Saône-et-Loire) but he adds, “The treatment was worse than the illness.” He listed his miseries: “The pupils were lazy, depraved, with no piety and not very bright”; the parents were bad payers and withdrew their children under various pretexts; a school doctor “who let children die without knowing what was wrong with them”; another doctor who stirred up the parents against the place; “a stepmother who badly beat her child and then accused one of the teachers of doing it”; an assistant priest who tried to compete with the Brothers’ choir and make the school take on classes for adults; competition from another boarding school “which was moving heaven and earth to draw our pupils away and was more to the taste of the populations around about Digoïn”; the minor seminary at Semur-en-Auxois whose four professors, all natives of Digoïn, spent all of their holidays attracting pupils away from the Brothers’ establishment, even the day students, to their French lessons; the parish priest whose Masses got on the pupils’ nerves because they were so long; Brothers on his staff who were neither very capable nor very confident: “They were the nightingales⁵⁹⁰ of the Province”; and finally “local suppliers who were all liars and cheats trying to outdo each other in their trickery.”⁵⁹¹

Even if Brother Avit is exaggerating, what he says shows clearly that ideas and behaviours in the world of the town were very different from what he had known in the world of farms and fields. On the other hand, it was now no longer a matter of just elementary teaching but of the intermediate level where significant competition reigned between private boarding schools, colleges and minor seminaries.

⁵⁹⁰ This word referred to unsaleable merchandise and, when used figuratively, someone that nobody wants.

⁵⁹¹ *Annales de Digoïn*, AFM 212.16, pp. 17-23.

Although still young – he was only thirty six – Brother Avit was no longer the triumphant young man of the years 1840-1848 but a man disenchanted and disoriented as a result of political events and the rapid changes occurring in society. Finally, after three and a half years spent as Director at Bourbon Lancy, at the end of 1859 he resumed his function as Visitor in the Province of Saint-Genis-Laval.⁵⁹² On 25th August 1876 he was elected as Assistant for the new Province of Bourbonnais.

In summary then, son of a peasant who was both a *légitimiste* and a good Catholic, well-educated for his time and milieu, Henri Bilon found in the life of a teaching religious an exceptional destiny which he owed in part to his own qualities as a man of energy and intelligence. But his teaching career seems to have experienced two contradictory phases. Up to around 1855 he was a teacher ahead of his time, a fervent Christian and a good administrator. These were traits shared by a good number of the Brothers of his generation. After that, he seems overcome by pessimism, a feeling shared by many Catholic educators, anxious in the face of the irresistible onrush of a new world, a world which they had largely helped to bring about, which, however, they could not recognise as theirs because they remained stuck in the ideal of a society that was stable and hierarchical.

It would certainly be going too far to claim there is a contradiction between *The Teacher's Guide*, with its concern both for tradition and for openness to the pedagogy of the times, and the frame of mind of the generation of Brothers who were at work in the years 1840 to 1860. One could at least, however, propose as a hypothesis that a certain spirit of conquest had come up against its limits.

⁵⁹² The Province of Centre had been separated into two.

13.

THE GENERALATE OF BROTHER LOUIS-MARIE (1860 – 1879)

It has been stated earlier that from before 1860, and without doubt from the time of the Chapter of 1852, the influence of Brother Louis-Marie had become preponderant within the Institute's leadership team and had contributed in a large way to the Institute's movement from being a community, lightly structured from an administrative point of view but united by a strong common identity and an egalitarian spirit, to a highly structured congregation defined by a detailed rule of life but also not so strong in its internal cohesion. The greater part of his generalate would consist in continuing the effort towards the setting up of administrative structures and the consolidation of what was no longer an association of laymen with an ill-defined status but not quite either a congregation. This is why, in the pages that follow, there will often be a tendency to consider the years 1852 to 1879 as a whole. It will be seen, likewise, that, although within the congregation Brother Louis-Marie had established himself as a leader perhaps more respected than loved, externally he experienced some serious setbacks in his dealings with the State and even with the Church.



50. Brother Louis-Marie (1810-1879)

A brilliant generalate marked by strong leadership

In the course of nineteen years (1860-1879) Brother Louis-Marie created a powerful network of provincial houses and boarding schools.⁵⁹³ The total number of

⁵⁹³ *Vie du F. Louis-Marie*: the Provincial Houses of Beaucamps (Nord), L'Hermitage (Loire), St Paul-Trois-Châteaux (Drôme) were enlarged whilst the General House at Saint-Genis-Laval was completed and an entire Provincial House constructed at Aubenas (Ardèche). C3 p. 48, the new boarding schools were: Lille, Paris, Haubourdin (Nord), Bourg-de-Péage (Drôme), Péage-de-Rousillon (Isère), Saint-Genis-Laval. In parallel, the following boarding schools were enlarged: Breteuil, Pont-Sainte-Maxence (Oise), La-Côte-Saint-André (Isère), Valbenoîte (in the suburbs of Saint-Etienne), Thizy (Rhône), St-Pourçain-sur-Sioule (Allier), St-Dider-sur-Chalaronne (Ain) and La Clayette (Saône-et-Loire).

schools went from 379 to 574.⁵⁹⁴ The number of Brothers doubled. This policy of controlled expansion resonated at a deep level with the way the majority of Brothers felt. In their view the growth in numbers was a sign of the Divine predilection. Brother Sylvestre, one of the first followers, would at the end of his life write a whole chapter on the “Marvellous Development of the Congregation”⁵⁹⁵ whilst more prosaically Brother Louis-Marie himself was to confide to Brother Avit, “If we stop creating new foundations, the Brothers will think that things are no longer going well in the Institute and they will become discouraged.”

The Rules of Government (1854) gave the superior General very broad powers. Appointed for life, he had within his purview⁵⁹⁶ “the superintendence and the general running of all the houses of the Institute, he appointed the Directors and Sub-Directors, the Visitors, the Directors of the Novitiate Houses, the Procurators, Secretaries, Economes, the members of the councils”... In 1862, directly or with the aid of his Assistants, he governed three Provinces:

Centre	The Hermitage Section (Loire)	91 houses	541 subjects*
	Saint-Genis-Laval Section (Rhône)	106 houses	608 subjects
Midi	Saint-Paul-Trois-Châteaux Section (Drome)	41 houses	245 subjects
	La Bégude Section	93 houses	488 subjects
Nord	Beaucamps Section (Nord)	52 houses	286 subjects
	Hautefort (Dordogne)		
	Section of Belgium		

*Note: ‘subjects’ is a term referring to the members of the congregation, i.e., the Brothers.

In 1873 the Province of the British Isles was erected, comprising England, Scotland, Ireland, South Africa and Oceania.

In his task he was assisted by, at first five Assistants, who “under the General were responsible for all movement of personnel and the personal direction of all the Brothers” of the Province they were in charge of even though they did not reside there. The Provincial Procurator concerned himself with the material side – the Brothers’ vestiaire (clothing supply), the accounts and the common fund. In schools there were a Director and a Sub-Director. Establishments with more than eight Brothers also had a consultative Council. The administrative side of matters was under the direction of a Secretary General.

The system was expanded as numbers increased. The number of Assistants went from two in 1839, to three in 1854 and to five in 1860. The Chapter of 1867 appointed a sixth and the 1873 Chapter took their number to eight, when it created the position of Assistant with responsibility for juridical and administrative matters,

⁵⁹⁴ *Abrégé des Annales*, 1877, p. 551.

⁵⁹⁵ Br Sylvestre, *Mémoires*, p. 77.

⁵⁹⁶ Constitutions of 1889.

that is, for relations with the civil, military and religious authorities. The central government of the congregation then remained in this form for a long time, since in 1903 there were still eight Assistants.

The Provinces were not autonomous. In 1854 each Provincial House had a Brother Director, (sometimes called the Provincial) in charge of the reception of postulants,⁵⁹⁷ their admission and the administration of the house. In urgent cases he had authority over the Brothers of his Province. In 1846 the position of Visitor was put in place, the details of which were set out in a Circular.⁵⁹⁸ The position was inter-provincial for a time,⁵⁹⁹ but was later merged with that of the Vicar Provincial.⁶⁰⁰

Finally there was the supreme institution, namely, the General Chapter.⁶⁰¹ It has already been shown how the way of choosing delegates was very quickly narrowed down. At the first Chapter in 1839, professed Brothers (there were 92 present) were members by right. In 1852, to be eligible for the Chapter it was necessary to be an “elder” or else a professed Brother holding a position of responsibility. Of the 337 professed Brothers who were electors, 69 were eligible for election and 30 elected. The creation of the Vow of Stability by the Chapter meant that this system of a restricted number of eligible Brothers became permanent, even though all professed Brothers were electors.⁶⁰²

DATE OF THE CHAPTER	NUMBER OF BROTHERS ELIGIBLE	NUMBER WITH STABILITY ELECTED	PROFESSED BROTHERS ELECTED
1852	The “elders”		13
1860	30 to 40 with Stability	None elected	
1863	48	33	27
1867	59	33	30
1873	59	33	36
1880	76	36	?

⁵⁹⁷ Abbé Ponty. *op. cit.*, pp. 96-97.

⁵⁹⁸ *Circulaires*, Vol I (C1) and *Abrégé des Annales*, pp. 333-335.

⁵⁹⁹ *Acts of the Chapter* of 1876, p. 88; C5, pp. 380-383; *Abrégé des Annales* (1876). It was under pressure from Rome that the Superiors modified the organisation of the Provinces in order to give them more apparent autonomy. In particular, the Brother Vicar Provincial was to exercise the functions of Visitor and also act as an aide to the Assistant. According to Brother Avit, it was in 1883 that the function of Visitor was re-established. Responsibility for both the Provincial House and for visitation of the communities had proved to be in contradiction with each other, and they were separated; the Vicar Provincial was to have responsibility for the general oversight of the Province whilst the Director of the Provincial House would have to be content with the government of that establishment.

⁶⁰⁰ One institutional structure seems not to have functioned well. These were the Districts, created in 1854; they were a group of a maximum of six houses overseen by a Brother with the Vow of Stability. They fell into disuse, but were set up again in 1875, but without great success, it seems. See C1, pp. 47, 77; C5, p. 257.

⁶⁰¹ C13, p. 515. This list contained all the information required for General Chapters.

⁶⁰² *Abrégé des Annales* (1855); *Constitutions* of 1889; C2, p. 403.

In short, the Chapter was rather more like a Senate than a Chamber of Deputies. Such a system can be more readily understood when we remember that this was in the era of Pius IX who, although he had started out as a liberal, was now orienting the Church towards a rejection of the modern world. Meanwhile, in civil society the spirit of democracy was making great strides.

The policy of expansion being pursued by the congregation was exacting heavy financial demands. Its resources came largely from the communities where a regime of strict economy was in force. Since, as of 1833, teachers in public schools had been receiving a modest but regular salary, the Institute had been trying to take on as many commune schools as possible. Whilst the monies thus coming in did not amount to a great deal, the General Fund was largely the beneficiary. Thus, in 1853 the houses furnished 103,563 francs⁶⁰³ and the postulants' fees brought in 36,525 francs. On the opposite side of the ledger, the most significant of the running costs was the Brothers' clothing, the vestiaire (33,533 francs in 1853).

When it came to taking on new expenses, however, the budget was thrown completely out of balance. This was the case in 1853 when the property of Saint Genis-Laval was acquired. The Statement of Accounts for that year indicates: Expenses of 373,509 francs, of which 241,727 francs was for the purchase of the new property, against 140,088 francs in Receipts. The account was "practically dry" (Brother Avit). There were two ways to cover this outlay. One was to engage in even greater cost-cutting. The other⁶⁰⁴ was an invitation to the Brothers to lend their personal patrimony to the Institute. These measures, however, were not enough, and in 1856 the congregation took out a loan of 100,000 francs. In 1860, it was necessary once again to exhort the Brothers to save on expenses. Then came a subscription fund for the construction of the chapel at Saint-Genis, and another for the boarding school in Paris. In spite of all these measures, in 1869 the Superior General acknowledged liabilities of 500,000 francs.⁶⁰⁵

This adventurous policy was arousing misgivings among the Brothers, and the Superior General had to work hard to allay them:⁶⁰⁶

"Brothers who have a good spirit, the true family spirit, are happy when they see all that is being done to ensure and to regularise the temporal affairs of the congregation. They are not at all surprised and even less are they pained when an appeal is made to their zeal and devotedness."

Debts and recriminations did not stop Brother Louis-Marie from setting off once again even more vigorously. More land was bought and construction projects begun for a novitiate at Aubenas (Ardèche) and then a Provincial House at Saint-Paul-Trois-Châteaux. The 1870 Franco-Prussian War upset the financial situation for a while. In 1872 a new invitation went out for cost-cutting efforts, since "more than ever our financial burden is becoming heavy and embarrassing". This was fol-

⁶⁰³ *Abrégé des Annales* (1853).

⁶⁰⁴ C2, pp. 186-188.

⁶⁰⁵ *Circulaire* of 2/2/1869.

⁶⁰⁶ C3, pp. 367, 461, 489, 490; C4, p. 336.

lowed in 1873 by a “supreme effort to extinguish our debt and to cover a loan of 300,000 francs which falls due on 11th December 1875”.⁶⁰⁷

To all these standard remedies were added for the first time “the profits from the sale of two products, the exploitation of which we have been tolerating for a short time, precisely for the purpose of paying off our debts.” The products in question were the *Arquebuse de L’Hermitage*, a medicinal liqueur, and *Biphosphate de Chaux* (Calcium phosphate), sold in pharmacies as an energising health tonic. (It contained a number of minerals and was effective in strengthening bone density, in treating skin diseases and even tuberculosis). In their regard Brother Avit marvelled:

*“The designs of Providence are indeed admirable. No one would have suspected before 1862 that Providence would make use of Brother Emmanuel (its inventor) to endow the Institute with a discovery which is so powerfully helping it today ... we are speaking of l’Eau d’Arquebuse ... We would have to say the same about the Phosphate tonic and about Brother Amable, who little by little arrived at its formula.”*⁶⁰⁸

This industrial and commercial activity, though theoretically provisional, could only continue since there had been scarcely any reduction in the debts and the hundreds of schools being run by the Brothers constituted an effective commercial network. The Institute, what’s more, had no lack of inventors, handymen and mechanics, proposing to the Superiors the development of inventions of greater or lesser usefulness. Finally there were the fund-raisers, Brothers who, once duly recommended by the Bishop, called on the generosity of the general public.

At the time of Brother Louis-Marie’s death on 9th December 1879, the debts were still well short of being extinguished, since just one year before, on 8th December 1878, the Institute had taken out a loan with the *Crédit Foncier* for another 500,000 francs. The total of debts then stood at between 2,500,000 francs and 1,700,000 francs. This was worrying but in less than twenty years the Institute’s assets in terms of immovables (buildings) and movables (furniture and other contents) had grown very considerably; in 1860, they had amounted to 1,200,000 francs. By 1876 their value had risen to more than 6,700,000 francs of which a little more than one million were still owing.⁶⁰⁹

Government policy turns hostile towards the teaching religious

With the fall of the Empire on 4th September 1870, and the disturbances that came in its wake, the war and then the Commune, the social and religious order seemed once again under threat. (The Commune was a short-lived extremist revolutionary government that came to power after the fall of the Empire).

⁶⁰⁷ C4, pp. 54-59, 318, 320, 322, 335, 339; C5, p. 227.

⁶⁰⁸ C13, p. 461. The first attempts would have occurred in 1858; C13, p. 467; the formula for the phosphate would have been arrived at in 1871.

⁶⁰⁹ *Abrégé des Annales* (1880); Acts of the Chapter of 1883.

These events caught Brother Louis-Marie by surprise as he was visiting the school at Charolles because, with the country at war and the Brothers not being able to gather for the retreats, the Directors had been brought together in certain places to receive directions from the Superiors and to hand over their funds.⁶¹⁰ When the Superior General and his Assistant, Brother Avit, were on their way back to Saint-Genis-Laval, they were carrying 30,000 francs. It was 8th September and Lyon was in a state of revolt. With public transport in disarray, they were making their way on foot towards St-Genis, but they were arrested en route, threatened with imprisonment and finally escorted to Saint-Genis-Laval.

In 1871 the Brothers had brushes with the Commune in two places,⁶¹¹ Paris and the Hermitage. After the assassination of the Prefect of the Loire, “the louts of Saint-Etienne and Saint Chamond” would have been planning a “visit” to the Brothers. The Brothers made preparations to defend the house. A dozen of them armed themselves with daggers. The others brought in piles of stones from outside, which they intended to launch from the windows. As usual nothing happened, but the alarm made a deep impression on the Brothers.

Brother Louis-Marie would have been all the more anxious because of the indications he had given of his loyalty to the Empire.⁶¹² When the Empress and the Prince Imperial came to Saint-Genis-Laval on 25th August 1869 to visit the Hôpital Sainte-Eugénie which had been founded by the Empress, “the whole community of the Mother House went up to Her Majesty to pay their respects ...” Another demonstration of loyalty was the dinner for the Canton of Saint-Genis-Laval hosted at the Brothers’ house with the Prefect of the Rhône as the guest of honour.⁶¹³ In later years the Republicans in Saint-Genis-Laval would make the Brothers pay dearly for their ill-judged involvement with the Empire.⁶¹⁴

In the meantime Brother Louis-Marie believed he had found in the very conservative Ordre Moral (Moral Order) government (1873-1877) a regime after his own heart. He would live long enough to see once again the collapse of the sort of regime that was to his liking, but his death in 1879 spared him the full-scale onslaughts of the Republicans.

Even so, from before 1870 Brother Louis-Marie had had to deal with two problems which were to become major difficulties for his successors. The first came about because of a change of attitude on the part of the Imperial government beginning in 1860, which was inspired by Minister Rouland who was trying to protect the lay teachers from the inroads of the religious congregations:

⁶¹⁰ Ibid. 1870.

⁶¹¹ *Vie du F. Louis-Marie* p. 180. In Paris, just one Brother (Brother Kilianus) was imprisoned. During the 1870 war, under the government of the Défense Nationale, the Mother House at Saint-Genis-Laval was requisitioned to house the Mobile Guard. They left the property in a mess (C3, p. 538). Prefect Challemeil-Lacour made life difficult for the religious congregations. For the events at the Hermitage, see the *Abrégé des Annales* (1872).

⁶¹² *Abrégé des Annales* (1858).

⁶¹³ Such demonstrations of loyalty were also motivated by utilitarian considerations. Thus in 1869 the Brothers were engaged in negotiations to obtain from the administration the right to have a private cemetery at Saint-Genis-Laval. *Vie du F. Louis-Marie*, p. 163; C4, pp. 510, 512.

⁶¹⁴ *Abrégé des Annales* (1877).

“These days, when the lay teachers ... are devoted to the Emperor, ... and keeping in mind that all now have the vote, we would be greatly weakened if all primary teaching ended up in the hands of the religious congregations, whose first loyalty is to Rome rather than to France.”⁶¹⁵

In addition, starting in 1861 the administration took the view that Municipal Councils should have only a consultative vote in the appointment of teachers in the commune schools and that the Prefect should only allow them to have religious in situations where “the deliberations have been free and fair”. Those same Prefects were also invited by Rouland to profit from the moments when changes were being made in the religious personnel of a school, to push for a vote by the Municipal Councils in favour of the school being laicised. Furthermore, the appointment of members of religious congregations, even the non-certificated teachers, would have to be made by the Prefect. A little later, the Duruy Law (29th March 1867) authorised Communes to convert their schools from fee-paying to non fee-paying. In this way the congregations, which before had been benefitting financially from these establishments, would now lose that advantage.⁶¹⁶ Thus, at St Pierre-du-Champ (Haute-Loire), the State stopped the Marist Brothers from becoming teachers in the public school in spite of the wishes of the population.⁶¹⁷

Another practical consequence of the new policy being conducted by Rouland was the fear of scandal. Up to this time the government had left it to the Superiors to take adequate measures to deal with any religious guilty of breaking the law, but after 1860 they were treated the same as lay teachers. From 1855 to 1860, steps such as disciplinary action, revocation of teaching permits and judicial condemnations were taken almost solely against lay teachers, whereas after 1860 the numbers of religious found guilty by the courts rose abruptly. Even more seriously, “the reporting of these trials became one of the principal items filling the columns of newspapers such as *Le Siècle*, *l’Opinion Nationale*, and the Republican newspapers published in the provinces.”⁶¹⁸

It was not therefore by chance that, beginning in these years, Brother Louis-Marie constantly came back to the necessity for Brothers to exercise vigilance in their relations with the children to avoid scandals:

“Let no one in any house, nor under any pretext whatever, mistreat the children or strike them. Even more let everyone avoid the slightest familiarity with them ... Be on your guard, let us all be on our guard, this is a matter of sovereign importance for us, for religious life, for the whole Institute.”

These political circumstances considerably curtailed the expansion of the congregation. From having founded on average twenty schools per year between 1850 and 1860, it could only manage an average of six per year between 1861 and 1869. This does not include school closures for which detailed figures are not available.

⁶¹⁵ J. Maurain, p. 581.

⁶¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 773.

⁶¹⁷ J. Maurain, *La politique ecclésiastique du 2nd Empire de 1852 à 1869*, Paris, 1930, p. 581.

⁶¹⁸ J. Maurain, Ch. X, p. 210, “Rouland, l’Instruction Publique et les congrégations”, and Ch. XVIII, p.540. *Le Siècle* (The Century) and *l’Opinion Nationale* (National Opinion) were Paris dailies read especially by the lower middle or “shopkeeper” classes.

All the same, the Imperial government's policy was only one of the causes of this almost complete halt. The Institute, after several years of spectacular growth, needed to recover its breath and absorb all these foundations. Then, during this period of a slowdown in the numbers of new schools being founded, Brother Louis-Marie was making a big drive to establish boarding schools, and these were absorbing a good number of personnel. There was a further factor. Although Brother Avit, when writing about why schools were being closed, declared that it was due to "political passions" and "the triumph of the Freemasons and their keenness to laicise the schools", he was also careful to add two other quite material causes, namely, "lack of resources or discouragement in a certain number of localities" as well as "the necessity of raising the salaries."⁶¹⁹

The legal authorisation of the congregation in 1851 had settled the problem of military service. All Brothers, irrespective of their employment, signed on for the ten year commitment to teach and were dispensed from military service. Beginning in 1863 the government began making difficulties around this ten year commitment and on 14th February 1866, in a circular letter to the Rectors of the University, Minister Duruy decided that members of congregations could only benefit from the dispensation if they were serving in public schools. This excluded Brothers employed in private schools or engaged in manual work. Finally, on 1st February 1868, a law was passed creating the Mobile National Guard, which placed certain Brothers under threat of being drafted. During the war of 1870 a number of Brothers were affected by the law of 10th August, which summoned to the flag "all celibates, unmarried men or widowers without children, between the ages of 25 and 35 years, whose names do not appear on the enrolment lists of the Mobile Guard".⁶²⁰

Under the government of the Défense Nationale, all seemed lost because Article 1 of the Decree of 29th September 1870 foreshadowed the mobilisation of all Frenchmen between the ages of 21 and 40 years. However, Brother Louis-Marie, accompanied by Brother Philotère of the Brothers of the Christian Schools went to Tours and obtained a decree exempting all members of religious congregations from service. Averaging out all these interventions, it appears that no Little Brothers of Mary were called up,⁶²¹ and with the return of peace, all the problems and difficulties around military service disappeared.

On the whole, Brother Louis-Marie was able to profit remarkably from the economic circumstances of the day and, despite the restrictive measures and even some serious jolts, the political situation remained favourable. Nevertheless, a little before his death in 1879 the republican adversaries, so greatly dreaded, had won power and the secularisation laws were being prepared. This is why when Brother Louis-Marie died in 1879 a whole epoch for the congregation died with him, the epoch marked by less spectacular but more orderly growth than has been the case previously.

⁶¹⁹ *Abrégé des Annales*(1979).

⁶²⁰ C3, p. 141.

⁶²¹ *Vie du F. Louis-Marie*, p. 141 ; C3, pp. 153-154.

The question of authority – centralisation or decentralisation

In spite of his great skill, Brother Louis-Marie had not been able to, nor had he wanted to, resolve two related problems, namely, the decentralisation of the Institute and the definitive canonical approbation of the Constitutions. It is true that when Father Champagnat was elected by the Brothers as their Superior, then recognised as such by the Diocese of Lyon and later by Father Colin, he had been a superior with a strong charism that was centred on the Hermitage. Under Brother François the question of decentralisation came up in a quite concrete way because, beginning in 1841 Father Mazelier, Superior of the Brothers of Saint-Paul-Trois-Châteaux had proposed a clearly decentralised system of government divided into Provinces. At the Hermitage, obviously, they were of a completely different opinion:

“It seems the interests of a united congregation demand that the Superior General and the Brother Director General must be able to assign the subjects of all Provinces except for the obligation to found houses in each diocese on a pro rata basis according to the number of subjects coming from that place to the society.”

Finally, each party accepted a compromise – the Superiors would have authority over the personnel in the Provinces but “the Brother Provincial Director will govern his Province, make the Brothers’ placements and changes, inspect the schools, while fully subject to the powers of the Superior General and the Brother Director General, which remain whole and entire.” So Saint-Paul-Trois-Châteaux became a Province but very much under the control of the Hermitage. The scenario was the same when the Brothers of Viviers were absorbed in 1844.

Father Mazelier placed the question once again on the agenda for the 1852 Chapter. He recalled in his letter his wish “that each Province in the Institute be directed and governed by a Provincial residing in his Province with responsibility for the Brothers’ placements and changes, and with the powers necessary to effect those placements and changes, also for inspecting the schools, etc.” as had been agreed on twelve years earlier.⁶²² Brother Louis-Marie⁶²³ replied to him in the name of the Chapter that the clause had indeed been respected, since there was an Assistant assigned to each Province to govern it. That he did not habitually reside in it was an advantage:

“Being a member of the Superior General’s Council, he can take his inspiration directly from its ideas and its views, which makes for greater unity in the government.”

In fact, the composition of the Chapter had reinforced this centralising stance for the Province of L’Hermitage had eighteen capitulants whilst those of St-Paul and Viviers had only five capitulants each, and the little Province of Nord, daughter province of L’Hermitage, had two.⁶²⁴ We may, however, wonder if, on this question, the small Provinces had not made common cause against L’Hermitage since: “a dozen members of the Chapter (from a total of thirty three) had asked for Provincial

⁶²² Abbé Ponty, *Vie du F. François*, pp. 95-96.

⁶²³ *Abrégé des Annales* (1854).

⁶²⁴ C2, pp. 114-115.

government for the whole of the Institute, as was being requested by Father Mazerliet for the Province of Saint-Paul.”⁶²⁵

One of the reasons pushing the Superiors to want this centralisation was the practice of the manifestation of conscience which Chapter 4 of the Common Rules conceived of thus: “The Brothers will have recourse to the Brother Superior in total confidence as to their father, and so that they can be effectively assisted they will make a complete revelation to him of the depth of their soul, that is, their good and bad inclinations, their failings, their temptations, the obstacles they encounter in the practice of the virtues, in a word, all that is bad and all that is good within them.”

This was a problematical practice since it involved a sort of confession but the Superiors judged it indispensable to preserve this role of father and spiritual director. In acting this way they claimed to be modelling themselves on the Brothers of the Christian Schools and the Jesuits. But they were also placing themselves in the tradition of the Desert Fathers and of the Hermitage in its early days, when those in charge, particularly in the case of Champagnat, had been priests. By so doing, although they were laymen, the Superiors were moving towards claiming for themselves both canonical power and charismatic authority.

Rome – a stumbling block

In 1857 the Marist Brothers compiled their dossier for obtaining their canonical recognition.⁶²⁶ On 11th February 1858 Brother François, and his first Assistant Brother Louis-Marie, arrived in Rome with the intention of having the congregation approved by Propaganda, as an affiliate of the Marist Fathers, because the approval would be obtained more rapidly than at the Congregation for Bishops and Regulars and Cardinal Barnabo, Prefect of Propaganda, appeared to favour this line of approach.⁶²⁷ However, Pope Pius IX, who received the Superiors in audience on 28th February and 15th April, decided that their affair belonged with the Congregation for Bishops and Regulars and Archbishop Bizzari, Secretary of this Congregation, foresaw that it would take quite some time. So on 12th August Brother François left Rome without having obtained anything.

On 9th December 1859 the Sacred Congregation for Bishops and Regulars delivered to the Little Brothers of Mary a Brief of Praise. This constituted a first step towards their approval.⁶²⁸ This was, however, accompanied by animadversions (criticisms) which overturned the entire organisational structure of authority in the Institute. Its author, Mgr Chaillot, Redactor of the “*Analecta Juris Pontificii*”⁶²⁹

⁶²⁵ On this question of decentralisation see *Circulaires* Vol. 1, pp. 488-492, 517, 520, 522, 539.

⁶²⁶ C2, pp. 506-511; the text of the petition for approval and the twenty fundamental articles of the Constitutions are in the *Vie du F. Louis-Marie*, Ch. 10, p. 185. See also the Acts of the Chapter of 1863.

⁶²⁷ Abbé Ponty, *op. cit.*, pp. 188-205.

⁶²⁸ See the text of the Brief of Praise in the *Vie du F. Louis-Marie*, p. 190.

⁶²⁹ The *Dictionnaire de biographie française* presents him as a notorious ultramontanist. Consulter to the Sacred Congregation for Bishops and Regulars, and supported by its Prefect, Archbishop Bizzari, he enjoyed considerable behind the scenes power; the French Prefects feared him and the Government worked against him, but without daring to push things to the limit.

and a notorious ultramontanist, had some harsh criticisms to make of the Constitutions:⁶³⁰

“The government of the Institute seems too absolutist; it could perhaps degenerate into despotism.” Closer examination is needed to see if the Superior General of an Institute of religious who are not priests should be elected for life or for twelve years only, with re-election for a further term being prohibited without an apostolic indult.”

Article 3 found that the authority given to the Assistants was too great and that they should be confirmed in office each time by the General Chapter, and not retain their position while ever the Superior General was still living. The criticism of Article 4 was especially severe:

“I observe one thing that is singular and perhaps without precedent. The Assistants, although obliged to reside with the Superior General, each have responsibility for a Province with a novitiate without residing there [...] It would seem opportune to create true Provincials, resident in their Provinces, who would supervise their own novitiate, appoint the local Superiors, place subjects in their schools, etc. ... reserving the appointment of these Provincials to the General Chapter with the faculty of confirming them in their position if they are doing well.”

As a consequence, the Archbishop of Lyon, Cardinal de Bonald, and the Superior General of the Society of Mary, Rev. Father Favre, were charged with reviewing and correcting the Constitutions “while keeping before their eyes the observations” before submitting the new text to the General Chapter of the Brothers, presided over on this occasion by Rev. Father Favre, and then sending them to the Sacred Congregation for Bishops and Regulars.

The severity of these criticisms may be in part justified, because of a letter written by Brother Marie-Jubin, future Provincial Director of the house of Saint-Genis-Laval, who, acting through the Archbishop of Lyon, had on 22nd February 1858 denounced to Rome the conditions under which the Constitutions had been drawn up,⁶³¹ namely, a Chapter hastily convened whose members were poorly prepared for their task, the Vow of Stability, which was not part of the tradition; articles fundamental to the Constitutions which had not been discussed. There were other matters as well. Brother Marie-Jubin concluded: “These, my Lord, are observations I have heard quite often from several Brothers, even from some who were our earliest members.”⁶³²

Criticisms also came from the side of the Marist Fathers who still exercised considerable moral authority over the Brothers. Since they were providing the chaplains to the Provincial Houses and the novitiates, they complained that the spiritual direction being carried out by the Superiors of the Brothers was encroaching on their role as confessors. Father Favre, Superior General of the Marist Fathers, there-

⁶³⁰ A.F.M. Registres capitulaires: Chapter of 1860.

⁶³¹ A.F.M. Registre des projets de constitutions, 1, pp. 95-98.

⁶³² This was aimed at Brother Louis-Marie, more than at Brother François. In discussions with the Archbishop of Lyon Brother Louis-Marie argued that the Vow of Stability had been introduced “following the very powerful example of the Company of Jesus” and that the Chapter had devoted “more than a hundred general sessions over three consecutive years” to the examination of the Constitutions.

fore asked Father Nicolet,⁶³³ his Procurator in Rome, to make an intervention with the Sacred Penitentiary because “I believe that in France we are going too far, at least in certain communities.” And in the margin he added: “Do not say anything to the Brothers about this. They are very sensitive on this point.”

For all these reasons, on 16th February 1859, Cardinal de Bonald, Archbishop of Lyon, sent a severely critical letter to Rome:⁶³⁴

“... These Religious (the Marist Brothers) direct schools with great success. But [...] good direction is lacking in their novitiate and in the society. The Superiors of this congregation, being but simple Brothers, have neither sufficient learning nor sufficient authority to direct the novices, give them a good understanding of the duties of the religious life, the range and scope of the vows, and to keep everyone in obedience and submission.”

“It therefore appears to me necessary that the Marist Brothers be, as they were before, dependent on the Marist Fathers. [...] By placing the Brothers under the authority of the Fathers, the Sacred Congregation will consolidate the Institute of the Little Brothers of Mary and provide for them a direction and level of instruction of which they stand in need ...”

Finally on 21 August 1858 Father Nicolet made it clear that the Brothers “must wait for the i’s to be dotted in their Constitutions” and added:

“I see that they want to consider them as an affiliate of the Marist Fathers. [...] Thus they would not be allowed to hold their General Chapter, whether for the election of the Superiors or for some other circumstances, without a delegate of the Bishop or of the Superior of the Marist Fathers being present; [...] What can be done for them? I don’t know anything more about it. All I know is that they will be linked. And in such a way that they will have trouble getting out of it later on.”

A Chapter would therefore have to prepare new Constitutions. Brother Louis-Marie, elected in 1860 as Vicar to Brother François and the de facto Superior General, attempted to modify this procedure. On 7th February he went to Rome⁶³⁵ but obtained nothing and left once again with clear instructions, namely, to convoke a General Chapter for the purpose of revising the Constitutions “while as far as possible taking into account the animadversions.”

The Chapter held its sessions from 22nd to 25th April 1862 under the direction of Father Favre, Superior of the Marist Fathers, to whom the Brothers gave a less than warm welcome. The assembly followed the plan in seventy two articles prepared by Brother Louis-Marie and again took up the contentious issue raised by Rome of a Superior General elected for life. In the same way it rejected a Provincial system of government which would undermine the unity of the congregation because, for a body of men so widely dispersed and having so few capable men avail-

⁶³³ A.F.M., Letter of Father Favre to Father Nicolet 27/02/1858. From a collection of photocopies drawn from the archives of the Marist Fathers and deposited in the A.F.M.

⁶³⁴ A.F.M., *Registre des projets de constitutions*, 1.

⁶³⁵ A.F.M., *ibid.*, p. 147.

able, it was necessary to have “an authority that is both very strong and very fatherly, and fatherly because it is strong”. At the end of the Chapter Father Favre felt the need to explain himself:

“In the thinking of Rome, his presence (at the Chapter) as Rome’s delegate had been intended in a spirit of good will, and its only purpose had been to hasten the conclusion of our business and to make for as happy an outcome as possible.”

By stating “that his mission was now at an end”, he removed any idea that there would be permanent supervision on the part of the Marist Fathers, but the rumour was going around among the Fathers “that Father Favre would have been very hurt by the behaviour of the General Chapter towards him.” On 5th May Brother Louis-Marie left once more for Rome. After a very cool reception from Mgr Chaillot,⁶³⁶ he secured the intervention of some influential ecclesiastical personalities, but with no success.

No one was prepared to give in. Archbishop Bizzari accused the Superiors of wanting too much power “and after all (he said) they must not forget that they are only laymen”. For his part, Brother Louis-Marie declared himself “very determined to cede nothing on the Superior for life, the Vow of Poverty and the Provincials”. On 6th July the Superior General returned to France. His Assistant, Brother Euthyme, remained in Rome until 7th September, but with no further success.

These setbacks were all the more painful as the congregation was not going well. Brother Louis-Marie in his letters from Rome alluded to the “process of purging that is being carried out”. Further on he stated, “The ball has been set rolling, anything that is rotten or really crazy or wavering, we are going to see it all go. Those who have gone recently, that’s all they were.”⁶³⁷

The serious internal crisis that had occurred during the Chapter of 1852-1854, and revealed by Brother Avit, had not therefore been resolved. Furthermore, the crisis over the manifestation of conscience had got worse. In 1861 the chaplain of the house at Beaucamps (Nord) had had to be withdrawn by Father Favre because of his conflict with the Brother Director. But Father Favre, although he had given in in this particular case, posed the problem at the level of principle,⁶³⁸ namely, that it was the chaplain’s role and not the Brother Director’s to regulate liturgical practice, run confraternities and decide on which children would be admitted to First Communion. In regard to the Brothers, it was the chaplain’s role “to do spiritual direction properly so called, which is an adjunct to confession”; “to judge in the internal forum matters concerning vocation and the call to vows, especially to that of chastity”; “to receive and especially to require the Brother to open his heart concerning his secret faults, such as would be equivalent to a confession”. And he concluded: “When things have reached that point, there is only one course of action that can be pursued in order to have peace, and that is to go our separate ways.” This was “the expression of a decision taken unanimously in Council” and

⁶³⁶ A.F.M. Dossier 354-1-3; approaches made in Rome by Brother Louis-Marie in May 1862.

⁶³⁷ A.F.M. Registre de projets de constitutions, 1, p. 147a, 190.

⁶³⁸ Letter of 6th October 1861, Lyon. Photocopies deposited in the A.F.M..

so there came about a second separation from the Marist Fathers, but in a very different spirit from the first one.

Fortunately, on 9th January 1863 the Institute obtained a Decree of Approbation of the Constitutions for five years. But this latter was very clear: the Constitutions approved were those of Mgr Chaillot in a corpus of sixty nine articles, and not those of the Chapter of 1862. Between the two texts there existed some fundamental differences:⁶³⁹

CONSTITUTIONS IN 72 ARTICLES PROPOSED BY THE 1862 CHAPTER	CONSTITUTIONS IN 69 ARTICLES CONFIRMED BY ROME
Superior General for life. Assistants elected for 10 years. General Chapter consisting of the regime and of 33 Brothers deputies chosen by the Professed Brothers from among Brothers with 4 vows (incl. Stability). General Chapter every 10 years. The Brother Visitor visits the Province; the Brother Assistant governs it. The Vow of Obedience (temporary) is made to the Superior General and to his representatives. Two years of novitiate, one of which is made in the novitiate, the other in a school. The Council for Admission to Vows is formed of six Brothers appointed by the Superior General.	Superior General elected for 12 years. Assistants elected for 4 years. Idem (the same). General Chapter every 4 years. The Brother Vicar Provincial governs the Province. The Vow of Obedience is made to the Holy See, the Superior General and to his representatives. Two years of novitiate made in the novitiate house. The same Council is presided over by the Vicar Provincial.

Ultimately, it was the Bishop of Arras, Pierre Louis Parisi,⁶⁴⁰ a renowned ultramontanist, who got the Superiors out of their difficulty. He established a subtle piece of casuistry, namely, that if certain points of the Constitutions were recognised as impossible to put into practice, one might with a fully safe conscience “suspend their application in practice”, without failing in respect for the Holy See. And indeed, the Superiors had been pressing the point that these Constitutions were in conflict with those on the basis of which the civil authorisation had been obtained in 1851, thanks in large part to Bishop Parisi, and that they were fearful of serious difficulties with government.

The danger was not imaginary since this was during the period of the Roman Question. Pius IX was holding out against the Movement for Italian Unification

⁶³⁹ A.F.M. Dossier 355-2, “Constitutions des Petits Frères de Marie: Historique” 12 typewritten pages by Br Michel Fatisson, Rome 1965. See also C3 pp. 494-495 and *Vie du F. Louis-Marie*, p. 193.

⁶⁴⁰ *Vie du F. Louis-Marie*, p. 194 ; Acts of the Chapter, 1863.

which had dispossessed him of the Papal States, and the French Government, which could not afford to lose the support of the Catholics, was having to maintain troops in Rome to defend the temporal power of the Pope against the Italian government and Italian public opinion, which saw Rome as their capital. Relations between the Papacy and France were therefore difficult and, rightly or wrongly, the Superiors were afraid that the government would cancel their authorisation in reprisal for Roman Curia's intransigence in the matter of the Constitutions.

At the Chapter of 20th July 1863 the Superior General read out the Decree but accompanied it with the opinion of Bishop Parisi, who had been joined in this by Cardinal de Bonald, Archbishop of Lyon. Evidently, the Chapter followed what Brother Louis-Marie was proposing and, to avoid any trouble, the capitulants were asked to bear in mind the approval granted to the Institute "without going into the details of the Constitutions, which have only been given or proposed for a trial period of five years". Thus the Holy See's Constitutions were kept secret. "Nevertheless," says an anonymous report, "some Brothers, two or three, were able to make some clandestine copies. This is what had come into the hands of the author of this account in 1867, that is to say, four years later."⁶⁴¹

At each new Chapter, the question of the Constitutions would come up again. At the 1867-1868 Chapter the secret Constitutions were reluctantly read out and, the Superior General having made the distinction between submitting them for examination by the Chapter (which had been done) and their implementation (claimed to be impossible), the matter was left there. Brother Marie-Jubin, Provincial Director, and Brother Placide, a Visitor, who seemed to have protested, were in later years removed from their positions. The 1873 Chapter was again full of skirmishes, with a group of eight or ten Brothers wanting to raise the question of the Roman Constitutions. At this stage moreover, with Rome having been seized by Italy in 1870, the reasons invoked by the Superiors in 1863 were hardly justified any longer and the French government had much more worrying matters to deal with than the Roman question.

At the second session of the same Chapter, in 1876, the minutes of the workings of the Chapter make mention for the first time of the provisional Constitutions given by Rome in 1863. Even so, the Chapter did not change position and even felt the same need to justify its behaviour and that of the Superiors by using the same line of argument, namely, the impossibility of implementing them and the support of two prelates.⁶⁴² Finally, by 35 votes for to 5 against, the Chapter expressed the wish that the government of the Institute be preserved. Such a decision was, without any doubt, dictated by Brother Louis-Marie and his Assistants, who seem in this occurrence to give proof of a certain stubbornness, the reasons for which we must attempt to discern.

It seems that Brother Louis-Marie had been brought up on a traditionalist philosophy inspired by the leading thinkers of the Counter Revolution, men such as

⁶⁴¹ A.F.M. Dossier 352-220-1.

⁶⁴² C5, pp. 365-393.

Joseph de Maistre and Bonald. His ideal was a society, patriarchal and stable by nature, under the aegis of the Pope and of a Sovereign who supported the Church. There was also the question of the status of congregations of lay religious under simple vows in an era when Canon Law had not yet defined whether these new entities were to be considered as Third Orders or as Religious Orders. Since they had not been able canonically to form part of the Society of Mary and were refusing to be seen as a Third Order, the Marist Brothers were asserting their claim to be recognised as religious in their own right.

At bottom it was an ecclesiological conflict. Priests in general, and the Marist Fathers in particular, were reluctant to accept the idea that laymen could run their own affairs, and in any case saw spiritual direction and confession as one and the same thing. The Superiors of the Brothers meanwhile, strong in the monastic tradition, were drawing a distinction between the two ministries. It remains no less true, all the same, that mixed in with these more profound reasons there was a real stubbornness on the part of the Superiors. Nor must we neglect the extraordinary growth of the congregation, which was perceived as a sign from Heaven, while at the same time confirming that the congregation had in place the best form of government possible.

14.

A SIGNIFICANT DOCTRINAL ENRICHMENT

The Circulars of Brother Louis-Marie and the books of Brother Jean-Baptiste

Brother Louis-Marie was not only an excellent administrator. Having entered the congregation in 1832, a long time after Brother François and Brother Jean-Baptiste, but having been very quickly called to important roles by Father Champagnat, he too could lay claim to the title of guardian of his spirit. His Circulars were therefore going to be largely concerned with perpetuating that spirit and even restoring it.

Three stages in his teaching

Up to 1873 the Circulars of Brother Louis-Marie constitute a veritable corpus of teaching reformulating the Marist spirituality from top to bottom. Brother Theophane, one of his successors, would also quote them and have several of them reprinted.⁶⁴³ Indeed, they would even remain a reference point for the Institute up to the middle of the Twentieth Century. They were characterised by a threefold objective clearly set out in the Circular of 27th September 1860, namely, the restoration of piety, charity and regularity. Unlike Brother François who, in his Circular on the Spirit of Faith, did not once quote Father Champagnat, Brother Louis-Marie made abundant use of the Founder's words and example, as he did also of two Brothers whom he held up as models, Brother Bonaventure, Master of Novices (d. 1865) and Brother Jean-Baptiste (d. 1872). In the final analysis, however, he was less insistent on charity than he was on piety and regularity.

Throughout his work an ascetical and even rather military conception of the spirituality of the Congregation is strongly present, in partial opposition to Brother

⁶⁴³ *Circulaires*, Vol. 8, p. 62, May 1890. Announcement of the publication of a collection of four of the Circulars of Brother Louis-Marie.

François' way of seeing it, and somewhat more in line with the approach of Brother Jean-Baptiste. The Circular on Formation, issued in 1867, seems typical in that respect. It presents the Institute in a highly structured way, with the Directors not only responsible for their school but also being required to see to the formation in the religious life of their young helpers, and being all the while under the vigilant eye of the Major Superiors.⁶⁴⁴

A second Brother Louis-Marie then seems to emerge in the long Circular on the Apparitions at Pontmain, as if the terrible events of 1870-1871 had filled him with dread that the enemies of religion would triumph unless defeated through the intervention of prayer. There is no doubt that it was this calling into question of his certainties which gave rise to the Circular on "The Mystical Life of Jesus Christ in our Souls" (16th June 1877), English translation, Vol. 2, p. 375), one of the high points of Marist spirituality. It is not unconnected, moreover, with the three Circulars which followed – on Hell, Eternity and Holiness. In these texts, which are strongly inspired by the Exercises of Saint Ignatius,⁶⁴⁵ we find the same inspiration again, namely, the fight against the reign of evil, after the example of Christ, for our own salvation and that of our neighbour.

Brother Louis-Marie's teaching seems therefore to reflect three contrasting stages. In the first, he is the Superior sure of himself and conducting a top to bottom reorganisation of a Congregation that was in real need of a strong leader; in the second, he returns to a tradition that had been present in the early days, situating the Congregation in the great cosmic struggle between Good and Evil, between the Christ and the Anti-Christ. Finally, there comes the ageing Brother Louis-Marie, making his own personal meditation on the Four Last Things (Death, Judgement, Heaven, Hell).

Of the three heirs to Champagnat chosen by the Brothers in 1839, it was doubtless he who contributed the most to reshaping the congregation, imposing himself in 1852 as the strong man in the leadership team, and demonstrating indisputable leadership qualities, while at the same time offering an interpretation of the Marist spirituality that was rather personal and not lacking in depth.

After 1879, of the three Superiors elected in 1839, the only one still living was Brother François, who had been in retirement since 1860 and who, despite having been affected by a stroke in 1876, participated in the Chapter that elected Brother Nestor. He died at the beginning of 1881. The task of writing his Death Notice seems to have been given to someone who hardly knew him. It was very short,⁶⁴⁶ as if Brother François had already been largely forgotten. Paradoxically, it was he who had seemed to be the weak link of the trio who were Champagnat's successors, even though during his generalate the Institute had undergone its most rapid development, as well as obtaining its legal recognition and setting up its fundamental law.

⁶⁴⁴ This strategy is not unconnected with the weak perseverance rate among the Brothers; the young ones because they had received little formation from Directors not able to take on a multiplicity of tasks; the Directors who were put off by a job that was asking too much of them.

⁶⁴⁵ See Volume 6, p. 78. The Chapter of 1863 had opened with a meditation on Hell and an Unhappy Eternity.

⁶⁴⁶ *Circulaires*, Vol. 6, p. 269-274.

His withdrawal from affairs in 1860 therefore seems rather mysterious. Born in 1808, he was only 52 years of age and it is difficult to understand how the congregation could be deprived of the services of so experienced a man. Over and above that, his health problems do not seem to have been as bad as those of Brother Jean-Baptiste. Then there is the question of his influence during the twenty one years that he continued to live. It cannot have been insignificant, because finally it was his Cause for Canonisation was introduced in 1910, whereas such a course of action seems never to have been contemplated in the case of Brothers Louis-Marie and Jean-Baptiste. The content of his spiritual notebooks leads us to think that this posthumous recognition was not overdoing things, since it is through them that we can penetrate the most into the depths of the Marist spirituality. They also lead us to suspect that Brother Jean-Baptiste's work owes a great deal to him.

In the short term, the death of Brother Louis-Marie more or less marked the close of a major phase in the history of the Institute, that of the heirs of Champagnat, the men who had not only known him but had been his direct helpers and the repository of his spirit. The myth of the "Three-as-One" also found its foundation in this reality.

Brother Jean-Baptiste – a second doctrinal input

An outline of the life of Brother Jean-Baptiste, the author of the *Life* of Father Champagnat, has already been given earlier in this work. However, it is important to fill out our knowledge of this central personage who was still very active up to 1872 as a letter-writer and Superior, and for whom a fully developed biography has never appeared, even though Brother Avit, who began writing the *Annales des Maisons* (The Annals of the Houses) in 1884, was impatiently asking for it.⁶⁴⁷

Several obstacles seemed to have discouraged a possible author. Firstly, the biographical sketch written by Brother Louis-Marie in 1872 and presenting Brother Jean-Baptiste as "a second Founder" and so the only one capable of "penetrating into the intimate and earliest thinking of the Father Founder". Bearing in mind that this was written while Brothers François was still alive, it may have shocked a possible biographer and made the task seem too daunting. Another reason may have been the copies of the hundreds of letters Brother Jean-Baptiste had sent replying to the problems of Brothers, in particular concerning "the holy virtue", which may have led to the de-



51. Brother Jean- Baptiste Furet
(1807-1872)

⁶⁴⁷ "We are very desirous of seeing it finally published," he said when relating the death of Br Jean-Baptiste in 1872, *Annales des Maisons*, Vol. 3, p. 173. In 1881, when relating the death of Br François, he renewed his wish (p. 294).

cision to postpone making use of them.⁶⁴⁸ A final reason may have been that Brother Jean-Baptiste left no personal notes.

A biography of Brother Jean-Baptiste, which remained in manuscript form, was written later by Brother Amphiloque Deydier at the request of Brother Stratonique, Superior General, on the occasion of the Centenary of the Institute in 1917.⁶⁴⁹ He did some research on the Brother Jean-Baptiste's childhood in Saint Pal en Chalancon and it is from him that we learn that he was born in the hamlet of Pieyre, that he was the third of six children, that he was the pupil of a "Béate". He was probably already sickly (he suffered from asthma) and his mother put him to work making lace, an occupation traditional in the Haute Loire, and normally the preserve of the women. He hardly ever went out into the fields with his brothers, but that did not prevent him from roaming the countryside looking for birds' nests, a detail he gives in one of his instructions. A devout boy, he bought the fourteen images of the Way of the Cross, which he used to decorate his bedroom.⁶⁵⁰

Brother Amphiloque brought us more extracts from his instructions and conferences.⁶⁵¹ One of them (p. 47)⁶⁵² seems of particular importance because it picks up again the instruction reported in the last chapter of the *Life*, the one in praise of constancy. But did the Brothers really need such a repetition?

LIFE, (ENGLISH TRANSLATION), P. 554	BROTHER JEAN-BAPTISTE, P. 47 ... (29TH AUGUST 1861)
<p>"The divine Master pronounces a magnificent eulogy of St John Baptist and before the assembled crowd, declares him to be the greatest of the children of men. Now, what is it that he particularly praises in the holy Precursor? [...] It is the constancy of the holy Precursor.</p> <p>To draw attention to the invincible firmness of St John, Our Lord questions those around him, and asks: <i>'What did you go out into the desert to see?</i></p> <p><i>A reed shaken by the wind?'</i> No; such a fickle character would not have been so great a spur to your curiosity and admiration. [...] You went to see a man who is constant</p>	<p>"... It was said of him, by the Saviour himself, that of all the children born of woman, there is none greater than he. Who could doubt it! (<i>then follows a description of the life of St John the Baptist</i>) It was thus that his fidelity and constancy merited being praised by Jesus Christ himself.</p> <p>Praised: but for what reason particularly? For his firmness of character, for his strength of will, for his constancy in doing what is right. John was not a weak and fragile reed bending before every wind, yielding to every whim, giving in to every influence, and changing at every instant. Neither was he a man made soft by sensuality, and dominated</p>

⁶⁴⁸ In relation to these letters Brother Theophane, superior General from 1883 to 1907, explained that "reading these letters as they are, would not be suitable for all the Brothers, nor would it be helpful to them."

⁶⁴⁹ A manuscript of 339 pages dated Grugliasco 20th June 1917. A.F.M., Rome, 514-4/K13.10.

⁶⁵⁰ Brother Amphiloque gives no indication as to his sources, and the hagiographical style he employs does not help us to distinguish how much of his presentation derives from the convention (pious mother, precociously religious child) and how much is authentic.

⁶⁵¹ On pages 47, 94, 99, 114-115, 140, 144-145, 147, 166, 223-224, 260, 265, 296. There is a quotation from Fr Champagnat on p. 98.

in the practice of the rarest and most heroic virtues; a man who never wavers in fulfilling the mission entrusted to him by God; who perseveres in the vocation and austere mode of life that he has embraced; who is steadfast in serving God, in edifying his neighbour, in reproving and correcting sinners and in supporting with unalterable patience and perfect resignation, the persecutions of the wicked.”

by the love of luxury and material comfort. He was a prophet and more than a prophet, who to the very end fulfilled his mission without any weakening, no matter the fatigue, the persecutions or the sufferings he experienced.

Brother Jean-Baptiste then goes on to praise the “têtes carrées” (an expression he invented meaning the tough-minded types) who, in imitation of John the Baptist, remain constant in doing what is right.

The biography of Brother Jean-Baptiste contained in *Our Superiors*⁶⁵³ (1953) did not add anything really new but it did make an interesting assessment of “his spirituality”, that “it was simple and solid. He did not go in for any sort of excess; he had no particular tendencies, and he preferred the common life to everything else.” A single idea would sum up that spirituality: “salvation, the truths which enlighten it, and the means which ensure it or make it easier.” These words of praise – which are at the same time an implicit criticism – are corroborated by Brother Paul Sester who, in *Marist Notebooks*⁶⁵⁴ defined his spirituality this way: “One’s salvation must be won before all else by warfare against the devil, the domination of one’s nature, the love of Christ, while being an apostolic religious.” In reading the *Manual for Directors* the same impression is formed of a doctrine that is very ascetical and, when all is said and done, rather dull. The inner depths of the man himself escape us.

As has already been said, this peerless conference-giver and lively letter-writer⁶⁵⁵ was a very unwell man. After 1860, he could no longer give general conferences to the Brothers. Sleeping very little, and even so in an armchair because of his asthma, Brother Jean-Baptiste was therefore relatively free to write his works, and it is not by chance that on the day of his death he was correcting the proofs of some meditations that were ready for publication. This solitude coupled with his malady seemed to have contributed to his becoming a person prone to severe crises of anxiety, which Brother Louis-Marie had quite a lot of difficulty in calming.⁶⁵⁶

Either before 1860 or afterwards, Brother Jean-Baptiste, alone or in collaboration with other Brothers, produced ten titles, nine of which were published while he was still alive.

⁶⁵² These words in praise of Br Jean-Baptiste are also reported in the *Manual for Directors* in the year 1861, p. 338. It is likely that Brother Amphiloque obtained them from this source.

⁶⁵³ Saint-Genis-Laval, 1953.

⁶⁵⁴ Nos 1 and 2, June 1990 and June 1991.

⁶⁵⁵ A letter writer also because of his position. The Rule required all Brothers to write regularly every two months to the Brother Assistant.

⁶⁵⁶ *Ibid.*

It is useful to stress that these works can be divided into two distinct periods. Those published in 1863 were only a revised and very much augmented edition of the *Manual of Piety*, now divided into two volumes. With the works coming between 1868 and 1875 we are dealing with quite a different matter. They were a major addition to the literature of the years 1851-1863, in which Brother Jean-Baptiste re-worked the source materials he had not used in the *Life* of Father Champagnat, and in particular the talks Champagnat had given to the Brothers. These he arranged in his own fashion in the light of his experience and his spiritual culture. This is especially true of *Avis, Leçons, sentences* (Opinions, conferences and sayings), the *Biographies de quelques frères* (Our Models in Religion),⁶⁵⁷ and *Le Bon Supérieur* (The Good Superior).⁶⁵⁸ The sheer quantity of Father Champagnat's talks to the Brothers is such that one may ask if the "voluminous notebooks" from before 1856 were not still in existence. In any case, there is a strong complementarity between these three works. *Avis, leçons, sentences* was a reminder of the primitive spirit of the Little Brothers of Mary, the *Biographies* an attempt to fight against the low esteem in which the vocation of the Brother was held, and the third urging the Directors to be exemplary in their behaviour and charitable in their dealings with the Brothers in their charge. These three topics were responding to fundamental difficulties in the congregation. As for the two books of meditations, although they were completing or reworking meditations already contained in the *Directoire de la solide piété* (The Directory of Solid Piety), they do seem also to be a more personal work of Brother Jean-Baptiste, who wanted "the Brothers to know Jesus Christ", words which offer a noteworthy correction to the somewhat bland image given by many of his conferences.

TITLE	DATE	PUBLISHER	OTHER COMMENTS
The Common Rules The Teacher's Guide The Rules of Government	1851-1853		Significant contributor
The Manual of Piety	1855	?	A formation catechism and collection of prayers. Significant contributor.
Life of Father Champagnat	1856	Périsse	2 volumes.
The Principles of Christian and Religious Perfection for the use of the Little Brothers of Mary	1863		4 th edition in 1893; 7 th in 1939. Successor to the Manual of Piety for use in formation
The Directory of Solid Piety	1863		Meditations and Prayers. Successor to the Manual of Piety. Republished in 1875, 1887, 1900...
Sentences, Leçons, Avis of the venerated Fr Champagnat.	1868	Lyon, Nicholle	Republished in 1914 and 1927 under the title Avis, Leçons, Sentences.

⁶⁵⁷ The majority of the Brothers whose lives are related came from the Province of the Midi, the Province where Br Jean-Baptiste was in charge for eighteen years.

⁶⁵⁸ Brother Louis-Marie considered that this work summed up Br Jean-Baptiste's thinking on the government of the Institute. *Circulaires*, Vol. IV, p. 261.

Our Models in Religion: Biographies of some Brothers who were distinguished for their virtues and their love for their vocation	1868	Lyon, Nicholle et Guichard	Republished several times.
The Good Superior, or the qualities of a good Brother Director after the mind of the Ven. Fr Champagnat.	1869	Lyon, Nicholle	
Meditations on the Passion and the Names of Our Lord.	1870	Lyon, Lecoffre	
Meditations on the Incarnation, the virtues of Jesus Christ, and the Eucharist.	1875	Lyon, Lecoffre	Posthumous work

The influence of his works

In his Circular of 1872 Brother Louis-Marie related a statement from a Brother Director who was a great reader of Brother Jean-Baptiste's works:

"When I have finished reading one , I cannot stop myself from picking it up and reading again what I had just been reading and, really, I cannot say how indignant I feel when I see Brothers paying no attention to them."

And Brother Louis-Marie went further:

"Here we have true treasures which are being offered to the whole Congregation. Some day or other, these treasures of religious teaching, these principles of perfection and salvation, these secrets of zeal and holiness will be used with great profit by our Brothers, to the greater glory of God and the greatest good of souls!"

These two admirers were therefore deploring the fact that such literature was being fairly much neglected by the Brothers, which suggests that by 1870 the prestige of the author may have been fading somewhat. This, however, would perhaps also be the moment to mention his limitations as a self-taught man. True! He was an orator, a raconteur and a brilliant letter writer, but his secular culture was limited and he had little esteem for it. "Their *Télémaque* (the celebrated work by Fénelon) they make out to be a masterpiece [...] but I would find it impossible to read. Don't talk to me about fables when I have the Gospel and the Fathers to read," he said. "Alas! Alas!" he lamented. "Their best efforts they keep for the bagatelles of secular knowledge." (C. IV, pp. 248, 254)

His essential sources were the Gospel, the great classics of spiritual literature such as Saint-Jure and Louis de Grenade, the lives of the Saints, and other such material, which he mobilised to create a kind of spiritual synthesis with the teaching that had come from the Founder, which with the passage of time he did not always distinguish from his own, and which may have appeared rather tiresome. It may

also be that in the years 1860-1870, the best of Brother Louis-Marie's teaching was overshadowing the brilliance of Brother Jean-Baptiste's work, a man moreover diminished by his ill health. So, in the end, the biography of Brother Jean-Baptiste written at the time of his death was intended to remind the Brothers of the greatness of a man who was already somewhat forgotten or even regarded by the rising generations as just a doddering old man, as if his charismatic authority had derived more from his gifts as a communicator than from his doctrine. Nevertheless, it was his works from the period 1868 to 1875 which were to prove to be of great importance.

By the time of the deaths of Brother Jean-Baptiste (1872) and Brother Louis-Marie (1879) the Institute was in possession of a body of Marist literature impressive in its scale and depth. After their time and up to 1965 the Institute would be over inclined to derive its nourishment from these two later and incomplete interpretations, which were much more respected than truly assimilated.

APPENDIX 5: Table with the doctrinal sources – Page 364

15.

EXPANDING INTO NEW AREAS AND SEARCHING OUT NEW VOCATIONS

A delicate relationship between networks of schools and areas of recruitment

The years 1815-1830 had been the great period for the creation of congregations of Brothers and their initial expansion. In the course of the Nineteenth Century, they experienced quite contrasting histories, as clearly shown by the statistics listed in the table below. From them we see that in 1861 the Marist Brothers had, in terms of their numbers, moved well ahead of the other new congregations and had arrived at a total number close to 40% of that of the Brothers of the Christian Schools. Up to 1903 these proportions would hardly change, with the Brothers of the Christian Schools remaining by far the most influential and their congregation by itself more numerous than all the others combined. More than that, being strongly established in the towns, they had prestigious establishments whereas the other congregations had had from the beginning a stronger presence in the rural areas, with only some partial diversification occurring in the years following.

	1830 MEMBERS	1830 SCHOOLS	1861 MEMBERS	1861 SCHOOLS	1877 MEMBERS	1877 SCHOOLS	1903 MEMBERS	1903 SCHOOLS
Brothers of Ploërmel	193	92	583	181	1559	372	2151	362
Marianists	70	18	686	78	1200	86	838	67
Brothers of Christian Doctrine of Nancy	50	26	203	41	209	28	?	19
Little Brothers of Mary	100	18	1681 ⁶⁵⁹	301	3600	504	4240	595

⁶⁵⁹ The figures for the Marist Brothers are less optimistic: in 1860 they mention only 1385 Brothers. It was not until 1882 that the total number of Brothers and novices exceeded 3000.

	1830	1830	1861	1861	1877	1877	1903	1903
	MEMBERS	SCHOOLS	MEMBERS	SCHOOLS	MEMBERS	SCHOOLS	MEMBERS	SCHOOLS
Brothers of St Joseph of Ruillé-sur-Loire	86	47						
Brothers of the Sacred Heart	100	14	420	73	1037	154	818	132
Brothers of the Cross of Jesus	50-60	18	131	34	131	29	-	16
Total	800	262	792	8514	1295	8047	1198	
Brothers of the Christian Schools	1420	380	6398	703	9818	1449	9309	1372

Note: the figures above are only approximations.

Regarding the number of Marist Brothers employed in the schools, their number in 1882 stood at 2532 as against 124,965 for the state lay teachers, hence 2% of the total. In the year 1882-1883, of 2,708,000 boys they were teaching 67,318, so 2.4% of the total. Such figures remind us, therefore, that despite their rapid growth, the Marist Brothers were playing only a modest role in the provision of elementary education to boys where the combined total of all the Brothers in the various congregations came to only approximately 10% of the total teaching body. It could be said that the Brothers congregations had been a failure, relatively speaking, in comparison to the situation of the girls, where 60% were being educated by Sisters' congregations. It is true, however, that their weakness in numbers was made up for by the quality of their organisation which even gave them the appearance of a force to be reckoned with politically.

The influence of politics on the establishment of schools

The rhythm of school foundations being made by the Marist Brothers was in effect closely tied to the political situation, especially after 1840. Starting from that date, numerous foundations coincided with conservative or even authoritarian regimes being in power. From 1841 to 1846, when the July Monarchy had become more conservative, the rate was averaging 14 foundations per year; from 1851 to 1859 under the authoritarian Empire, it was 21 foundations per year; finally, from 1871 to 1875, after the radical government of the Commune and under the very conservative Moral Order government, it was 20 foundations per year.

Frequently the Brothers were invited to a place by a particular person or group there. Thus, at Gonfaron (Var), "where the population was not well disposed, the Parish Priest and the Mayor, a simple carpenter, were the only ones who wanted

the Brothers to come, but the Prefect insisted on it.”⁶⁶⁰ All the same, when the situation appeared too bad, the Institute backed away. Thus, Parish Priest of Azay, canton of Lugny (Saône et Loire), also asked for Brothers. “We were sent to him,” says Brother Avit, “and we saw that the situation in the canton was very bad. Only eleven men had fulfilled their Easter duty (of annual Confession and Communion) out of the total of 22 parishes comprising it.”⁶⁶¹ The Parish Priest’s request was not accepted even though he pleaded with us many times.”⁶⁶² Sometimes the request to make a foundation could not be refused. This was the case at L’Arbresle, near Lyon, where the foundation was imposed on the Brothers by the Archbishop.

Often the benefactors were *légitimistes* (supporters of the Bourbons).⁶⁶³ Hence, it was from a foundation of this type that the Province of Nord came into existence. In 1854 the Countess de la Grandville, by birth the Marchioness de Beaufort, made a gift to the Brothers of an extensive property at Beaucamps, near Lille, with a large building on it.⁶⁶⁴ After her death in 1865, the Brothers established a Provincial House on the property that had been made over to them, along with a day school, a boarding school with 160 pupils and a novitiate. The Province which grew around it comprised 330 Brothers teaching 13,000 pupils.⁶⁶⁵

Generally it was the case that the Parish Priest who was the main one pushing for the foundation, usually by coming to an understanding with the Mayor and a wealthy benefactor or benefactress. Up to around 1860 this strategy worked very well. The commune was usually delighted to have a school which cost it little. On the other hand, this was the era when the Brothers were following on from teachers who were less educated than themselves. Where the resistance was too great or the teacher was solidly established, the Parish Priest and some leading persons would found a private school in the hope of supplanting the commune school by attracting the majority of pupils away from it.

Invitations to found schools also came from members of the high bourgeoisie, businessmen, owners of ironworks, supporters of the Orleans Monarchy or Bonapartists. Thus, several dozen schools held by the Brothers were in mining centres, as we find in the region of Bessèges (Gard) and especially Montceau-les-Mines (Saône-et-Loire). In this last agglomeration, the owner of the mines, Jules Chargot, influenced by the Parish Priest, confided four schools to the Little Brothers of Mary in 1857. After 1877, the mine’s schools, the number of which had risen to six, had brought together 1200 pupils being taught by 33 Brothers.

As these companies had abundant capital at their disposal they provided significant salaries and well-equipped school buildings, but they were also very demanding, trying to keep close control over the running of these establishments.

⁶⁶⁰ *Abrégé des Annales*, 1852.

⁶⁶¹ Br Avit was not exaggerating. It was a very dechristianised area north of the city of Mâcon.

⁶⁶² *Ibid.* 1853.

⁶⁶³ Br Avit’s *Annales des Maisons* gives many examples of this type of foundation.


⁶⁶⁴ Abbé L. Ponty, *Vie du Frère François, premier Supérieur général des Petits Frères de Marie*, Lyon, 1899, pp. 123-130.

⁶⁶⁵ C3, p. 302.

**Map 8. Schools of mining and industrial companies
(end of 19th century)**

Nota:
Very approximate
location

The importance
of school
implementations
(very variable) has
not been collected.

Certain  indicate
a school network;
others, a school.

Source
A.A. around 1880



Around 1850 things were calm on the school scene, but as socialism and trade unionist activity began to increase, the pupils proved more and more difficult to manage and the teaching of religion was becoming completely ineffectual.⁶⁶⁶

Setting up areas of influence

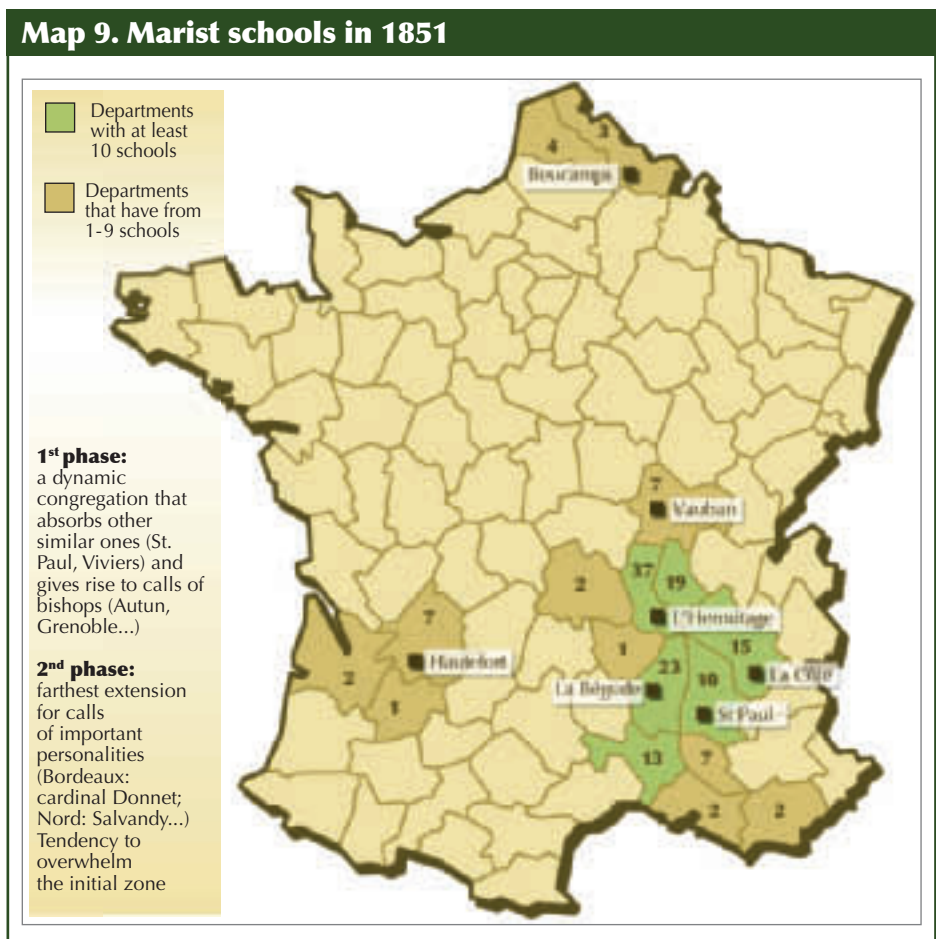
The Marist Brothers established themselves anywhere there were sufficient resources to support a community of three Brothers and where they would have the

⁶⁶⁶ André Lanfrey, "Eglise et Monde ouvrier", Cahiers d'Histoire, Vol. XXIII, pp. 51-71. The schools belonging to industrial or mining companies besides the complex at Montceau-Blanzay, were as follows: In the Province of Bourbonnais: Gueugnon, La Machine, Montchanin and Montcenis. In the Province of Aubenas: Bessèges (Gard), Lafarge (Ardèche), La Voulte (Ardèche), Martinet (Gard), Le Pouzin (Ardèche) and Rochessadaule. In the Province of Nord: Auchel and Rimbart. In the Province of L'Hermitage: Lorette, Terreroire (Loire). In the Province of Saint-Genis-Laval: Allevard (Savoie).

support of at least part of the population. It was on schools with two or three classes, therefore in relatively substantial localities, that they focused their efforts, leaving the smaller communes to the secular teachers.⁶⁶⁷

By the end of the July Monarchy (in 1848), the congregation had therefore expanded essentially into five Departments of the valley of the Rhône and the Saône; it also had an extension in the far North of France. Five novitiates were ensuring a supply of personnel: the Hermitage near Saint-Chamond (Loire), Saint-Paul-Trois-Châteaux (Drôme), La Bégude (Ardèche), Saint-Paul-sur-Ternoise (Pas-de-Calais) and Vauban (Saône-et-Loire).

Outside this favoured area, it was a looser network. Four groups of dioceses feature: in the centre of France those of Moulins, Nevers and Clermont, which in 1873 made up the Province of Bourbonnais; in the South, the dioceses of Fréjus,



⁶⁶⁷ Antoine Prost, *op. cit.*, p. 140.

Map 10. Marist boarding schools at the end of the 19th Century



Note It is difficult to determine the difference between a boarder, a paying guest and an external. The boarder stays several months in a row in the boarding school; the paying guest returns home with greater frequency and the external returns home each day. But is it the same everywhere? The 'camerista' complicates the system further. When can a 'camerista' be considered a boarder or a paying guest?

Aix, Avignon, Nîmes and Montpellier were extensions of the Provinces of St Paul and Aubenas. In the South-West two dioceses in particular drew the Brothers – Périgueux and Bordeaux; finally, in the North were Arras and Cambrai. By 1903 France had seven Provinces designated by the name of the town where their central house was located: N.D. de l’Hermitage (Loire), Saint-Genis-Laval (Rhône), Saint Paul-Trois-Château (Drôme), Varennes-sur-Allier (Allier), Beaucamps (Nord), N.D. de Lacabane (Dordogne), Aubenas (Ardèche).

The Little Brothers of Mary, however, were not content with little primary schools whether public or private. The Founder himself had established boarding schools attached to novitiates but the attempts made at the Hermitage, Saint-Di-dier-sur-Chalaronne (Ain) and Vauban (Saône-et-Loire) had not proved satisfactory,

either because the novices ended up as domestic servants to the boarders or else were coming under bad influences. After Champagnat's time there was a period of uncertainty on the part of the Superiors with regard to these institutions. Brother François, the Superior General up to 1860, and his Assistant Brother Jean-Baptiste were not in favour of them because they stopped the Brothers from "quietly attending to their exercises of piety and living in recollection and the exact observance of their rule". Brother Jean-Baptiste, who called the boarding schools "Brother-killers", would even have closed two of them.

Brother Louis-Marie, on the other hand, wanted to have well-organised boarding schools which could create sources of income and make the Institute more influential.⁶⁶⁸ It was also a way to find vocations of good social and intellectual quality. Thus, in 1854, at great expense, he bought the boarding schools of Thizy and Beaujeu (Rhône). And the foundations continued. In 1867, mention is made of boarding schools at Neuville-sur-Saône (Rhône), Saint-Didier-sur-Chalaronne (Ain), Valbenoîte in the suburbs of Saint-Etienne, Thizy, Millery (Rhône), Le Péage-de-Roussillon, Saint-Genis-Terrenoire (Loire), Le Luc (Var), Largentière and Les Vans (Ardèche), Beaucamps in Nord and in Paris a boarding school in the Plaisance quarter. Certain ones of these foundations were capable of accommodating several hundred boarders and had a very significant number of Brothers on their staff (from around 10 up to 30), and often from among the best educated of the Brothers.

Inter-congregational rivalry

Although the Marist Brothers were often victorious in their competition with the secular teachers, they found it much more difficult when it came to competition with other congregations. The *Annales* cite numerous cases of rivalry, especially with the Brothers of the Christian Schools. In 1868, "the commune of Aps asked for three of our Brothers ... The Brother Directors of Valence (Brothers of the Christian Schools), Montélimar and Laurac came to an agreement and offered three of their Brothers to the Mayor of Aps, at the same price as ours (the Little Brothers of Mary)"; a Director from the Brothers of Saint Gabriel "offered money to the Parish Priest of Rochefort (Puy-de-Dôme) on condition he would send our Brothers away and bring in theirs ..." ⁶⁶⁹ More examples could be given.

These rivalries, however, arose from initiatives at the local level. At the top, the principle was that no congregation would replace another without the agreement of its Superiors. Brother Louis-Marie set this out very clearly in a letter written in 1852⁶⁷⁰ to the Parish Priest of Charolles (Saône-et-Loire):

"Often, we are approached with a request to replace the Brothers of the Christian Schools for one reason or another. Last year, the Reverend Parish Priest of Tournus did everything to have us come but I did not want to entertain any

⁶⁶⁸ *Abrégé des Annales*, 1852, p. 329.

⁶⁶⁹ *Abrégé des Annales* 1849, pp. 295-296; (1858), pp. 386, 488, 548.

⁶⁷⁰ C2, p. 476.

proposal whatever without having the written consent of the Very Reverend Brother Philippe. [...] It is moreover very evident that no administration would be possible for an Institute, if one congregation were to agree to displace another."

Whatever the principles may have been, disputes were not always avoidable because parish priests were adept at getting congregations competing against each other. The congregations, for their part, were trying to set up closely-linked networks of schools. Brother Louis-Marie set out this problematical situation very clearly in the case of Charolles (Saône-et-Loire):

*"This is a central position for all of our houses in the arrondissement, it is the most important one that could be offered to us in this whole area; to abandon it in order to see it pass to another congregation would be to put all of our houses in an unfavourable light. It would spread discouragement right through all the Brothers of the Province and create anxiety in all the parishes where they are employed; it would be to compromise the whole future of our Institute in the diocese and to create the most deplorable antagonism between two congregations"...*⁶⁷¹

The Marist Brothers were therefore in a position to threaten the dominant position of the Brothers of the Christian Schools in the principal town of a canton, but the Brothers of La Salle took care to see that the Marist Brothers remained shut out of the big cities.⁶⁷² The Marist Brothers were therefore not able to secure a good foothold in either Bordeaux or Paris.⁶⁷³

In short, the world of the teaching congregations was a world with its agents, its allies and its zones of activity, which were often – but not always – its zones for recruitment. The different societies comprising it, while avoiding warring among themselves, were trying to occupy the best spots, the principal town in each canton, and the large and medium sized cities. They would then support these strongholds with a network of smaller posts. This did not happen without quarrels both local and more general. The map showing the locations of the Marist Brothers reveals some characteristic features. There is a total absence in the West, which was massively occupied by the Brothers of Ploërmel, the Brothers of St Gabriel and those of the Christian Schools. The scenario was similar in the North-East. It was the preserve of the Brothers of the Christian Schools and the Brothers of Christian Instruction of Nancy. The Brothers of the Christian Schools were, in short, the only congregation operating on a national level, the others being rather more regional. After 1880 and particularly in 1903 the difficulties created by State policies hostile towards the religious congregations would alter these positions.

⁶⁷¹ C4, p. 514, Letter to Br Philippe (1869).

⁶⁷² C2 p. 473. Letter of Br François to the Bishop of Moulins. The Marist Brothers were intended for parishes of 1500 souls or more.

⁶⁷³ A.F.M., Dossier F.F.E.E.C.C. 445-2 : correspondence on the subject of Pélussin (445-2, n. 9) and Vaugirard (445-2 n. 27). Two other matters can be found there also: Lille, where in 1860 the Brothers of the Christian Schools accepted the Marist Brothers setting up in a fee-paying school but on condition that they never start a commune school there. In Marseilles, the Archbishop did not want the Brothers of the Christian Schools and the Marist Brothers were able to install themselves there in a big way. (Archives épiscopales de Marseille, dossier Petits Frères de Marie, no. 424).

The Institute and Society – looking at the origins and aspirations of the Brothers

One of the reasons for these rivalries was the religious congregations' concern to have areas where they could carry out recruitment for, theirs being a world of celibates, congregations are obliged to search beyond themselves for new members. The simplest method was, when the Brothers had set up in a diocese, was to establish a novitiate there and then to request the Bishop to recommend to his clergy that they send candidates to it. This for example was the schema followed in the Province of Nord where the Archbishop of Cambrai, at the diocesan pastoral retreat in 1849, commended the work of the Little Brothers of Mary to his priests.⁶⁷⁴

The clergy's role, however, remained a modest one for the Parish Priest was often a competitor looking to send the most gifted and better-off children to the seminary.⁶⁷⁵ Those he recommended to the congregation were often older youth who were not well educated enough or well-off enough to become priests. For example, it was on the advice of his Parish Priest that the future Brother Théodore, a seminarian lacking finance, became a Brother.⁶⁷⁶ The same was the case with Brother Terrier-Joseph.⁶⁷⁷ As his health was weak, and he had already been refused by the Holy Spirit Fathers and by the Marist Fathers, his Parish Priest sent him to the Little Brothers of Mary. The Brothers did not neglect this input of ecclesiastical students or young men of lesser means. However, it was the school that was their major field of recruitment;⁶⁷⁸ 40% of the deceased Brothers (from the Notices issued at the time of their death) had found their vocation there.⁶⁷⁹ There were also the veritable vocation hunters such as Brother Salvien who, in the course of thirty five years, had unearthed seventeen priestly vocations and eighteen religious vocations in the parish of Chevières (Loire); or Brother Saturien, who at Jonquières (Gard) had around 1870 set up a sort of pre-novitiate.⁶⁸⁰

The Brothers' visits to their families were also very profitable and it was not rare to see them return with one or several aspirants.⁶⁸¹ Frequently it was two or three boys

⁶⁷⁴ C2, p. 422; Archives de Beaucamps, BE1 (Annales). In 1851 the presence of 20 postulants in the novitiate impressed the clergy "who until then had maintained a great reserve." "At the pastoral retreat, His Grace the Archbishop had recommended this work to the zeal of his clergy. In 1857 Brother Pascal (the Assistant) wrote a circular letter to the clergy to interest the clergy in recruitment to the novitiate. It was approved by the Bishop of Arras, but not by His Grace of Cambrai who proposed another text.

⁶⁷⁵ *Biographies*, Vol. 1, p. 537, Br Marie-Urbain; Vol. 2, p. 323, Br Joseph-Félicité, Vol. 4, Br Joseph de Léonissa, p. 82, Br Michaël, p. 143, Br Marie-Raphaëlis, p. 188, Br Marie-Alypius, p. 230 Br Antoine, p. 309, Br Joseph-Mantius, p. 413, Br Auxent, p. 449 ...

⁶⁷⁶ *Biographies*, Vol. 2, p. 129.

⁶⁷⁷ *Biographies*, Vol. 5, p. 346.

⁶⁷⁸ *Biographies de quelques frères* : pp. 383-386. Br Pascal there indicated the method to use: 1) "pray and have many prayers offered ..." 2) "Go looking for vocations, that is to say, study, observe and discover among our children, among those who live around us and that we know all those who would have the desired qualities and the attraction ..." 3) Check for vocations above all at the time children will cease coming to school.

⁶⁷⁹ *Biographies*, Vol. 2, p. 129.

⁶⁸⁰ *Biographies*, Vol. 4, p. 207 ; Vol. 6, p. 25.

⁶⁸¹ *Biographies*, Vol. 4, pp. 113, 468.

from the same family becoming Brothers or else it was an uncle bringing along his nephew.⁶⁸² Many Brothers came from families rich in vocations. The family of Brother Dieudonné,⁶⁸³ out of seven children, gave three Brothers and two religious Sisters.

There were obvious sociological reasons accompanying these religious motivations: people in the populous areas of the Haute-Loire, the Haute-Ardèche or the Haute-Alpes were delighted to place their children with the Brothers. In those regions, a father could be seen going to the novitiate to arrange for his son to enter, just as if he was going to visit a tradesman to arrange to have his son taken on as an apprentice.⁶⁸⁴ If the family was not so well known, there were precautions the Brothers could take. Thus the future Brother Ernestus was required to board for a year with the Brothers in the school at Montpezat before being admitted to the novitiate.⁶⁸⁵ On the whole, however, not too many difficulties were made, the height requirement being the most sensitive one because candidates who were too short could not be admitted. Nor on the financial level did the Brothers demand too much, and for many widows a son becoming a Brother was an attractive solution, because the novitiate could be offered free of charge or reduced to a part payment. For the same reasons, it was not rare to find orphans who had no living parent.⁶⁸⁶

The Notifications of the Death of a Brother, although a category of literature requiring sensitive handling, provide many examples of typical vocational histories. The biography of Brother Cléomène is a good summary of the family ideal of the Brothers.⁶⁸⁷ His mother was a pious woman, maternal and energetic. His grandfather especially was an austere elderly believer, carrying with him the memory of the Revolution who educated his grandchildren in a counter-revolutionary way of thinking. In these poor and mountainous rural areas, the migration in search of work quite naturally took on a religious turn. The future Brother Cléomène entered the Brothers because at the age of thirteen years he had read the life of "Brother Marie-Ephrem, Trappist of Aiguebelle". Occasionally we come across other accounts of these families of austere habits who in the evening before going to bed read the Lives of the Saints or the lives of the Desert Fathers.⁶⁸⁸

⁶⁸² *Biographies*, Vol. 2, p. 133, Br Cléomène; Vol. 5, p. 5, Br Désirat; Héliodorus, p. 17; Philadelphus, p. 49; Joseph-Gaudens, p. 56; Jean-Victor, p. 65; Edbert, p. 96; Léonard, p. 213; Eléazar, p. 265 ...

⁶⁸³ *Biographies*, Vol. 4, p. 179.

⁶⁸⁴ *Biographies*, Vol. 6, p. 6. The passage comes from an autobiography by Br Flaminien. A.F.M. Dossier RAO 550-3 n. 9.

⁶⁸⁵ *Biographies*, Vol. 4, p. 169.

⁶⁸⁶ *Biographies*, Vol. 5, p. 7, Br Désirat; p. 253, Br Marie-Amadéus; Br Ferrier-Joseph, p. 346; Br Hippolytus, p. 475; Augustin-Joseph, 483; Joséphus, p. 498; Vol. 4, p. 143, Br Michaël; p. 169, Br Ernestus; p. 295, Br Clomant; Vol. 6, p. 250, Br Michaélis.

⁶⁸⁷ *Biographies*, Vol. 2, p. 131 ... the biography of Br Pascal in *Biographies de quelques frères* (pp. 346-416) gives the same impression.

⁶⁸⁸ *Biographies*, Vol. 1, p. 101, Br Tertullien; p. 603, Br Agée: "Our time (in the evenings) was divided between exercises in Plain Chant, interesting readings or pleasant conversations. Our grandmother related episodes from the French Revolution 'which presented some good priest or pious layman from her birthplace, or even perhaps someone related to her, who ordinarily had perished a victim of duty or his zeal in the most tragic of circumstances.'" Other biographies mention families who had hidden priests: Vol. 4, pp. 366, 468 ... The biography of Br Philotère (Vol. 4, p. 109) mentions his family practices of piety.

Quite often, however, the family structure was less united in its outlook.⁶⁸⁹ The child who wanted to become a religious confided in his mother, or a sister or an aunt. The father was only made aware of this later and was often opposed to the vocation, particularly when there was a question of an eldest son or an only son, either because he needed him or because he wanted his son to have an ecclesiastical career.⁶⁹⁰ As far as we know the biographies contain only one account explicitly testifying to faith on the father's part,⁶⁹¹ whereas they take great pleasure in giving the testimonies to maternal faith, liking to compare the mothers to the strong woman of the Scriptures.

In summary then, the congregation was still finding, in certain areas, good numbers of families deeply rooted in their faith, but it also knew how to make do when lukewarm parents offloaded their rather badly brought up offspring onto them, youngsters who had little motivation for the religious life. This explains why, in spite of all the idealistic discourses, the Institute nurtured an ambivalent attitude towards the family. On the one hand, there were the rare visits, the exhortations to be detached from the family, to separate oneself from worldly goods, and on the other, the exaltation of the Christian family as the place where good vocations flourished.

In any case, it appears that the families of the Brothers were almost always people in modest circumstances; 70% of the Brothers were the sons of small landholders. Among those not from families on the land, they were nearly all sons of men who earned their living by the work of their hands – weavers, carpenters, shoemakers, tailors, stonemasons, and so on – all the trades involving wood, iron and leather so characteristic of the world of rural craftsmen. The only profession that was a little bit intellectual was that of the schoolmaster. The liberal professions were very nearly not represented at all. Government officials were rare and came from the lowest ranks of the civil service. It was then very much from the world of the little people (but little people who wanted to rise in society) that the Brothers came.

Some areas very rich in vocations, others yield very few

The congregation was present in three types of areas. There were those which, well provided for with schools, furnished vocations in abundance: Rhône, Loire, Ardèche, Isère and Drôme. Then there were others which, although they had practically no schools, produced great numbers of vocations, like Haute-Loire and Puy-de-Dôme. Finally, came areas producing no vocations but where there were many foundations like the Var, the Bouches-de-Rhône, and the Vaucluse on the edge of the Mediterranean or near it.

These areas, moreover, underwent contrasting evolutions. Although on the whole the number of aspirants had grown over the course of the century, the in-

⁶⁸⁹ *Biographies*, Vol. 1, p. 128, Br Philogone and Vol. 6, p. 250, Br Michaëlis.

⁶⁹⁰ *Biographies*, Vol. 1, p. 537, Br Marie-Urbain; Vol. 2, Br Josphe-André; Vol. 1, p. 402, Br Henri-Désiré.

⁶⁹¹ *Biographies*, Vol. 4, p. 169, Br Ernestus. As the children were talking in their bedroom after they had gone to bed, their father, who was a widower, reminded them that the bed was a place of prayer and this chatter was "a lack of respect for the holy presence of God."

crease was due to certain areas only, above all the Ardèche (more than 1000 Brothers altogether) then the Rhône and Nord. In Gard, in Saône-et-Loire, in Loire and Haute-Loire, recruitment was stagnating by the end of the century. Finally, in Drôme, Isère and Puy-de-Dôme vocations were on the decline.

Recruitment depended on supply and demand: the rhythm of growth in vocations followed that of foundations. After some years, however, it became necessary to reduce the rhythm of foundations, sort out the big influx of entries and make a better choice of aspirants. The congregation was fortunate that up to 1880 there had been a series of alternating good and bad periods. For example, when around 1859 the Imperial government had ceased favouring the congregations and had started to put the brakes on their development, this could only work in favour of an indispensable slow-down. From 1860 to 1870 therefore the congregations had the time to reorganise themselves and be ready once more for a new leap forward under the Moral Order government in power from 1873 to 1877. The period of the secularisation laws from 1882 to 1886 even provided the congregation with a moment to pause and gather itself after a period of strong growth. (At first these secularisation laws only applied to the public schools, and did not prevent the religious from teaching in private schools. More will be said about this later.)

From 1860 – a new recruitment drive is launched

We have already seen that recruitment up to 1860 had risen to beyond the level of 200 novices receiving the habit each year. A notable drop then followed partly linked to an internal crisis which we have evidence of in the correspondence of Brother Louis-Marie. In 1862, when he was in Rome negotiating the approbation of the Constitutions, he declared to one of his Assistants:⁶⁹² “I would like this time of our approbation by the Holy See to be a time of renewal for the whole of the Institute and of reform of the different abuses which have been tending to insinuate their way in amongst us.” This operation was to be accompanied by “a thorough cleansing of the Institute, with no surprise or great fear at the number of Brothers leaving or being dismissed, until the good spirit is re-established and can be maintained in all of our houses.” It appears therefore that the crisis in confidence that followed the Chapter of 1852-1854 lingered on for a long time and that it had rebounded on recruitment and had led to numbers of Brothers leaving, both young and not so young.

If from the 4005 entries over the period 1861-1879 (See the table) we subtract the 535 who died over the same period, we arrive at a net theoretical increase of 3470. As the Institute only doubled during this time, going from about 1500 to

⁶⁹² *Vie du F. Louis-Marie*, pp. 135-136. Besides that, on p. 137 there is the portrait of the bad young Brother. In C3, p. 313, Brother Louis-Marie makes clear allusions to what was happening: “Do we not see it (the efforts of Satan) in the redoubled assaults to which our best Brothers are being subjected ... Do we not recognise it above all in the clear difference visible between the good Brothers, the true religious, and those who only have the habit and the outward appearance?” In 1869 Brother Louis-Marie alluded (C3, p. 491) to the “marked sorting out process” in operation since 1858. Brother Avit in the *Abrégé des Annales* (1869) speaks of the considerable sorting out that had been going on especially since 1860.

3000 members, there had been a considerable increase in the degree of leakage from the congregation, as is shown by the difference between the numbers taking the Habit and those making profession in the table below.

Situation of the Institute (1861 - 1879)					
YEAR	FOUNDATIONS	RECEPTION OF HABIT	PROFESSIONS	DEATHS	STABILITY
1861	12	171	110	18	15
1862	4	180	75	26	
1863	3	152	98	22	
1864	6	130	86	24	0
1865		182	89	30	7
1866		146	74	27	2
1867	8	190	79	25	6
1868	11	144	57	33	4
1869	8	206	77	30	1
1870	4	122	0	31	0
1871	6	183	67	47	0
1872	21	178	66	20	0
1873	16	276	88	17	19
1874	20	299	78	22	2
1875	22	269	57	34	2
1876	14	236	52	43	0
1877	15	336	63	42	8
1878	14	284	91	19	1
1879	9	226 ⁶⁹³	60	28	0
Total	193	4005	1367	535	67

So it was not without reason that in 1868 Brother Jean-Baptiste published the *Biographies de quelques frères* (appearing in English in 1936 as *Our Models in Religion*), a veritable treatise on vocation. In the Preface he explained:

“The mission of all these excellent Brothers was to make reparation for the scandal given by apostate religious and demonstrate the futility of the pretexts these allege in order to unburden themselves of the sacred obligations they have contracted towards God.”

The same concerns are found in *Avis, Leçons, Sentences* (1868), where besides Chapter 3 on “the Misfortune of losing one’s Vocation”, numerous passages raise the question of vocation.

Juniorates – the Institute’s answer to the less favourable vocation climate

The rapid economic progress, which was making more employment available, was competing with the “profession” of Brother. It became necessary to take in younger aspirants, at the time they were starting to enter the workforce:

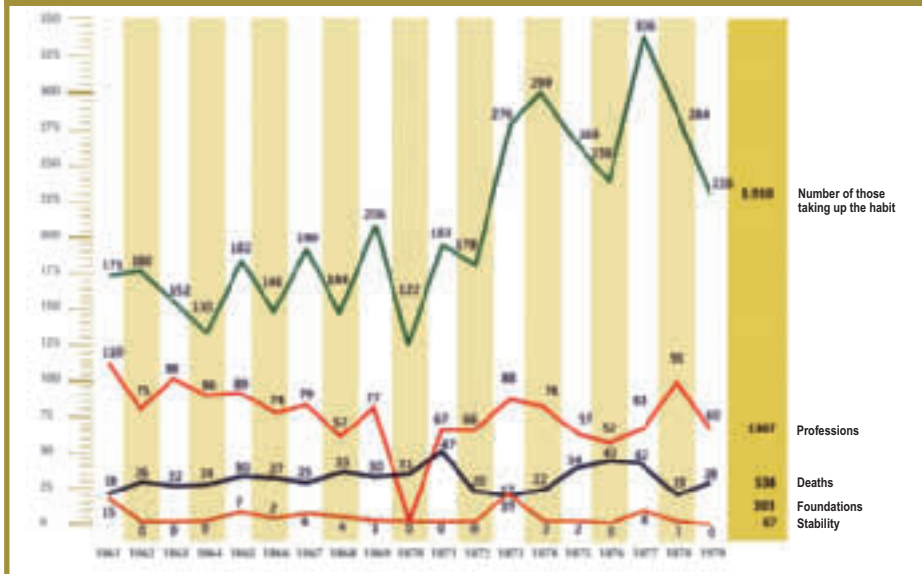
“If we do not admit them (said Brother Louis-Marie) after their First Communion, at the point when they are leaving school, they will unfailingly be lost. They will take up a career in the world – in the factories, on the railways, in the various industries – and every idea of vocation will be gone in a few months.”

As for those who were older, they arrived “hardly knowing how to read and with no religious knowledge beyond the bare minimum required to frequent the Sacraments.”⁶⁹⁴ Also the number of subjects receiving the Habit aged less than 17

⁶⁹³ 3107 receiving the Habit from the time the Registers were started.

⁶⁹⁴ C3, p.342.

STATISTIC 4. The Institute's evolution from 1861-1879



years rose notably: 35.2% in the period 1850-1859; 42.8% 1860-1869; and 51.3% between 1870 and 1879. Obviously, the perseverance rate of such young ones was low, but there was something more serious: from 1852 to 1882, so over a period of thirty-one years, an average of between nine and ten Brothers left each year.

So, in the hope of finding and keeping men who would be sufficiently well-formed and likewise of retaining those children that economic development was threatening to take from it, the congregation modified its system of recruitment by creating Juniorates. In his Circular of 16th July 1868⁶⁹⁵ Brother Louis-Marie announced the decision to “make a trial of a juniorate or minor novitiate at Notre Dame de L’Hermitage”. It would be for those aged less than 15 years, and would take in 53 subjects. However, the War of 1870 interrupted the project.⁶⁹⁶

It was at the Chapter of August 1876 that the decision was taken to go ahead with definitively setting it up.⁶⁹⁷ The boarding schools, which were providing few vocations, would maintain it financially. One year later, Brother Louis-Marie announced the creation of three projected juniorates – one at Saint-Genis-Laval for the Provinces of Saint Genis, L’Hermitage and Bourbonnais, the second at Saint-

⁶⁹⁵ C3, p. 445; Brother Louis-Laurent, *Panorama des juvénats de la province de Saint-Genis-Laval* ; a typewritten work of 295 pages plus appendix.

⁶⁹⁶ This aborted work, moreover, was not quite a new one. Starting back in 1852, Br Louis-Bernadin recommended the setting up of a work of “a reparatory novitiate for the children who, at the time of their First Communion or soon after, want to become Brothers”. He even suggested that an association of charitable persons could provide the resources.

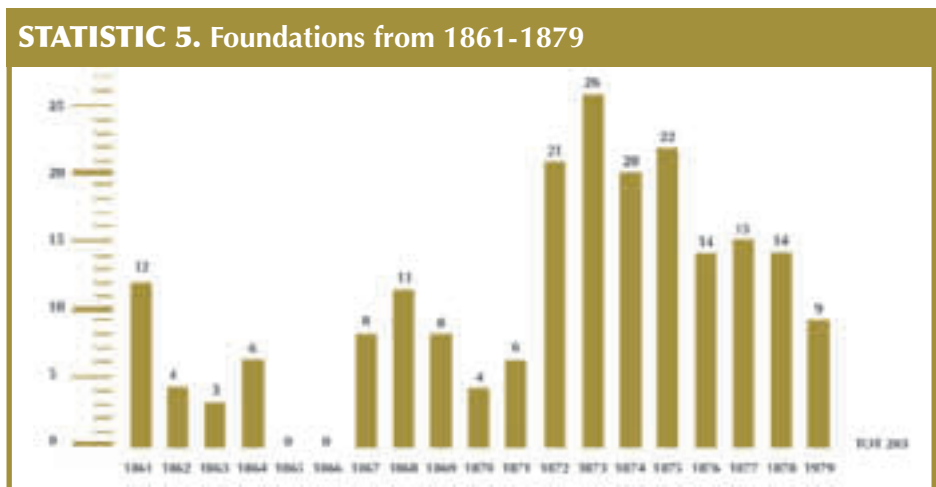
⁶⁹⁷ C5, pp. 385, 377, 444-445.

Paul-Trois-Châteaux for the Provinces of Aubenas and Saint-Paul, and the third at Beaucamps for the sectors of Nord and West. The choice of these three sites shows that at the time the Juniorates were thought of as pre-novitiates, placed under the Director of the Provincial House. The conditions for admission were still the same as in 1868, namely, to be at least 12 years of age and less than 14 years completed; to be able to pay fees of between 250 to 300 francs, provide a suitable outfit, and “give good hope as to conscience, piety and intelligence”. At 14 years complete or 15 years begun, if the height, state of health and moral and intellectual dispositions of the aspirants permitted it, they would be admitted to the novitiate.

To obtain the remainder of the finance needed, Brother Louis-Marie imitated the Brothers of the Christian Schools who, back in 1875, had set up a Work of St Jean Baptiste de la Salle to provide financial support for the minor novitiates. Cardinal Caverot, Archbishop of Lyon, granted, on 25th October 1877, a letter of recommendation for the work of the juniorates,⁶⁹⁸ and on 24th December 1880 a Brief issued by Pope Leo XIII addressed to Cardinal Caverot commended the work, adorning it with an indulgence of 300 days for benefactors.

The beginnings were uncertain. Brother Avit, recording the relaunching of the juniorates, described some of the problems:

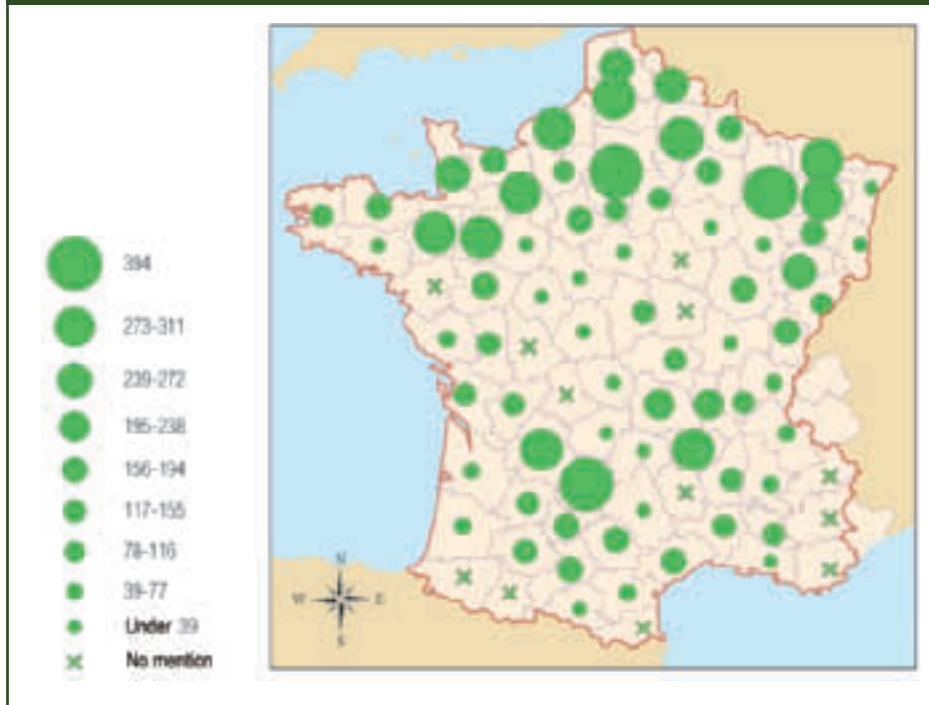
*“As soon as the parish priests of Lyon learned of this work, they hastened to present us with those of their little parishioners who, either because of poverty or because the absence of their parents, had ended up on their hands...; so at first the Juniorate at Saint-Genis-Laval was a sort of unruly bunch of children very little suited either to the religious life or for teaching. Only a few settled down and stayed on. This went on for three years.”*⁶⁹⁹



⁶⁹⁸ C5, pp. 639-641; Br Louis-Laurent, *op. cit.*, p. 64. He was followed by the Bishops of Belley, Grenoble, Bourges, Autun, Moulins, Nevers and Clermont.

⁶⁹⁹ *Abrégé des Annales*, 1875.

MAP 11. Birthplace of the institutions of congregants in 1791



In spite of these few setbacks and problems we can consider that by the time of the death of Brother Louis-Marie the organisation of the juniorates was in place. If, however, the creation of juniorates permitted a qualitative jump in formation and procured a greater regularity in recruitment, it was also the sign of a certain crisis. In fact, around 1850 the congregation had been multiplying schools without too much fear of a shortage of subjects. It was coming from a perspective of missionary conquest. By about 1875 it was establishing houses to shelter subjects it wanted for itself. Likewise, it began establishing schools in areas known to be fertile in vocations. The impression is that the congregation's primary objective was slowly becoming its own ongoing viability. The Marist Brothers might now have been looking like a religious order with its foundation in a rural Christianity which was now in slow decline.

The Brother's vocation – the lack of a clear understanding leads to problems

Because formation was now more costly and was requiring greater care, perseverance was becoming a fundamental problem. This had always been a major issue, even back in the beginning, mainly because of the young age of the candidates. In any case, there was no question of seeking to recruit older persons, even though the congregation had always accepted late vocations from persons from

the margins or from unusual backgrounds, like Brother Chaumont, a former soldier, and Brother Castule, a former domestic servant to the Brothers,⁷⁰⁰ not to mention former seminarians like the future Superior General, Brother Louis-Marie.⁷⁰¹ On the whole, however, the bulk of the Brothers had been recruited between the ages of 15 and 25 years. The number of late vocations, after 25 years, remained more or less constant: 3.7% from 1850 to 1859 and 3.9% from 1860 to 1879.

The problem at bottom was that, among the young and the not so young, the notion of vocation was often inexistent or quite unclear. Many pulled out once they thought themselves able to find a better position elsewhere. This is the reason Father Champagnat, and then his successors, made great efforts in their instructions to remind the Brothers that the Institute was a religious body receiving men who had been chosen by God, and were obliged to respond by fidelity to that grace. Father Champagnat's instruction on "The Misfortune of losing one's Vocation", taken up again in *Avis, Leçons, Sentences*,⁷⁰² gives a good idea of the continuity of the teaching on vocation. "To lose one's vocation" was to abandon the religious life before making Profession with the consequences of "a miserable life", "entanglement in sin" and "lack of success in every activity undertaken". Anyone who left after Profession was an apostate and there was "nothing worse than apostate religious." They were perverted and corrupt men destined for malediction. Finally, there were the Brothers "unfaithful to their vocation", that is to say, "who have not acquired the degree of perfection to which they were called". When we take into account this category we see one of the great difficulties the Institute had, especially after 1840. It was weighed down by a significant number of Brothers who had no clear religious motivation.

Another difficulty was that once the young Brother had gone through their time of the novitiate, their vocation came up against a system in the schools less like religious life and more like an apprenticeship, even reproducing the worst aspects of such a system. Hence from time to time we find cases where humiliating pranks or jokes could become harassment pure and simple. Brother Avit admitted: "All sorts of tricks were played on the innocent Brothers, especially the young ones, the ones just starting out."⁷⁰³

There were times, moreover, when these pranks had a very precise objective, namely, to get rid of a young Brother who was not wanted. Such was the case with Brother Castule, a renowned prankster, and a young Brother he wanted to push to breaking point. Claiming that he wanted to buy a lid for a large iron pot, he made the young Brother walk the length of the town of Rive-de-Gier (Loire) carrying the pot on his back. Then he took the young Brother, still arrayed with the pot on his back, to visit the Brothers' other communities in Lorette and Saint-Genis-Terrenoire. The Assistant had to move the young Brother to another community.⁷⁰⁴

⁷⁰⁰ *Annales de l'institut*, Vol. 1, 1839, n. 482.

⁷⁰¹ *Ibid.*, p. 276. One can find notably teachers who were older men such as Brs Paul and Cassien in the *Biographies de quelques frères*, pp. 162, 189; some who had tried out with the Trappists such as Brs Léon and Paul (pp. 130, 160). Fairly frequently too, the Institute admitted candidates afflicted with a physical defect; this was the case with Br Avit, suffering from a deformity of his right arm and Br Ribier, who was born crippled. (*Biographie* vol. 1 (1890-1900) p. 1 and *Biographies de quelques frères*, pp. 254-291.

⁷⁰² A.L.S., Ch. 3, p. 40 (English ed. p. 38): "Le malheur de perdre sa vocation".

⁷⁰³ *Abrégé des Annales*, 1860.

⁷⁰⁴ *Annales des maisons* : St-Martin-la-Plaine.

Reacting against treatment of this sort, the Superiors reminded the Brothers of the example of Marcellin Champagnat who: “on every occasion recommended to the Directors never to allow the Brothers to suffer, but to provide them with everything they needed, whether it be clothing or food or the materials needed for their teaching or other form of employment, and without making them wait or obliging them to ask for it again several times.”⁷⁰⁵ Later Brother Jean-Baptiste would take up the theme again in *Le Bon Supérieur* (1869). In *Avis, Leçons, Sentences*, judged it useful to recall in Chapter 2: “What a young Brother is”. A chapter all the more significant in that at the start of the chapter he quotes the traditional criticisms of the young Brothers: “in the schools they cause people to laugh and talk”, they are a source of embarrassment to the Brothers, and create problems for the success of the school. “What good are so many quarter-Brothers?”

There were also generational conflicts. The most typical case in this regard was the special school at Grange-Payre where “some young Brothers and some older ones were being spurred on by Brother Sylvestre” to prepare for the Brevet. To stimulate his students, he had created a kind of Honour Board. This displeased certain ones because, “The older men were always at the bottom, and they got angry about it.” So they took down the Honour Board and smashed it to pieces. It required the intervention of Brother Jean-Baptiste, the Assistant who, in order to make the older Brothers happy, told them that they were “the great men of the Institute” but then sent them out into the schools, “because he thought they were too far on in years to handle serious study.”⁷⁰⁶

The role of Director – strategic but also problematic

In principle each community was under the direction of a professed Brother, that is, a more senior man. However, especially after 1850, we come across cases where a Brother who had only the Vow of Obedience was the Director, because he had the Brevet.⁷⁰⁷ An older Brother was then added whose job it was to watch over his conduct.⁷⁰⁸ It happened too that the Brother Director was not educated enough to take the top class, and had to settle for teaching the lower class. Sometimes the Brother Director was relegated to the job of cook “while still being in charge of the Brothers and having to ensure to the best of his ability that the Rule was observed.”⁷⁰⁹

The Institute was, therefore, having to make a distinction between professional worth and spiritual worth, but this was not easily done. As Brother Avit says, “The

⁷⁰⁵ *Life*, (1989), Part 2, Ch. XV, p. 428. See in Part 2, Ch. I, (p.266) Br Sylvestre and his wheelbarrow. In the biography of Br Urbain (*Our Models in Religion*, p.292), he is praised as the model of a good Director.

⁷⁰⁶ *Annales de l'institut*, 1848.

⁷⁰⁷ *Annales de l'institut*, 1841, an exhortation to the Brothers to prepare to sit for the Brevet; in 1844, schools with no one with the Brevet; in 1846, a good number had failed the exam for the Brevet; in 1852, novices are having to be used in the schools and also Directors who had not made Profession.

⁷⁰⁸ C2, p. 189 (1854). An example of the difficulties of Directors vis-à-vis their subordinates. The circular declared that the results of the exams done by the Directors would not be announced, and would be known to the Superior General alone. The results of the Professed Brothers would be announced to them in their presence and that of their Directors.

⁷⁰⁹ *Annales de l'institut*, 1879, Br Alexandre.

majority of the older Brothers were very simple men.”⁷¹⁰ Brother Dominique, for example, “an indefatigable walker, a great lover of poverty, and of sobriety; [...] was hard on himself and sometimes on others”.⁷¹¹ The younger ones, however, found ways to deal with these simple and rustic men, and here again, farcical pranks played a big role. Thus, “the Brothers in a community where the Director was too strict put an enormous fresh cheese in his bed. One can only guess what happened when it came to bed time.”⁷¹²

Being in the position of Director resulted in more than one vocation being undermined. Brother Avit cites the case of “two subjects with a promising future who were lost because of the visits and irregular relationships that the position of Director favours.” In 1857 he recalled the departure of Brother Ismaël “who did so well that, to his misfortune, he was appointed a Director. He then procured for himself a cane, gloves, knitted stockings (the Brothers at the time had to wear cloth stockings), a pair of pince-nez glasses and pomade for his hair.”⁷¹³ He mentions also that of the 62 Brothers who made Profession in 1853, six who were appointed Directors subsequently left the congregation.

The problem was that a Director was tempted to make himself a figure of note and to carve out a career in his own right.⁷¹⁴ At best, the Superior General or the Assistant could transfer the Director who was at fault, but this was not always easy to do because the Mayor or the Parish Priest might object to his departure.⁷¹⁵ Ultimately, when a Director failed in his responsibilities, it put the school in danger and also the vocations of the Brothers who were under his authority, because in general they were left to their own devices.

Study – necessary but not without its dangers

With the requirement to have the Brevet and with pedagogical demands constantly on the increase, the Superiors, caught as they were between their fear for the Brothers’ religious life and necessity, were inconsistent in the policies they adopted. In 1842 Brother François reminded the Brothers about what should constitute the areas of knowledge necessary for a Little Brother of Mary – model handwriting, a deep and practical knowledge of the catechism, good reading ability, and a little grammar and arithmetic.⁷¹⁶ But how were principles of this sort to be applied under the July Monarchy, when “so many difficulties are being created,

⁷¹⁰ *Ibid.* 1879.

⁷¹¹ *Ibid.* 1865. In 1840 at Charlieu (Loire) « he was able to thus quench his thirst and that of his three community members for the whole year with a *piquette de sorbes* (a drink made by mixing the berries of the rowan tree with water) and a few litres of wine. Later, at Blanzay (Saône-et-Loire) he wanted to reward his Brothers who had spent the whole of one Thursday working in the garden. He had a dish of fried potatoes cooked up for them. “If that little Louis-Marie (the Superior General) gets annoyed about it,” he said several times, “too bad.” (At that time Thursday was the mid-week day off in French schools. It is now Wednesday.)

⁷¹² *Ibid.*, (1860).

⁷¹³ *Annales de l’institut*, 1849.

⁷¹⁴ This would be the case of Br Béatus, who left to become a lay teacher. *Abrégé des annales*, 1865.

⁷¹⁵ *Our Models in Religion*, p. 21. Brother Louis showed by his example the correct way to behave when a Parish Priest wanted to keep him on as the Director. (pp. 37-39).

⁷¹⁶ *C1*, pp. 62,63

programmes increased so much and there is so much arbitrariness almost everywhere, that it is almost impossible for our Brothers to succeed. To obtain four Brevets we had to present twenty eight Brothers."⁷¹⁷

After 1850 the examination process became easier because the examining panels were more favourably disposed and the Brevet could be replaced by a *Certificat de stage*, which was granted once the candidate had completed a certain amount of time teaching in a public school.⁷¹⁸ Even so, it was always the case that there were never enough Brothers with the Brevet. Accordingly, the tone of the Superiors began to change.⁷¹⁹ Directors had to see that studies were being done properly in the houses. Almost every day the Brothers had to give each other a dictation test; every day young Brothers who did not have the Brevet had to learn a page or half a page of grammar and a chapter of the catechism and repeat them to the Director.⁷²⁰ In 1854 the Superiors established examinations and competitions to "maintain the taste for and the practice of study." Furthermore, the Superior General reminded the Brothers:

"Let us not forget, dear Brothers, that in order to do good we need, not only to give a solid religious instruction to our children, which is no doubt the most important thing, but also rival the other schools in all the essential elements of primary instruction."

In 1866⁷²¹ Brother Louis-Marie suggested the following organisation: after the morning Exercises of Piety were over, there were to be ten minutes for giving a dictation and ten minutes for correcting the previous day's work. Each Brother was to have four exercise books for his work – one for catechism and spiritual notes, one for dictations and grammatical analysis, one for handwriting models or practice pages, and one for arithmetic problems. The Brother Visitor was responsible for checking all of these.

These invitations to intensive study were punctuated with moments when the brakes were applied and warnings issued. Concealed here and there in the biographies there are also gentle reminders against taking the love of study too far. Brother Nivard regretted the "six years spent in the study of History, Literature and other branches of knowledge which are not absolutely necessary for a Brother" instead of studying Jesus Christ. In the biography of Brother Pascal the case is cited of a young Brother obsessed with a desire "to be called to the special school to get an education". It gave him no rest and ruined his exercises of piety.⁷²² On 8th April 1872 Brother Louis-Marie used the biography of Brother Jean-Baptiste to remind the Brothers that only their religious studies were the ones that were truly indispensable.⁷²³ In 1875 it was necessary to forbid the Brothers in certain establishments to get up at four o'clock in the morning "in order to have more time to work."

⁷¹⁷ *Annales de l'institut*, 1847.

⁷¹⁸ C2, p. 75.

⁷¹⁹ C2, p. 171. In 1853, of 24 candidates 16 were successful.

⁷²⁰ C2, p. 189. Examinations were also established in order to "maintain the taste for and the practice of study."

⁷²¹ C3, p. 305.

⁷²² *Biographies de quelques frères*, pp. 160, 371, 325. In A.L.S. Br Jean-Baptiste reminded everyone of "what it is to teach catechism well". He was on the warpath against Brothers who did not prepare their catechism lessons. (English ed., pp. 318-325)

⁷²³ C5, p. 277, C4, pp. 239-256.

In fact,⁷²⁴ there was no way the desire for studies could be suppressed. The most that could be done was to put a stop to the more serious excesses or, even better, to integrate study into the religious ideal:⁷²⁵

“Application to study is moreover an excellent means of preserving us in piety and regularity, provided that we are careful to refer all our studies to God alone and to have nothing else in view than His greater glory.”

The temptation of Latin

If, therefore, some Brothers gave in to the temptation to leave and become teachers in their own right, there were others⁷²⁶ who wanted to learn Latin in order to become priests. Back in 1842, Brother François declared: “Already the disease of Latin is taking several from among us each year, even though its study is forbidden to the Brothers.” In 1844 Brother Marie-Pacôme “although already advanced in years” left to become a priest. He did his studies in Algeria before carrying out functions in the archdiocesan offices there and then returning to take a little parish in the Ardèche. In 1852 Brother Aristonique left to become a priest after fifteen years in community. Of the thirty two professed in 1852, two went off to the priesthood, one of whom became Vicar General to Archbishop Lavignerie in Algiers.⁷²⁷

As it was not easy to dissuade a Brother from embracing the ecclesiastical state, the Superiors consulted Father Roux, Vicar General of Viviers, who in 1865⁷²⁸ provided them with an arsenal of theological arguments against religious who wanted to embrace the ecclesiastical state, and his report concluded that there was not one of these renegades “who was not ill with a secret love of self that was very tenacious, very fine and very subtle.”⁷²⁹

The struggle against the temptation to enter the Trappists seems not to have been felt with the same keenness. Correspondence with Brothers caught with this desire aimed to have them see that the life of a Brother was very much just as penitential as that of a monk:

*“A few days ago I went into the youngest children’s class (the ‘little’ class) where there were 132 children confided to a young Brother of 20 years of age, seven hours a day every day! Would anyone be able to find a Trappist or a Carthusian monastery which surpasses that degree of immolation, of sacrifice! ...”*⁷³⁰

All of this friction clearly reveals the ambiguity in relationships that existed between the Brothers and the clergy, with the latter being perceived as socially and intellectually superior. In the case of certain chaplains in the Provincial Houses there would have been a particular danger, because they were turning certain subjects away from their vocation in confession”.⁷³¹

⁷²⁴ C5, p. 534; The Circular expressed regret that many young Brothers saw only the “profession” (of teacher) and not “the mission”.

⁷²⁵ C2, p. 172.

⁷²⁶ *Life* (1989) Part 1 Ch. XIV pp. 147-151, Part 1, Ch. XV, pp. 157-159, and *Biographies de quelques frères*, p. 27.

⁷²⁷ *Annales de l’institut*, 1842, 1844, 1852, 1856.

⁷²⁸ A.F.M. drawer K 11/14. “Private letters of the Superiors”.

⁷²⁹ *Vie du F. Louis-Marie*, p. 253.

⁷³⁰ *Vie du F. Louis-Marie*, p. 261, Letter of 5th March 1869.

⁷³¹ *Biographies de quelques frères*, pp. 74-85; Brother Stanislas, p. 64.

Raising the standing of the Brother's vocation

Family life, the priesthood, the profession of lay teacher and the monastic life were thus all perceived as being in competition with the life of a Brother. It was also necessary to battle against the idea that one could just as easily save one's soul in the world as in the religious life, since many Brothers who had entered the religious life at a young age were claiming that they had taken on their commitment without fully understanding the obligations of their state.⁷³² As a great number of Brothers were hesitating about making their Profession and were remaining for a long time in the intermediate stage of the Vow of Obedience, the Chapter in 1876 decreed that limit for making Profession would be fixed at thirty years of age.

If Brothers were aspiring to another life, it was also because they did not have a high esteem for their own, seeing it as too difficult a life or too lowly. This is the reason Brother Jean-Baptiste set to work to demonstrate to the Brothers the greatness of their life in several chapters of *Avis, Leçons, Sentences*, such as "What a Brother is according to Father Champagnat". In his last chapter also ("What is a teacher?"), he evoked the sacerdotal function of the Brother: "The priest and the educator, with their concern for the human soul, carry out mankind's two most elevated ministries".

Another aim of Brother Jean-Baptiste, and of others as well, was to have the Brothers love and esteem the congregation as a family. The biography of Brother Damien⁷³³ provided the occasion for a long instruction on this subject – God loves the congregation because he has made it prosper, the Superior is a father. And this family has it not raised him, educated him, nourished him and above all preserved him from the world? And it would continue its benefits by taking care of the Brother, ensuring him a decent existence, preserving him in his vocation and finally by praying for him after his death.

These problems had been a reality in the years 1817 to 1840, but the early generation of Brothers had largely been captured by the mystical élan infused into the society by Champagnat and had consequently been able to accept an existence that was both humble and austere. Over the next forty years the congregation's growth spurt, along with the socio-economic revolution, was setting the generations against each other and weakening the sense of belonging. Although the Institute had built up a compelling body of teaching demonstrating the value of the Brother's vocation, it was up against a mentality in the society around it that saw the Institute as nothing more than a teaching association not requiring any special charisma. It was the Superiors' lively awareness of this fragility that was the driving force behind their insistence on a highly centralised form of government based on a group of stable Brothers. At the same time, we need to remind ourselves that even in spite of these deep-seated problems, the Institute had been capable of an expansion that had allowed it to establish a network of establishments over a large part of France. It was not a national congregation like the Brothers of the Christian Schools, but it was more than just a regional congregation.

⁷³² *Life* (1989), Part 1, Ch. II, pp. 9-10. *The Principles of Christian and Religious Perfection*, (English ed., 1934, pp. 208-209) answers this objection.

⁷³³ *Our Models in Religion*, pp. 91-101; Br Stanislas, p. 76.

16.

SOCIETAL DEMOCRATISATION v. POLITICAL DEMOCRATISATION

The Marist Brothers in the Diocese of Belley

Even if many Brothers did not see their vocation as one attracting high esteem, their collective action was having a more profound and more democratic effect than was acknowledged by a certain republican myth, which saw nothing but obscurantism and reactionary thinking among those who had preceded the advent of free, compulsory and secular schooling. Indeed, until teacher training colleges were set up by the State in 1833, it was the religious congregations which had been pushing for the use of modern pedagogical methods in the villages and towns, and thus endangering the old Ancien Regime tradition of the little primary school for the ordinary populace and the college for the elite.

This attitude of rejection towards the work of the religious congregations rested in part on the fact that the republicans and the religious orders did not have the same conception of democracy. Politically, the republicans were Jacobins, that is to say, hyper-centralisers whose desire was for the State to exercise tight control over society and therefore over education. Although they did not envisage a monopoly in law, they were pushing for a de facto monopoly, thanks to an ever more powerful government administration systematically favouring the state schools and placing a multiplicity of obstacles in the way of private educational bodies. This authoritarianism, arrayed as it was in the prestigious language of modernity with terms such as progress and equality, was by and large accepted by society.

When it came to societal structures, however, the Republicans and the Liberals were less audacious. Although a large number of the bourgeoisie were politically liberal or republican in their views, they were still intent on preserving the traditional social hierarchies. This explains why the State did not touch the old division between schools for the common people and school for the elites. In spite of its declarations about democracy, it maintained the two systems of teaching with almost no point of crossover between the one and the other. In the one, there was the elementary school charging no fees, at the end of which, at age 13 years, children were awarded the Certificate of Studies. The most gifted or most ambitious among them could then go on to upper primary schools and further studies. These would take them to the *Brevet élémentaire*, giving them the right to teach, or to the *Brevet supérieur* (Higher Brevet), which was the final diploma in the primary system. This was the course of studies followed by the majority of Brothers.

The system for the bourgeoisie was fee-paying and was based on the learning of Latin in seminaries, colleges or lycées. Its end point was the *Baccalauréat* and the University. This opened the door to prestigious careers, although many college students left the system before completing the full course of studies. Republican power could therefore be defined as a form of state control, on the political level more liberal than democratic, on the social level conservative.

Theoretically speaking, the ideal proposed by the religious congregations was constituted by order, religion and respect for the established structures of society. On the practical level, however, it was the reverse, because in their elementary schools, and more especially in their boarding establishments, the religious orders were setting up an advanced level of primary teaching, even sometimes offering specialised teaching areas, responding to the desire present in the popular milieu and among the petit bourgeoisie to improve their position in society. The religious, who were often more skilled teachers than many of the professors in the colleges and minor seminaries, were providing these institutions with stiff competition and drawing on themselves recriminations from the higher levels of the bourgeoisie and even from some of the clergy, who were coming close to accusing them of disturbing the social order. The disfavour with which the education offered by the congregations was viewed was not therefore based on its supposedly reactionary character, but on the fact that for the State and for the societal hierarchies, often in alliance with each other, it constituted a real peril. This was the case even before the Republicans came to power.

It needs to be noted also that, over the years 1860 to 1880, society in general, which for a long time had had little interest in educational matters, had undergone a great deal of change. Schools and education had become a political and social issue and now more than before, Church authorities and the congregations had to take account of the civil authorities and of local public opinion. The Brother Director therefore needed not only to have the favourable opinion of the Parish Priest, but also of the Inspector of Primary Schools, the Mayor and the local inhabitants. These latter could go as far as adopting the Director as “their teacher”, irrespective of whether in regard to their religious practice they were fervent, or not so fervent.

Brother Avit’s *Annales des maisons* (Annals of the Houses) reveal a great many examples of this competitiveness between the primary schools and boarding establishments run by the Brothers on the one hand, and the colleges or commune schools run by lay teachers or clergy on the other. All the same, at the start this competition was not ideological in character. The years 1860-1880 reveal a multitude of local conflicts which had little connection with any great matters of principle. To illustrate this point we can take the case of some schools in the Diocese of Belley, a vast quadrilateral to the north-east of Lyon stretching from west to east, and comprising the rich valley of the Saône, the icy plateau of the Dombes, and the Jura Mountains which form the border with Switzerland

Politics and the Marist Brothers’ schools

Although the Department of Ain was not for the Marist Brothers one where they had an extensive presence, they did found a total of thirteen schools there between 1836 and 1875, just a little fewer than other local congregations like the Brothers of the

Holy Family and the Brothers of the Cross of Jesus, or than the Brothers of the Christian Schools. As it was necessary to have sufficient resources to support three Brothers, the centres where they set up schools had had populations of between 1500 and 3500 inhabitants, except for Oyonnax (9300 inhabitants).

Depending on the dates of their foundation, the Marist Brothers' schools correspond to two distinct models, although in the transition from one type to the other all sorts of nuances and adjustments need to be taken into account. As has already been mentioned, after 1860 the Imperial government became more distrustful of the religious congregations, and the general population began to experience the way education was becoming a strategic area.

Model from 1836-1860	Model from 1860 to 1890
Leading members of society, often <i>légitimistes</i> , offering funding for a school or boarding school run by a congregation.	Newly prominent persons from industry, the liberal professions or government administration, often reserved towards or even opposed to congregational schools.
A parish priest anxious to ensure better religious formation for the children and/or keen to maintain the clergy's dominance in educational matters.	Parish priests less influential in educational matters and often reserved in their attitude towards schools run by the congregations.
Mayor and municipal council leaving it to the parish priest to act or else collaborating with him. They had little inclination to spend money for a school.	Mayor and municipal councillors keen to assert their rights in matters concerning education.
General population either indifferent or only interested in education it can be obtained at as low a cost as possible.	General populations keen on education for their children and wanting teaching personnel who will fit well into their local situation.
Diocesan authority intervening only sporadically but in an authoritarian manner.	Pronounced loss of influence.
The State fairly favourable or very favourable towards the schools operated by religious congregations.	The State exercising a control, at first authoritarian, and later openly hostile.
Little control at the level of the Prefect of the Department or inspection by the Academy: local authorities have the main say in the choice of teachers.	Control at the level of the Prefecture and inspection by the Academy dominating local authorities and zealous in executing government policy.
	Regional newspapers quick to engage in anti-clerical campaigns (exploiting scandals).

It was therefore a movement away from a model where the local society was autonomous in regard to its educational policies, one very close to the old Ancien Regime model, to a Jacobin model, and this was happening well before the politics of the Third Republic brought to this evolution a radical and highly ideological character. (Translator's note: the Jacobins were the extremists of the 1789 Revolution. Their ideas on the radical reorganisation of society persisted well after the Revolution was over).

Two contrasting histories – the schools at St Didier-sur-Chalaronne and Thoissey

The establishment at St Didier-sur-Chalaronne, founded in 1836 in a rural village, was the Marist Brothers' first school in the Ain and, basically, their great success. The second, established in 1837 in the nearby township of Thoissey, was instead rather a failure. Father Madinier, the zealous and much esteemed parish priest, had worked hard to have the Brothers come, and in 1835 the Countess de la Poype offered to Bishop Devie an amount of 72,000 francs for a Brothers' establishment for the children of St Didier-sur-Chalaronne and the nearby township of Thoissey. Although the local inhabitants had not been included in these arrangements, they set to work preparing the school. The men levelled the school yard and cleared the garden of stones, while the women prepared the linen for the house. Finally, in November 1836 four Brothers arrived. From the very start the school had 250 pupils, coming not only from St Didier but also from town of Thoissey, which was very close by. However, "these latter were little demons whose mischievousness and independent spirit were a spoiling things for the others. From then on it was clear that the two lots of children could not continue to go to the same school."

Already by 1846 there were twenty Brothers at work in the boarding school at St-Didier, and additional subjects like music, gymnastics, fencing (swordsmanship) and military training were being provided by lay teachers. The 1848 Revolution aroused some disturbance and the school came under threat, but Brother Philippe lent his school's brass band to the Republicans to accompany the electors when they went to Thoissey to cast their votes. Nevertheless, the atmosphere changed. A Brother was falsely accused of an act of immorality, and an ex-Marist Brother arrived and set up a school with a boarding facility, which provided stiff competition to Brothers' school up to 1871. A chaplain was appointed in 1862, but the Directors saw to it that his authority was limited. From 1875 to 1879 the number of boarders rose progressively from 80 to 178. This figure dropped later but remained steady at over one hundred.

Summarising the situation in 1880, Brother Avit noted that at that stage almost every man in St Didier could read, write, do calculations and carry on everyday correspondence. Over and above that, the establishment had produced "7 or 8 priests, 22 Brothers (of whom 6 had later left), a Captain in the Engineers, some Adjutants, 3 notaries, as well as architects, travel agents, pharmacists, court ushers, a good number of mayors and municipal councillors, and many who were employed in commerce, industry, the railways, etc. ..." In 1891 he added that there were some pupils who had obtained the Brevet, some their Diploma in Special Secondary Teaching, one even the Baccalaureate. There was also one who had obtained admission to St-Cyr (the officer training school for the military).

In Brother Avit's eyes, Thoissey was the direct opposite of St Didier. Although its population was smaller than that of St Didier, it had the status of a town and housed the administrative headquarters for the Canton. It had a very old College which had been re-established in 1819, which was educating pupils from the better-off families, while the children from the ordinary population went to "lay teachers who taught privately" and who had little education. In 1837 two Brothers started going each day to teach at Thoissey. The school rapidly became a commune school and had a hundred pupils. However, the parish priest, Father Hugon, who had been very well-disposed towards the Brothers, died in 1865 and was replaced by Father Pascal, who had up to that time been the Principal of

the College. This college had been taken over again by diocesan clergy after 1830. As he wanted to favour his old establishment, Father Pascal's relations with the Brothers were very cool. Besides all that, in 1878 Monsieur Ducher (or Duchère), who was the doctor, the Mayor and a General Councillor, as well as an ally of Father Pascal, was manoeuvring to have the commune school laicised. This took place in 1881. Finally, the Brothers were left with nothing but a free school with fifty pupils, supported financially by a committee of prominent persons. As for the new parish priest, Father Josserand, "apart from coming for Confessions, he had as much to do with the Brothers as the Sultan of Turkey." The school at Thoissey was therefore always struggling to survive in a town which had never given the Brothers anything more than a modest place among them, and had never provided any vocations to the Institute.

These two examples could, by themselves alone, summarise the story of the Marist establishments in the Ain. On the one hand, the success of a combined boarding and day school capably providing education on a large scale to children, not only from the popular milieu, but also from an intermediate class of people seeking a quality modern education; on the other, the failure of an urban commune school confronted by competition from lay run establishments and a College. Here we also see all the complexities in relationships between congregations, ecclesiastical authorities and the bourgeoisie.

All the same, in the examples above, the role of the State only enters the scene later. It is as if the vagaries experienced by these foundations were still largely rooted in the old social and political order of the Ancien Regime. The feeling is largely that this was a world little influenced by ideology, and instead made up of personal conflicts and power struggles between interest groups, although in certain milieux the successive revolutions had radicalised people's positions.

Politics and school at Oyonnax and Nantua

In Oyonnax and Nantua educational rivalry was to prove much more radical. As was his wont, Brother Avit depicted the inhabitants of the industrial town of Oyonnax (9300 inhabitants) in a negative light: "It was one of the first towns in France where Marxist Socialism succeeded in taking root", and its industries created a favourable setting for immorality. One party led by the parish priest and a businessman had invited the Brothers of the Christian Schools in 1853 but they were quickly obliged to withdraw. The Municipal Council wanted to laicise the school but the Office of the Prefect (it was the early stages of the authoritarian Imperial government when it was favouring the religious congregations) obliged them to choose religious for the school. The Bishop of Belley, Monseigneur de Langalerie, asked the Superiors to replace the De La Salle Brothers, a request that was tantamount to an order. Arriving in 1857 the Marist Brothers found themselves competing with a College that had some forty or so pupils, about half and half boarders and day students, and "in just a few years our Brothers obliged it to close." They were then teaching in the Town Hall buildings but were subjected to harassment from municipal officials, members of the bourgeoisie and the extreme left who had formed up an alliance against them. Eventually, the Municipal Council elected in 1878 voted for the Brothers to be expelled, and this was approved by the Prefect on 9th September 1879. This was at the beginning of the ascendancy of the Republicans and the expulsion of the Brothers from Oyonnax heralded the secularisation laws which were to come later.

It is in Nantua, however, where we encounter the most striking example of head to head rivalry between a Brothers' school and a College. This Sub-Prefecture of 3500 inhabitants was a small administrative centre which, since it was the seat of the County Court, was in the hands "of pen-pushers who earned their living at the court."

When Father Deblay, who had been Parish Priest of Nantua since 1829, asked for some Brothers in 1838 the town had a College, four or five private teachers and a commune school. Father Champagnat had misgivings about it but Bishop Devie was insisting on this foundation.⁷³⁴ Three Brothers therefore arrived as teachers for the commune in October 1840. Right from the start they had 160 pupils in their classes but "the better-off parents did not like their children mixing with children from the inferior levels of society." It was therefore necessary to create a "higher" class for these children from privileged backgrounds.

At the College, which had only two classes, things were not going at all well. "The Principal was going around begging from door to door for them (the pupils)," says Brother Avit. The Brothers, too, were complaining of being insulted by the college students "any time they encountered them and even right in front of the church door". The Brothers' school came under threat during the Revolution in 1848 and, although the Director of the College was a priest, the college and its supporters continued to wage a "violent and unfair war" against the Brothers.

Brother Brunon, the Director from 1853, "very capable, a good teacher and of a very enthusiastic character", with the full support of the Parish Priest, then engaged in a policy of direct competition with the College. He introduced "all the subjects for the full Brevet" into his school. Finally the Departmental Council of Public Instruction accused Brother Brunon of insulting the college and of illegality in his programmes. It demanded his replacement. In the end, the matter went as high as the Ministry.⁷³⁵ Brothers Brunon and Pémen were removed from their posts, the Brothers expelled from the school, and the Municipality voted for the union of the school with the college. The government and the leading citizens in Nantua had taken matters right to the end of the road.

Unlike the situation at Oyonnax, this was not yet a case of the school being laicised, but of an alliance between the local bourgeoisie and the State, which had turned against the religious congregations after 1860. We should add here that it was also a defeat for the clergy insofar as they were responsible for education, because here they appeared to be divided. The Parish Priest was more intransigent than the Superiors of the Brothers, who in this struggle with the Abbé Tholon, the Principal of the college, had only half-hearted support from Bishop de Langalerie, and they themselves had been outrun by a Director who was engaged in a very personal and dangerous line of action.

A rural world where being accepted is all important

Even in the rural milieu, the success of a foundation was by no means assured. We see this at Marboz, a large commune of 2557 inhabitants, not far from Bourg-en-Bresse. It had remained very Catholic during the Revolution and was a seedbed of priestly and religious vocations. In 1825 Bishop Devie established a clerical school there, in short a little college-seminary. At the start of November 1864 three Brothers came to run an es-

⁷³⁴ *Letters of Marcellin Champagnat*, Rome, 1987, Letter no. 239, p. 439.

⁷³⁵ Jean Maurain, *op. cit.*, p. 465. A.N. F 17/ 10914.

establishment comprising daystudents, some Latin students, and boarders, all in view, said the Parish Priest, of “the urgent need to get as many children away from the schoolmaster as possible”. It therefore became a fierce struggle with the commune school, but the teacher, who had “a great deal of support”, held out. And so, although they were very good Catholics, the population of Marboz remained hostile towards the Brothers who, in spite of themselves (they had been invited by Bishop to take the school), had become involved in what was perceived as a clerical manoeuvre.

In many respects Foissiat, a rural commune of 2600 inhabitants, was similar to Marboz and moreover was not far from it, but the educational story that unfolded there was very different. The foundation of the Brothers’ school was the work of the Mayor, Monsieur Pitre. He was the church cantor and attended Mass every day but, says Brother Avit, “he often attempted to interfere with the administration of the parish and rarely saw eye to eye with his Parish Priest”, Father Martin. They managed all the same to agree to ask for some Brothers who arrived in October 1873. Contrary to what had happened at Marboz, the Brothers’ school here was a success. When, as a result of the secularisation law of 1886, they were expelled from the public school, the foundation of a free school (where they could continue teaching) went ahead without any problems.

Bagé-le-Châtel was a place where, according to Brother Avit, “seven eighths of the men and half of the women fail to fulfil their Easter duty”, and the children took nothing seriously and were not very bright. In 1863 the Parish Priest Father Martigny, in association with the Monerrat family, founded a free school for the Brothers, where the children would not have to pay fees, in order to compete with the teacher at the public school. According to Brother Avit, he “was a good man but a rather mediocre teacher”, and he was not able to withstand the competition. Although, with the fall of the Empire, Monsieur Mazoyer, a freemason and a zealous republican, became Mayor, the policy towards the school did not change. Good politician that he was, the Mayor, joined by the Parish Priest, made himself the spokesman for the population in clamouring for the return of the Director, Brother Pacificus, “who had endeared himself to everybody”. In 1882, the Prefecture pressed the commune to establish a school committee but the Municipal Council, almost unanimously, refused. Resuming his account in 1891 Brother Avit notes that the school, which being a free school had not had to submit to laicisation after 1886, had 90 to 100 pupils. The secular school founded in 1887 had only eight or ten pupils, the children of government officials and the “so-called victims of 2nd December”.⁷³⁶ So, at Bagé-le-Châtel, in spite of a weak level of religious practice, the Brothers’ school had in effect really become the public school.

In an urban setting, therefore, it seems the Brothers were being caught up in an educational quarrel which quickly became politicised, with the Brothers becoming the target of hostility on the part of the academic authorities, the local authorities and often even the clergy. It seems they were only tolerated if their school had only a limited and catered for the lower classes of society. In a rural setting the problem was couched in somewhat different terms. There everything rested ultimately on the ability of the school run by the religious to get itself accepted by the local people as *their* school. Whether or not it had the status of a commune school was of little moment. Likewise, it mattered little whether or not the population was particularly religious. To the local people’s way of thinking religion, politics and education had very little to do with one another.

⁷³⁶ The coup d’état of Louis-Napoleon on 2nd December 1851.

As has already been said, the teaching congregations did not succeed in resolving the strong contradiction existing between their educational activity, which was breaking down class barriers, and their ideal of a stable society. On the other hand, there was uncertainty about their ability to set down permanent roots. The people complained about the way Brothers were frequently replaced, or they clamoured for the return of Brothers who had been able to establish strong rapport with the local population. Finally, too, as we saw in the case of Nantua, the congregation did not find it easy to control the autonomy of the Directors.

Indeed, the Brothers' most successful instrument was the boarding school. The boarding schools were where a notable part of the population, seeking a chance to move up in society, found an institution adapted to their aspirations. The boarding school at St Didier-sur-Chalaronne was the only one to have lasting success in fulfilling that function. Here the Brothers, free from social and political pressures, were able successfully to implement the modern approach to pedagogy which, before many others, they had brought into their schools.

This study also invites us to pose some questions concerning the evolution of the very French concept of "*laïcité*" over the course of the Nineteenth Century. (The term essentially means "being secular", in the sense of not being based on religious concepts or values). At first Brother Avit uses the word "*laïque*" to describe teachers who were not members of religious congregations. They competed with the Brothers, but were not otherwise very different from the Brothers in their teaching methods, their values and their concern to see their school do well. His later use of the word has a clearly political sense. All the same, for a long time, in the villages as well as the towns, *laïcité* was less an ideology than a collection of sensitivities consisting of reservations towards an over authoritarian parish priest, too much invasiveness on the part of the religious congregations, over powerful local dignitaries or a diocesan authority too removed from the situation. Other factors played a part also. Ways of behaving owed more to local considerations or personal rivalries to which, either out of opportunism or, at a later stage, some political movement or other became attached. These were the origins of the alliances and rivalries, which to us seem surprising but were common at the time, where parish priests or other clergy either opposed or were indifferent towards the Brothers' schools, or where the local authorities in the communes were backing the Brothers but were at odds with the parish priest. Before 1880, and often afterwards, the great debates, which to us seem ideological, often had an underlying pattern arising from the human comedy and local power games. All the same, Brother Avit was right when he designates the great revolutionary events of 1848 and 1870 as key moments in the evolution of people's thinking. These were the occasions when power changed hands at the local level, enabling sensitivities, which had been more or less vague up to that time, to crystallise into ideologies.

It was only after 1871 that the word "*laïcité*" began to refer to an ideology that was asserting itself boldly on the political front but decidedly unadventurous when it came to societal structures. A good deal of *laïcité's* strength as an ideology, too, came from the fact that it had been espoused by a government administration, which had long been fiercely determined, when it came to key areas like education, to rein in local autonomy and private initiatives. Summing it all up therefore, *laïcité* could be described as the ideological dress adopted by a State bent on centralising all power into its own hands.

17.

THE SITUATION AT THE END OF FORTY YEARS

Internal changes successfully managed but the future uncertain

The forty years that followed the death of Father Champagnat was a time of dizzying numerical expansion. The total number of Brothers had increased tenfold (280 to 3000) and the number of establishments eleven fold. This quantitative revolution however took place in two stages. The years 1840-1859 were truly years of a quite chaotic explosion, whilst from 1860 to 1880 expansion remained strong but was much better managed. At the same time, however, the Institute now had to deal with a certain loss of internal cohesiveness. It was also the period when society in general and the State were adopting a progressively more distant attitude towards religious congregations.

The explosion in numbers, it could be argued, had its roots in internal causes. Champagnat had been successful in building up a group of limited size imbued with a “spirit of the Institute”, a group both fraternal and charismatic, but also professionally competent. This internal density then encountered external circumstances which more and more worked to its advantage. Society was beginning to value education, and with the Guizot Law of 1833, the State was fostering this movement. The Church, too, was coming more and more to recognise that the schools run by the religious congregations were a means to evangelisation. The Marist Brothers, recognised as a first class educational society, were therefore attracting a great number of vocations and were in demand more or less everywhere.

The congregation’s low level of institutionalisation, with no definitive rule and relatively rudimentary administrative organisation, was even an asset. The negotiations involved in founding schools were relatively straightforward and the Brothers in the houses enjoyed a good deal of autonomy. Essentially then, the Marist Brothers were very much a part of the world in which they were operating and, in a society still totally Christian, where in matters of education the influence of bishops and parish priest was often paramount, the Brothers may well have appeared as a happy modernisation of the traditional role of the village schoolmaster. With the Revolution of 1848 this happy functional relationship between the congregation and the world around it began to diminish. A powerful “red” party of Republicans, Socialists, and others was on the rise and facing off against a conservative party of Royalists, Bonapartists and Liberals. Society in general too now seemed less interested in catechetical instruction and more interested in secular learning. Furthermore, in 1848 revolution broke out all over Europe and Pius IX, who had for a time been driven out of Rome, dragged the Church into a fierce struggle against the movement for Italian unity in particular, and the modern world in general. Thus, with its

very ultramontanist spirit, the congregation naturally found itself once more involved in this anti-modern movement, and would later suffer the political and social consequences.

This political-religious involvement may have contributed to a weakening of the Institute's internal cohesiveness which, anyway, had been fracturing as a result of the influx of young recruits and the rapidity of its expansion, but also because of its relatively weak institutional structures. Around 1850 the Superiors and the more senior Brothers could well have been asking themselves if the spirit of the Institute had not started to dissipate and whether the congregation's success as an educational organisation was not having a negative impact on its religious and catechetical side. The legal recognition of the Institute as an association of public utility in 1851 could well have looked like the final step in this mutation.

The Chapter of 1852-1854 was the moment for the great rejection of such an evolution. It confirmed the Marist Brothers as a religious order equipped with its own detailed Rule of Life (1852), its code of teaching practice (1853) and Constitutions establishing the powers of each of its members (1854). Thus the charismatic phase of the Institute initiated by Marcellin Champagnat in 1817 came to an end, and a necessary phase of structuring now began which raised a major question: how could structuring be carried out without altering the primitive spirit?

In responding to this challenge, the three Superiors had at their disposal one major advantage; namely, they had been the Founder's close collaborators and the election of 1839 had confirmed them as the recognised depositories of his spirit. Furthermore, they had collected together in writing all his teachings. Finally, they had taken care to surround themselves with the older Brothers and the Directors, the only ones eligible to attend the Chapter. The Rule they drew up, although not directly written by the Founder, could therefore be legitimately considered as his work.

Nevertheless, since codifying in writing a spirit and an oral teaching is always a delicate matter, some opposition from the older Brothers did manifest itself. What followed therefore was a period of ongoing uneasiness, the central point of which was the nature of the Society. Was it egalitarian or hierarchical? The answer in 1854 was clear. The only Brothers eligible would be those whom the Superiors had invited to make the Vow of Stability. It was a system of oligarchy which may well have looked like an innovation opposed to the primitive spirit of an Institute which in Champagnat's conception was to have been as egalitarian as possible. Over and above all this, the Chapter transformed the vital link with the origins. The Rule now took the place of the Founder, a man whom, moreover, the majority of the Brothers had never known. This was the reason the Biography of Father Champagnat (1856) had become indispensable. Nevertheless the older Brothers kept alive an oral tradition which confirmed or nuanced the personality of the one who was becoming an icon. Hence, texts or official interpretations did not as yet quite express the whole of what constituted the spirit of the Institute. The Chapter also opened up a crisis within the leadership team of the Superiors, with the influence of Brother Louis-Marie gradually supplanting that of Brother François. The construction of St Genis-Laval, which from beginning to end had been in the hands of Brother Louis-Marie, was a significant moment in this *de facto* assumption of power. In the same way, by becoming the legislator and memorialist of the congregation, Brother Jean-Baptiste had involuntarily dispossessed Brother François of a task which, in his capacity as Superior and Champagnat's oldest disciple, should have fallen to him. His resignation in 1860 and his withdrawal to the Hermitage could be taken as a silent protest against an evolution of the Institute which he saw in terms different from those of Brother Louis-Marie, but which, in the absence of probative documentation, we are not in a position to ascertain.

In any case, Brother Louis-Marie set to work to build up a new synthesis on the identity of the Institute. Through his Circulars, he did indeed offer a powerful spiritual teaching whilst, through the organising of Provincial Houses and boarding schools, he completed the structural reorganisation of the congregation. Under what one is tempted to call his reign, the Institute doubled its numbers, put its organisation on a lasting footing and created juniorates, which would ensure an abundant and steady supply of recruits as well as a better formation.

All the same, behind this brilliant façade, we need to note the failures and unresolved questions. First of all, the strong homogeneity of the Institute was not fully restored, and the massive intakes were fairly largely offset by the departures, particularly of professed Brothers, which became more numerous than before. The adventurous financial policy aroused reservations. The problems with Rome, which did not want a centralised power, gave rise to an undercurrent of opposition, which emerged more clearly on the occasion of the Chapters.

The State itself was beginning to distrust religious congregations. From 1860 onwards it often blocked projected foundations, threatened their members with military service, compelled them to have the Brevet, and allowed press campaigns to develop systematically exploiting scandals concerning moral failures on the part of religious. Furthermore, the rise of a body of teachers formed in the government teaching training institutions began to create a strongly competitive situation and the State Inspectors of Education threw up numerous difficulties. The destiny of the congregational model, triumphant in the years 1850 to 1860, now began to wane. The death of Brother Louis-Marie a few months after the rise to power of the Republicans thus brought to a close a phase in the life of the congregation when it had been in the ascendant, encountering increasing numbers of difficulties certainly, but, when taken on the whole, a time when the challenges were met brilliantly, especially during the years 1850 to 1870. In France his successors would rapidly find themselves backed into a tenaciously defensive stance.

Even though the government of Brother Louis-Marie had given rise to a good many internal debates, the vast majority of Brothers seem to have appreciated belonging to a dynamic group, which was offering real opportunities for social advancement to many young people from the popular milieux, and possessed an impressive material set-up. All the same, the question could be asked if the Institute might not have been functioning on several levels; first, there were the large numbers of Novices and Brothers under the Vow of Obedience entering easily, formed rapidly and quickly gone, as if the Institute was acting as a passageway for them to move out of traditional society into the modern world; then there were the Directors of schools, usually Professed Brothers. Among these the link between the teaching profession and the religious life was more or less clear, but they were easily tempted to leave the congregation for life as a lay teacher, priest or monk. We would need to think, too, about the many Brothers teaching in the boarding schools, who constituted a certain intellectual elite. Even Brothers with the Vow Stability were far from homogenous as a group; a good number of them would have favoured a rather static interpretation of the spirit of the Institute, but at the Chapters, which were normally very tightly controlled, Directors of the big boarding schools, and certain Brothers who were Visitors or Provincial Directors, seemed to have been in a position to cause upsets.

As in French society itself at the time, many contradictory aspirations were at work within the Institute. Drawing on the Marist charism and by the adroit use of his authority, Brother Louis-Marie successfully provided strong leadership to a group of men who, at the time, were living in a religious and cultural environment much more complex than appears at first sight.

History of the Institute



52. Universal exposition of 1855.
Original lithography of A. Provost.
(Cabinet des Estampes).

PART 3

1880-1907

Difficulties in France and international expansion

By 1879 the upheavals the country had gone through since 1789, with their revolutions and dramatic swings from left to right in politics, had come to an end. Supported by a narrow but solid majority, the Republic would now have time to establish itself solidly. Liberty and order were both ensured, although these were interpreted in an extremely anti-clerical and even anti-Catholic fashion. For the religious congregations, confronting a hostile State and a society which was gradually shaking off the influence of the Church, it was to be a time of resistance and disappointed hopes. Among the laws which particularly targeted the Marist Brothers as teachers and religious, the following featured prominently:

- *The Ferry Law of 16th June 1881, which decreed that all primary education in public schools was to be free of charge. In itself this did not have any grave consequences but it was paving the way for the laicisation of public schools. (Jules Ferry was Minister for Public Instruction in the early 1880's).*

History of the Institute

- *The Ferry Law of 28th March 1882 on compulsory and secular education, which outlawed the use of religious symbols and the teaching of catechism in schools.*
 - *The Goblet Law of 30th October 1886, which decreed that only laypersons could teach in public schools, thereby excluding the teaching religious. This required the setting up of a system of “free” schooling in opposition to the public schools. (René Goblet was Prime Minister of France 1886-1887).*
 - *The Military Law of 15th July 1889, which imposed military service on religious and clergy.*
- From 1890 on a period of calm ensued. Pope Leo XIII was encouraging the French Catholics to make a rapprochement with Republic. However, the Dreyfus affair (beginning in 1898)⁷³⁷ which divided France into Dreyfusards (usually Republicans) and Antidreyfusards (usually Conservatives and Catholics) radicalised positions once again. These events led to the Waldeck-Rousseau Law of 1st July 1901. This law granted to all the right to form associations with the*
- 53.** *The commune of 1871 in Saint-Etienne after the fall of the Second Empire.*

⁷³⁷ *A Jewish Army Officer wrongly accused of high treason.*

exception of religious associations. They would be required to obtain a decree of authorisation.

In 1903 the Combes Government refused authorisation of any sort to religious congregations engaged in teaching or preaching. Their members would thus be obliged to choose either exile or laicisation. The axe fell with the Law of 5th July 1904. This law prohibited any members of congregations from teaching, even members of congregations which already had authorisation, such as the Brothers of the Christian Schools. Finally, on 9th December Parliament

voted in the law which established the separation of Churches and State.

All these events translated into a defeat for the French Church in its century-long drive for post-revolutionary reconquest, and particularly for the teaching congregations. Even so, beneath the surface a profound renewal of Catholicism was occurring. Not content simply to resist the modern world, the Church, and the religious congregations too, set about creating new ways of living as Christians or religious, principally through Catholic action movements and a renewal of catechesis.

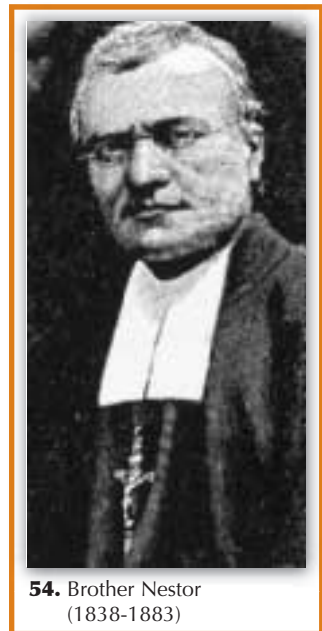
18.

UNDER ASSAULT FROM THE SECULARIST REPUBLIC (1880-1903)

By 1880 the Institute was more than a little tired of Brother Louis-Marie's imperious style of leadership and it is not surprising that the General Chapter was looking for a new man, one capable of dealing with the difficulties the Institute was facing both internally and externally.

A new man with not enough time – Brother Nestor (1880-1883)

The new Superior General, Brother Nestor, was elected by the Chapter on 10th March 1880. He had obtained just 29 votes out of 47.⁷³⁸ For a good number of the capitulants his youth must have been a cause for reserve in his regard, but he was also a man from the South. This would be the first time the Institute would be governed by a man from the peripheries. Born at Vauvert, in the Gard, in 1838, he was only 42 years of age. He had first been a pupil of the Brothers. He then entered the novitiate on 1st May 1851, at thirteen years of age. In September 1852 he went as cook to Saint-Victor-la-Coste (Gard) where he remained for two years, the first year as a novice, the second having taken his Vow of Obedience. In 1854 he was placed at La Roque as assistant in charge of the beginners' class. In 1855 he was sent to a more important school, La Seyne-sur-Mer, where he remained until 1864. There in 1857 he obtained his "brevet obligatoire" (the Elementary Brevet) and then in 1863 his "full brevet" (the Higher Brevet). It was during this period also, in 1859, that he made his Profession. He was then singled out to be in charge of the Special School, which operated more or less intermittently at Saint-Paul-Trois-Châteaux



⁷³⁸ A.F.M., Acts of the Chapters, 1880.

for Brothers studying for their Brevet. In 1867, he became the Director at the important boarding school of Le Luc, in Provence. In 1871 he was appointed Visitor for the Province of Saint-Paul but he fulfilled this function for just two years before, in 1873, he was elected Assistant by the General Chapter. He was then thirty five years of age.⁷³⁹

Thus, in record time he had moved up through all the echelons in the “career” of a Marist Brother, with the exception of having charge of a parish school. However, he died on 9th April 1883 after an illness of a few weeks. He had only just had time to sketch out a vast programme of reform for the congregation, faced as it now was with the laws enforcing secularisation.

A return to the tradition of Brother Louis-Marie (1883-1907)

His successor, Brother Théophile, was elected by the eighth General Chapter in 1883 by a crushing majority of 39 votes out of 45. It was probably he who, in 1880, had been the principal rival to Brother Nestor. In terms of his career in the congregation, he represented the exact opposite of Brother Nestor. Born in 1824 at Saint-Priest, in the Ardèche, he was the son of a small landowner and miller, who was the Mayor. His first orientation was towards the priesthood. It was only in 1845, when he was twenty one, and had almost finished his studies for the priesthood, as well as acquiring the Brevet, that on the advice of a Jesuit priest, he entered the novitiate at the Hermitage.

Candidates with the Brevet were a godsend, and thus his novitiate was one of the shortest. He entered on 8th September 1845, took the religious habit on 16th November and, if we are to believe his administrative file, the next day he left the novitiate to go to Valbenoîte, in the suburbs of St-Etienne, to begin teaching. Nevertheless, he took a break for some time doing the cooking at the little school of Saint-Germain-Laval before then becoming its Director. In 1850, at the age of twenty six, he made his Profession and was appointed Director of Valbenoîte, one of the most important schools in the congregation, with ten Brothers on the staff and an enrolment of three hundred pupils. In 1860 the Chapter appointed him Assistant for the Province of Nord, then in 1875 Assistant for the much more important Province of L’Hermitage. At the death of Brother Louis-Marie, he was first Assistant and, as such, was temporarily the one in charge.

Although he appeared to be Brother Louis-Marie’s designated successor, he had not been elected. At the age of fifty six, he may well have been considered too old by some of the members of the Chapter. It seems very likely, too, that his candidature may have suffered because of the dissatisfaction of numerous Brothers, who were looking for a man less marked by the era of Brother Louis-Marie. Whatever the case, three years later, he was the man for the situation, and he continued as Superior General until 1907. As with Brother Louis-Marie, then, the Institute was again to be governed by a former student for the priesthood.

⁷³⁹ *Nos Supérieurs*, Economat Général des Frères Maristes, Saint-Genis-Laval, 1953.

The secularisation laws

In the years that saw the triumph of the Republic and the putting in place of the secularisation laws, what the congregation needed was a decisive governing team. There had been serious difficulties already under the Second Empire. In particular the State Inspectors had strong reservations about the formation programmes of the religious congregations, which they judged to be very deficient, especially in the women's congregations.⁷⁴⁰ Hence the comment from Monsieur Courvière, Inspector for the Académie in Lyon, in 1878:

“Forced as they are, as a result of the rapid expansion they have undertaken, to supply members to too great a number of establishments and not having available a sufficient number of qualified staff, the congregations are reduced to simplifying as much as possible the preparation of their teachers; they send them, with only the most rudimentary preparation, into the schools as assistant teachers. There, under the direction of a qualified person, who knows a little more about it than they do, which is saying a lot in some cases, these assistant teachers continue their education while that of their pupils suffers.”

This criticism was partly true of the Marist Brothers as well. In any case, beginning in 1878, the situation was no longer one of just minor annoyances. Many republican Prefects, notably in Paris, were proceeding to laicise public schools which up to then be staffed by religious.⁷⁴¹ Free (that is, private and independent) schools were being started where the religious chased out the public schools, and the children they had been teaching, could come together again.⁷⁴²

The Laws of 16th June 1881 decreed that all teachers, private as well as public, had to have the Brevet in order to teach, and that teaching had to be free of charge. However, it was around the Law of 28th March 1882, making education compulsory and secular, where passions collided. With the Apostolic Nuncio and the Bishops wanting to maintain



55. Work of Paul Bert, minister of public Instruction and cults from 1881 to 1882, Anticlerical and supporter of laicism, one of the founders of the “obligatory and lay free school”.

⁷⁴⁰ Archives Nationales, F 17 12487.

⁷⁴¹ This was the period of sensational affairs in Lambézellec where Brothers and Sisters were expelled and especially the case of Alais where Prefect Dumarest expelled the two Brothers who were the Directors of the two schools.

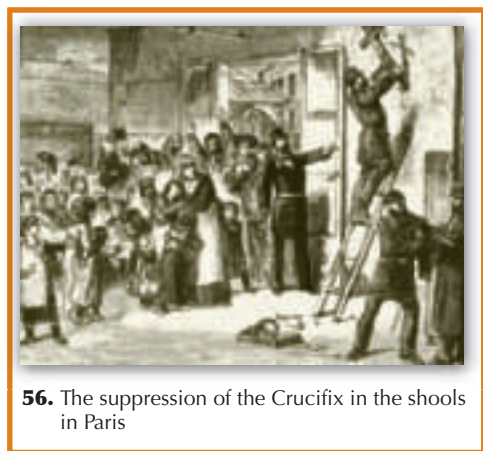
⁷⁴² Against the Jesuits and similar congregations, among them the Marist Fathers, the government published the decrees of 28th March 1879 dissolving the Jesuits and imposing on the other unauthorised congregations the requirement that they be authorised. As an authorised society, the Marist Brothers were not affected by this matter. They contented themselves with expressing their solidarity with the congregations of priests that had been placed in difficulty.

a moderate attitude, an effort was made to organise subscriptions to support the starting up of independent schools, instituting in particular “The Penny for the Catholic Schools”. With regard to schools being laicised, the watchword was to keep a close eye on the situation and to resist by using whatever legal means were available. Generally speaking, the implementation of the Laicisation Law was effected prudently. In areas where the population was indifferent, it was implemented quickly. In strongly Catholic areas, it was done much more slowly, and consequently did not arouse any great resistance.⁷⁴³

For Brothers teaching in public schools the practical situation was a delicate one. Crucifixes were required to be removed from the classrooms, and the Brothers were no longer allowed to teach catechism. Brother Nestor sought advice from the bishops on the line of action to follow.⁷⁴⁴ On their recommendation he advised the Brothers to “neglect nothing in order to preserve our commune schools”, and therefore to conduct prayers and catechism lessons outside the regulation school hours. If it became impossible to meet for this purpose in the buildings of the commune school, then it should be done in a private room.⁷⁴⁵ In any case, the Brothers were to refuse absolutely to remove the crucifixes and other religious symbols. In the meantime, the laicisation of schools was proceeding slowly because 2,284 public schools were in the hands religious congregations

of men. The Marist Brothers alone had 396 public schools and 108 independent schools, amounting to 15% of the total number of schools for boys being run by religious congregations.⁷⁴⁶

The laicisation of all teaching personnel in public education on 30th October 1886 (the Goblet Law) removed all hope of retaining a foothold there. In 1887 the Marist Brothers had already undergone 143 laicisations in 22 Departments. Once a public school was laicised, a local or diocesan Catholic committee would be set up and maintained by subscriptions. Of the 18,618 pupils the Brothers had been teaching in



56. The suppression of the Crucifix in the shools in Paris

these public schools, 10,931 followed them into their independent schools. In the same year, 411 Brothers were still teaching in the laicised schools, assisted by 1653 Brothers looking after the material side of things.⁷⁴⁷

Laicisation, along with the obligation to attend school, re-balanced the situation. The schools of the religious did not come out of it too badly. They were able to make up their

⁷⁴³ Louis Capéran, *op. cit.*, pp. 193-233.

⁷⁴⁴ C 6, pp. 9-11.

⁷⁴⁵ C. 6, pp. 9-11.

⁷⁴⁶ A.N. F 17 12473. C 13, pp. 472-473, indicates that in 1879 there were 547 houses of which 38 were outside France. We find that in 1880 there were 83,430 pupils. In the book on the Chapters (1862-1902), the General Chapter recorded 81,430 pupils, of whom 8,414 were in the Province of the Isles, and 2,390 in adult classes. There would have been 73,016 pupils of whom 70,626 were children.

⁷⁴⁷ A.F.M., drawer “Statistics”.

losses with the arrival of pupils brought in because of the law making it obligatory for all children to attend school. In the same way, the laicised schools, which to a greater or lesser degree had cut into the Brothers' clientele, themselves saw their numbers supplemented by the arrival of children now obliged to attend school. In 1892 the Marist Brothers withdrew from the last seven public schools they had been running. In that same year, total enrolments in the Marist Brothers' schools were more or less equal to what they had been in 1880.

The problem of the Brevet

At the time, however, the big problem for the Superiors was not so much the laicisation of the schools but the Law of 16th June 1881 making it obligatory for every teacher to hold the Brevet.⁷⁴⁸ The practice up to that point had been that only the Director was required to have the Brevet. Furthermore, the Falloux Law had authorised the replacement of the Brevet by the *Certificat de stage*. This could be granted by the Academic Council after three years of teaching in schools. Thus, when, on 19th May 1879, Jules Ferry brought in a plan making the Brevet obligatory, the religious congregations had good reason to be worried. When the Superiors made an inventory of Brothers with the Brevet was drawn up, they found the following:

Province	No. of Schools	Brothers Teaching	Brothers with the Brevet
St-Genis-Laval	128	560	182
Viviers (Aubenas)	64	261	91
Nord and Ouest	?	382	105
St-Paul-Trois-Châteaux	115	468	218
L'Hermitage	119	540	158
Total	426 + about 150	2211	754

Thus only a third of Brothers were qualified with the Brevet, and among these certain ones could no longer teach because of age or infirmity. It was feared that this Law could cause the closure of two thirds or three quarters of the schools. Added to this was the question of military service, because Brothers without the Brevet were no longer dispensed. The religious congregations therefore found themselves under attack on three fronts.

In a certain way, the Law requiring the Brevet was a piece of luck for the congregations, because it gave them the opportunity to pull out of schools where the situation was too precarious. Brother Nestor, then, and his Council embarked on a policy of school closures based on three criteria: lack of material resources, hostility on the part of the population, and the failure of the area to provide vocations. In 1883 the Assistants proposed the closure of sixteen schools to the Superior General.⁷⁴⁹ Around

⁷⁴⁸ See in C. 5, p. 637, Brother Louis-Marie's concerns about the proposed Law of Paul Bert on the Brevet.

⁷⁴⁹ A.F.M., Register of Deliberations, 1880-1889 (10th July 1883). At the financial level, 106 houses brought in revenue of 500 francs per Brother and so it created a deficit.

1891 Brother Avit mentions that under Brother Nestor there had been 34 school closures,⁷⁵⁰ and 74 under Brother Théophane.

Up to that time the formation of the Brothers had largely been carried out on the job, even though in the Provincial Houses there existed special schools where selected Brothers spent several months preparing for the famous Brevet. However, these only functioned intermittently because they became a sort of pool of Brothers the Assistants could draw on during the course of the school year for replacements for Brothers who were sick or needed a rest.⁷⁵¹ Faced with necessity, in 1881 the Superiors established in each Province a permanent special school that was soon called “the scholasticate”, and in 1882 at St-Genis-Laval, a “higher level course” destined to prepare two or three Brothers from each Province for the Higher Brevet.⁷⁵² Putting the most pressing things first, from 1880 onwards the Superiors were urging the Brothers to use the school holiday time to study, for which they established a detailed programme and preparatory examinations.⁷⁵³ Finally, to allow Brothers to study during the school year, Brother Nestor promulgated a daily timetable during the winter of 1881-1882, providing for one hour of secular study to be done each evening between 6.00 pm and 7.00 pm.⁷⁵⁴

Results were not slow in coming. Thus, the Province of Beaucamps, which in 1878 had had only 93 Brothers holding the Elementary Brevet and 15 with the Higher Brevet, in just the single year of 1881, saw its number of Brothers with the Brevet rise by twenty five.⁷⁵⁵ In the Department of Loire, on the date after which Brothers without the Brevet could no longer teach (1884), no schools had had to be closed.⁷⁵⁶ In other Provinces the situation was not so brilliant. When schools reopened in 1884, Brother Philogone, Assistant for Bourbonnais, was short of qualified Brothers by 57, and no other Province was able to help him.⁷⁵⁷

If we look at the problem over a longer period, from 1884 to 1886 very few Brothers were successful in obtaining their Brevet, but between 1888 and 1892, the number of successful candidates was very large.⁷⁵⁸ After 1895 the difficult period was over. In regard to the Higher Brevet, starting in 1889 there was a steady flow of candidates. Whilst at the start the success rate was around one quarter of all sitting, it rose rapidly to fifty percent. Despite all of this, in 1894 we still find Brothers aged between 28 and 30 who did not have the Brevet.

⁷⁵⁰ This was the first time the Institute had closed more schools than it opened (26 schools were opened between 1880 and 1883).

⁷⁵¹ Archives de Beaucamps, BE 8: *Histoire de Beaucamps (1842-1932)*, by Brother Joseph Ferrier, p. 78; C. 7 p. 150; in 1865 Brother Nestor was Director of the special school for two years.

⁷⁵² A.F.M., Register of Deliberations, 1880-1890.

⁷⁵³ C. 6, p. 327.

⁷⁵⁴ C. 6, p. 358.

⁷⁵⁵ Archives de Beaucamps, BE 1, Annales de Beaucamps.

⁷⁵⁶ A.N. F 17 12 479, Statistics established according to the Circular of 13th September 1884.

⁷⁵⁷ A.F.M., Register of Deliberations, 1880-1889.

⁷⁵⁸ A.F.M., Register of Deliberations of the Great Council (1890-1902), p. 24:

Year	1895	1896	1897	1898	1899	1900
Elementary Brevet	222	268	212	194	198	233
Higher Brevet	23	32	8	13	8	23

In the meantime, in the schools the practice continued where Brothers without the Brevet were classified as assistants. Walls between classrooms were removed, or an opening made between the room where the holder of the Brevet was teaching and the other where the assistant was teaching. In this way it could be claimed that the law was being obeyed, since the second Brother was not engaged in teaching properly so called. It was not pleasant business having to do this but, because it was difficult for the Inspectors to prove fraud, it did allow Brothers to get around the law without too much risk. Another way of getting around the law was the practice of “umbrella Brothers”. Elderly Brothers who had the Brevet did not teach but provided administrative cover for Brothers without the Brevet who were doing the actual teaching.⁷⁵⁹ A last resort was to employ lay teachers who had the Brevet. Thus, at Montceau-les-Mines, where the Marist Brothers had several schools, the number of Brothers dropped from nineteen to twelve and they were replaced by eight lay teachers. These replacements did not last long, because from 1888 onwards, at Monceau and in its surrounding schools, out of the 57 Brothers comprising Directors and staff, only eight did not hold the Brevet.⁷⁶⁰

All the same, the Superiors were not content with just a defensive policy. On 1st March 1882 Brother Nestor published a vast plan of studies, the purpose of which was to bring the Brothers up to the level of the Higher Brevet in three years without impinging on their religious studies properly so called.⁷⁶¹ The abundant bibliography that was proposed remained at the level of a manual and aimed at a culture that was broad rather than deep. Nevertheless, it was a coordinated project for the acquisition of a secular and religious culture that conformed with what was required of teachers in the State system. It seems, however, that the death of Brother Nestor prevented the implementation of the project.

A significantly modified network of establishments

In 1891, as the laicisation process was coming to an end, the Marist Brothers had 558 schools, of which approximately 488 were in France. In 1880, they had been running 565 schools of which 524 had been in France. It seems, therefore, that the laicisation process had ended in a draw. For the Marist Brothers, however, it marked the start of a reduction in the number of their works in France to the advantage of other countries. Further to that, a comparison of the geographical distribution of the schools in 1880 and then in 1891 reveals that the central area, where the Brothers had previously had a massive presence, had generally lost schools. In contrast, we see the start of an increased presence towards the frontiers of the country, either expanding more strongly in areas such as l’Ouest and the Hautes-Alpes, or making new beginnings in places like the Pyrénées-Orientales and the Aude. One gets the impression too that an effort was being

⁷⁵⁹ A.N. F 17 10 906, Dossier Petits Frères de Marie. Letter signed with three pseudonyms. The Institute continued to consider the Brevet an administrative formality without attaching much importance to the name of the holder of the Brevet.

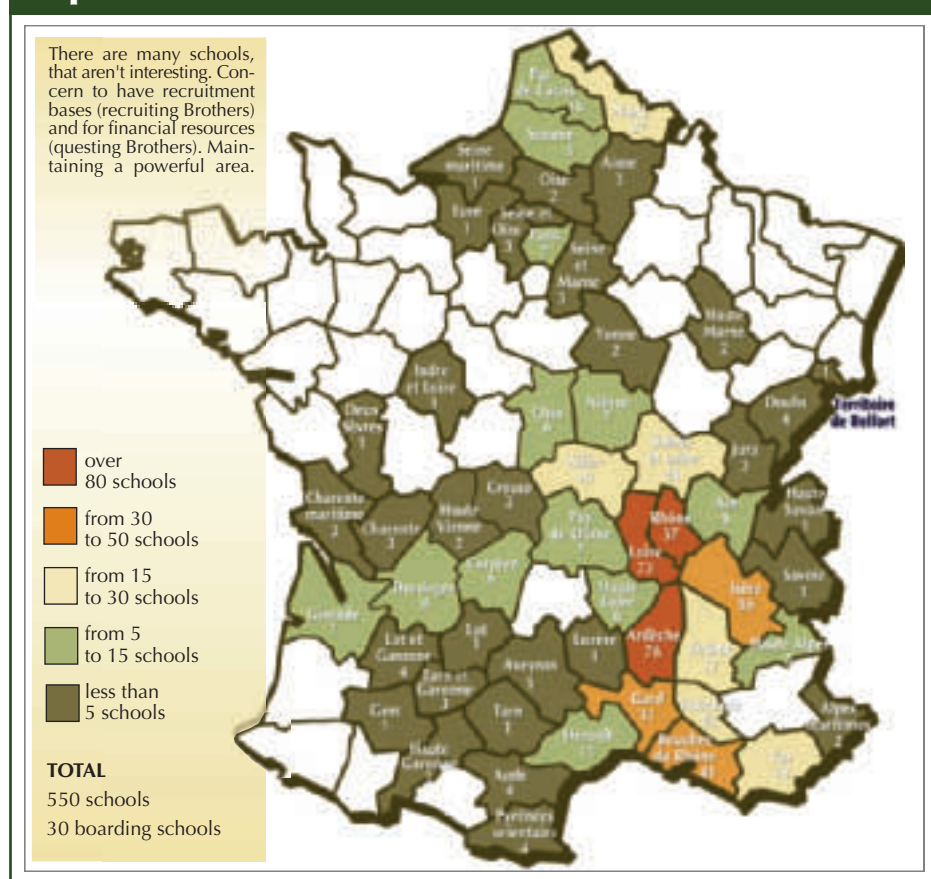
⁷⁶⁰ *Annales des Maisons*: Montceau-les-Mines (Province of Bourbonnais); André LANFREY, “Eglise et monde ouvrier: les congrégations et leurs écoles à Montceau-les-Mines sous le II^{ème} Empire et la III^{ème} République (1875-1903) in Cahiers d’Histoire Vol. XXIII, pp. 51-71.

⁷⁶¹ C. 6, pp. 360-547.

made to fill the gaps between the different areas where the Institute was working. Thanks to two foundations therefore, one in the Yonne, the other in Seine-et-Marne, the North was linked up with the South. The same thing happened between East and West through an establishment in the connecting Department of la Corrèze. The focus now was no longer on establishing close networks, but rather to occupy strategic points that would be important for recruitment.⁷⁶² Another factor likely to bring about a wider distribution of establishments was the kind of vacuum created by the difficulties all congregations were experiencing at the same time. Because of this, territories which previously had been monopolised by one congregation were now opening up to others. Finally, the railway network was considerably reducing the problems posed by distance.

Material necessity is another factor important to take into account. In 1883 it was realised that a salary of 500 francs per Brother was insufficient. Now, the committees set up to finance the free (that is, private) schools, were often short of funds and not

Map 12. Marist schools in 1901



⁷⁶² A.F.M., Deliberations of the Great Council (1890-1902), 5th May 1891

free with their spending. They were trying to set up schools for a minimum outlay just at a time when the congregation's costs were increasing, particularly because of the urgent need to set up the special schools for Brothers preparing for the Brevet. These committees were only too ready to accuse the religious congregations of being too demanding.⁷⁶³ Out of this arose a series of unpleasant conflicts between these founding committees and the congregations.

Military service and an anti-congregation taxation policy

It has already been noted that the Law of 16th June 1881 threatened to change totally the status of religious congregations in regard to military service, because exemption from service was now limited to those holding the Brevet. At this time, in the Provincial Houses and the boarding schools there were dozens of Brothers looking after the kitchen, the gardens and the laundry, and also answering the door. Up to this point they had benefitted from the dispensation given to members of a teaching association. Many of them had so little education that the Superiors regarded them as illiterate. To fend off the blow, in November 1881 Brother Nestor asked for a list to be drawn up of Brothers employed in manual tasks, "and that steps be taken to get them educated" to the point where they would be able to sit the examinations in the course of the year, since without that examination their ten year commitment to teaching would no longer be valid. (Up to this point the ten year commitment had exempted them from military service). And "almost all" asked to sit the examination.⁷⁶⁴

The Military Law of 1889 suppressing the exemptions to military service, by imposing three years away from community on the young Brothers, would reduce these efforts to nothing. So, at the start of November 1889, there were fifty Brothers who reported to barracks. When the law came into full force in 1891 their number came to close to 200, "almost all with the Brevet and trained for teaching". Henceforth the Institute would have 150 to 200 Brothers under the flag.⁷⁶⁵ This amounted to half the total number of a Province. Nevertheless, all this was nothing in comparison to the burning fear that was felt that these Brothers would become corrupted by the world. In describing this law, Brother Avit did not hesitate to use the word "hellish".⁷⁶⁶

As in the case of the laicisation, the Superiors adapted themselves the best they could. Retreats and regular correspondence were used to provide those departing with some spiritual weaponry. But they were also seeking an alternative. In 1890 they rejected the idea of pushing the Brothers to obtain the baccalaureate and university degrees, which would have spared them two years of military service.⁷⁶⁷ In the end they made use of Article 50 of the Military Law. This article stipulated that any young person established in another country before

⁷⁶³ A.F.M., Volume No. 8 of the Letters of the Administration, No. 8382 of 4/12/1882.

⁷⁶⁴ A.F.M., Register of Deliberations (1880-1889), (1881-1882).

⁷⁶⁵ A.F.M., Volume of the Letters, No. 11, No. 11 157 of 15/09/91, Register of Deliberations of the Great Council (1890-1902), p. 21.

⁷⁶⁶ *Abrégé des Annales*, p. 638.

⁷⁶⁷ A.F.M., Register of Deliberations of the Great Council (1890-1902).

the age of 19 years complete⁷⁶⁸ could be dispensed from military service for the duration of their stay there. If they returned before the age of 30 years, “they would only be subject to the obligations of their classification”, that is, to be called up in the case of war. The course of action to follow in the case of an article of this type was obvious; places would have to be established outside of Europe which could be populated with young Brothers. This could not, however, be a general measure.⁷⁶⁹ It was necessary to ensure the continuity of the works in France and, since the young Brothers were still minors, for many of them, as well as for their families, the prospect of going far away from their country was repugnant.

The fiscal arrangements of the congregations also had a lot to do with this move towards internationalisation, because the Law of 29th December 1884 had imposed on congregations a tax rate of 5% of the gross value of their property, movables and immovables, either owned or occupied.⁷⁷⁰ This impost, called the Brisson Tax (from the name of its promoter), was also called a tax on accruals since, as congregations did not pay inheritance tax or transfer tax when one of their members died, they were constantly accumulating capital. Furthermore, the Taxation Office had overestimated the value of the movables and immovables of the congregations.⁷⁷¹ The matter therefore went to court, and on 13th January 1892 the Court of Appeal ruled that only the official headquarters of a congregation could be registered by the Taxation Office.⁷⁷²

As the revenue produced by the Brisson tax was not very great, the Law of 16th April 1895, called the Law of Subscription, transformed the tax on accruals into an annual compulsory tax of 0.03% of the gross value of all property, movables and immovables, owned by congregations. Under the leadership of Father Le Doré, Superior of the Eudists (the Congregation of Jesus and Mary), the majority of congregations engaged in a policy of passive resistance, but the five congregations of men recognised by the government (Vincentians, Sulpicians, Society of the Foreign Missions, Holy Spirit Fathers and the Brothers of the Christian Schools) all complied. The congregations had not been able to present a common front.⁷⁷³ Certain congregations, among them the Marist Brothers, were settled on their policy of sending men overseas,⁷⁷⁴ because Brother Théophile in particular was determined to follow the policy of passive resistance. There was a court case with the Taxation Office in regard to the distillery at Saint-Genis making Arquebuse.⁷⁷⁵ A first case was lost in 1898, and in 1903 the congregation had to pay back taxes of 180,000 francs.⁷⁷⁶

⁷⁶⁸ *Bulletin des Lois* No. 327, Series 12, July-December 1889.

⁷⁶⁹ A.F.M., Register of Deliberations (1880-1889), (1889-1897), p. 17 and p. 41.

⁷⁷⁰ Paul Nourisson, *Histoire légale des congrégations religieuses en France depuis 1789*, two volumes, Paris, 1928, p. 46.

⁷⁷¹ A.N. 156 API, Letter of 1/02/1891. For Brother Théophile, it was necessary to reduce by half the evaluation of properties held by the congregations done in 1880.

⁷⁷² C. 7, p. 287.

⁷⁷³ This quarrel was the occasion for the creation of the *Bulletin des Congrégations*, the first number of which appeared on 15th November 1895. In E. Lecanuet, *Les Signes avant-coureurs de la séparation*, Paris, 1930, pp. 35-39, Cardinals Langénieux and Richard directed the congregations' policy of passive resistance. Leo XIII refused to support their attitude. From 1st April 1896 to 1st November, the administration had 524 judgements handed down and obtained 4,273,691 francs.

⁷⁷⁴ *Bulletin des Congrégations*, No. 18 (12th March 1896).

⁷⁷⁵ A.F.M., Drawer France 600, dossier 1902.

⁷⁷⁶ C. 9, pp. 407, 684.

A religious sociology in practice

The battle with public education was bitter. For the Brothers it was most often lived at the level of the local village. Between 1882 and 1891, Brother Avit conducted a thoroughgoing survey of three quarters of the houses of the congregation, and this enabled the Superiors to obtain an overall view of the situation throughout the whole of France.⁷⁷⁷

His investigation highlighted entire areas where the religious instruction given by the Brothers was being “offset within the families”, if not completely destroyed. This was the case with the great majority of schools along the Mediterranean seaboard. In other areas, not as extensive it is true, the results were equally clear. This was the case in Drôme, and from Livron to Die, areas where Protestantism had a strong presence. In the Department of Loire, the apostolic effectiveness of the schools around the industrial region of St-Etienne was quite weak. The same was true of Saône-et-Loire, and in the industrial region of Montceau-les-Mines. Finally, along the valley of the Rhône, on both sides of the river, Brother Avit’s survey showed that the impact of religious instruction was often mediocre.

In general, in these same areas the Municipal Councils were hostile towards the Brothers’ schools. The picture, however, was often more nuanced. In many places Brother Avit found that the population was supportive of the Brothers even when the Municipal Council was hostile. It even happened that, in some places where the religious practice of the population was seen to be mediocre, the effectiveness of the school was good. In general, however, the areas on the plains had become in part “dechristianised”, whilst the mountain areas remained politically conservative and faithful to their Christian practice.

Brother Avit had, in fact, created a religious sociology. Almost everywhere he mentions the low level of religious practice which, according to him, had been provoked by the revolutionary events of 1848 and 1870. Such was the case in Chavanay (Loire), which had been “very religious before 1870, the population there has been going downhill ever since”. Likewise in Ampuis, “the population, very good before 1848, still good between ‘48 and ‘70, has lost much since this last event.” The railways were to blame, as in the case at St-Paul-le-Jeune, where “before the construction of the railway, the station and several cafés and coffee bars, attendance at church services on Sundays and feast days was higher.” The reason? Because in the wake of the railways came industries and especially outsiders, people who were often “the dregs of other places.” Then, with industry comes rapid urban growth. According to Brother Avit, many towns like Voiron in Isère, were “little Babylons”, corrupting not only their own inhabitants but also those of the surrounding countryside. Take, for instance, the countryside around St-Chamond (Loire), which was being “worked over by the freethinkers”, or else Chauffailles (Saône-et-Loire) where “filthy pamphlets” were spreading licentiousness and loose living. In short, “Wealth and comfortable living are the mortal enemies of religious practice in all the parishes where they are present, for example the Beaujolais”,⁷⁷⁸ and

⁷⁷⁷ A.F.M., *Annales du F. Avit*.

⁷⁷⁸ A.F.M., *Annales du F. Avit* : 213/29, 211/23, 212/21.

inversely the populations in isolated places like Doizieu in the Loire or Sablières in Ardèche, remained faithful to their religious faith and practice. Occasionally, as at Murinais in Isère, he attributed the maintenance of religious fervour to the influence of the chateau. At Létra “the parish’s twelve bourgeois families, who are good Catholics, contribute towards maintaining practice there and even improving it.” Nevertheless, the bitterness of this royalist often resulted in outbursts against the Republicans – these “circus performers”, these “comedians”, these “clowns”. And so:

“If the tree is known by its fruits, then the fruits of the Republic are indeed bitter for the landowner, the peasant and the worker. The tree has not responded to the hopes of those who planted it and watered it with their sweat and their blood. We must return to the tree of the Monarchy to gather those fruits the names of which are the honour, credit and prosperity of France.”⁷⁷⁹

Brother Avit’s biased attitude prevented him from understanding people who, although they supported the Republic, nevertheless sent two thirds of their children to the Brothers’ school, as was the case at St-Bénin-d’Azy. In his view this only proved that “the mysteries of human stupidity are more numerous than the mysteries of religion.” In more measured terms in one of his Circulars, Brother Théophane himself deplored:

“the weakening of faith, the indifference of parents towards the religious instruction of their children, the greed, sensuality and materialism, which are invading the diverse classes of society and making them soft.”⁷⁸⁰

In abandoning God, France was rushing to its doom, even in a worldly sense, and this conviction occasionally took on an apocalyptic turn:

“It is necessary that nations [...] receive here below the reward or the chastisement which are their due, and that the punishment endure all the longer in proportion to the greatness of their crimes.”⁷⁸¹

The Superiors had been quite good observers, but their essentially traditionalist theology did not lead them to the implications of what they were observing. As they saw it, in confronting all these movements, which in any case were limited, the Church had to remain firm on matters of principle, although it might be able to give way on some minor points. But was this mentality shared by the majority of the Brothers? It seems that the younger generations, those born after 1848 and who were in closer contact with the population, were less wedded to the past, and largely shared the aspirations of the general society. The desire for education is a case in point that has already been mentioned. More will be said about this at a later point.

⁷⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 214/57, 211/23, 212/21.

⁷⁸⁰ C. 7, p. 169.

⁷⁸¹ C.7, p. 446 (1889).

19.

MEETING THE CHALLENGES

Juniorates and “the missions”

The Republicans’ harassment of the religious congregations would only partly succeed in breaking their dynamism and drive. And so, in the last years of the Nineteenth Century their fierce resistance would be giving the Republican government a great deal of cause for concern.

The Juniorates – largest component of the congregation

Recruitment for the congregation of the Marist Brothers, which was just getting back on its feet after the shocks of 1870-1871, now took off, aided by a favourable politico-religious climate. Between 1871 and 1878 numbers grew from around 2,500 to 3,250. Between 1878 and 1884 total numbers suffered a slight drop brought about by the laicisation of the schools. With that difficulty over, numbers rose every year before plateauing out at 350 novices receiving the Habit annually from 1894. By 1901 the number of French Brothers, with novices included, had reached 4,800. Even more significant for the Institute was the recruitment coming from outside the country. This had been marginal until 1881 after which it rose rapidly, so that by 1890 recruits from outside the country accounted for one third of all those entering. By 1901 there would have been close to 1,000 Brothers who were not French.

Growth on this scale at a time when religious were being targeted by the French government can largely be explained by a change in the recruitment strategy. This change was based on juniorates, which were set up in places where recruitment was good, and then multiplied. Thus, the Province of St-Paul had established a juniorate at Serres in the Hautes-Alpes in 1884, and then a new one at Castelnaudry in the Aude, for youngsters coming from the South of the Massif Central and the Pyrénées-Orientales.⁷⁸² In the Province of Nord, the juniorate at Beaucamps was reinforced

⁷⁸² According to the *Abrégé des Annales*, 1891, the juniorate at Serres was founded “to house the numerous vocations from the Diocese of Gap”. Besides that, there was for a time a juniorate at Bourg-de-Péage, probably attached to the boarding school. According to the survey done between 1897 and 1901, it had given 71 Brothers to the Institute.



57. Juniorate of La Valla toward 1886.

with two more both located in Belgium, one at Arlon (1888), the other at Pitthem (1896). The same Province then founded another at Trémilly in Haute-Marne in 1900.⁷⁸³

The first juniorate in the Province of Centre (Varennes) was at St-Genis-Laval. Another was then established at Digoin (Saône-et-Loire) in 1884. This was later moved to Varennes-sur-Allier in 1891. With the Province of L'Hermitage keen to have its own juniorate, and there being too many juniors at St-Genis-Laval, in 1891 a number were sent up to Lavalla (Loire). Thus, each Province came to possess one or more juniorates of its own.⁷⁸⁴ The Province of St-Genis-Laval at first set up a section for juniors in its boarding school at Monsols (Rhône). When this mixed arrangement did not prove satisfactory, it was decided in 1898 to set up an independent juniorate at École near Besançon in the Department of Doubs, so as to attract youngsters from the Franche-Comté and even from Alsace.⁷⁸⁵

The following table gives a reasonably exact idea of the progression of numbers in the juniorates:

PROVINCE	1880	1883	1891	1893	1900	1903
St-Genis Laval	32	36	120			79
L'Hermitage	12	41	105			187
Bourbonnais	8	17				
St-Paul-Trois-Châteaux	50	70	220			198
Aubenas			62			64
Nord (Beaucamps)	50	70	90			106
Ouest (Lacabane)			55			90
Total	152	224	732	984	1213	724

⁷⁸³ *Biographies*, Vol. 4, p. 43.

⁷⁸⁴ The creation of the juniorates gave rise to some difficulties between Provinces. Brother Avit notes that the juniorate at St-Paul-Trois-Châteaux, common to the Provinces of Aubenas (Ardèche) and St-Paul (Drôme), profited St-Paul the most because they kept the best subjects.

⁷⁸⁵ C. 9, p. 356; a typewritten work by Br Louis-Laurent; Panorama of the Juniorates of the Province of St-Genis-Laval, pp. 119 ff., 148 ff., 156 ff. The table presented here has been put together from information taken from the *Actes Capitulaires* (Acts of the Chapter): the Chapters of 1880 and 1903; C. 7, p. 79; *Abrégé des Annales*, 1891; C. 13, p. 486.

In 1883 the number of Juniors was only 7% of the total number of Brothers. In 1891 out of 3,700 Brothers there were 732 Juniors, so 20%. In 1892 Brother Théophile notes with satisfaction that “all the novitiates in France have good numbers thanks to the juniorates, which are supplying them with good postulants.”⁷⁸⁶

The fund created to support the work of the juniorates, equipped with a Bulletin serving as a link with its subscribers, was bringing in significant amounts of money. From 1878 to 1883, this income rose to 354,749 francs from subscriptions, 36,000 francs from foundations and 41,693 francs from scholarships.⁷⁸⁷ However, as Brother Avit noted, “most of the resources came through the Brothers doing fundraising”.⁷⁸⁸ These Brothers were also the recruiters, and were duly supplied with a Letter of Obedience from the Superiors, along with a Letter of Authorisation from the Bishop.

Thus we have Brother Véron:⁷⁸⁹

“Always dressed in his full Marist habit, his leather satchel on his back, his big umbrella in one hand and his long Rosary beads in the other, and always on foot, he traversed the steep mountains of Vivarais and the plains of Basse-Ardèche and Gard, seeking among Christian families with numerous children those vocations sown by God, which were only awaiting the passage of this indefatigable apostle to reveal themselves.

[...] He was so well-known that people going by, seeing him on the road, would stop of their own accord and invite him to get into their carriage. Other times, it would be peasants offering him a seat beside them on their wagons.”

A method of this sort quickly enabled the Brothers to distinguish the good parishes from the bad ones and to set up a network of correspondents with parish priests favourable to the Brothers. However, a great number of congregations and religious orders were utilising the same methods and in the same territories, and so the competition was lively, even between Marist Brothers from different Provinces. Thus it was that the Superiors had to settle a dispute between the Provinces of St-Paul and Centre, both of which wanted to do recruiting and fundraising in Savoy.⁷⁹⁰ In 1908 it would even become necessary to establish zones of recruitment for each Province.

This extended recruitment was based on schools which served as points of departure and also as places for the recruiters to return to and take a break. There were some Brothers, men like Brother Marie-Victoire, with a twofold occupation as both teacher and recruiter. He was teaching at St-Urcize (Cantal),⁷⁹¹ but he “spent every Thursday and his holidays recruiting religious vocations” around St-Urcize and in Lozère in the arrondissement of Marvejols.

⁷⁸⁶ A.F.M., Volume 7 of the Letters of the Administration, no. 7996; Volume 8, Letters no. 9230; Dossier 541-413: Letters of Br Théophile to a Vicar Provincial.

⁷⁸⁷ Br Louis-Laurent, *op. cit.*, pp. 90-105 ; C. 5, p. 567, where the broad lines of the organisation of the work of the juniorates are set out; *Actes Capitulaires* of 1883.

⁷⁸⁸ We have a sample of what one such Brother could bring by way of funds through the accounts drawn up by one of them. From 6th to 28th February, he travelled through 25 communes from Ardèche to Gard, amassing 972.30 francs. As in January he had collected 820 francs, in just two months his receipts totalled 1,792 francs.

⁷⁸⁹ *Biographies*, Vol. 5, p. 424.

⁷⁹⁰ A.F.M., Register of Deliberations (1880-1889).

⁷⁹¹ *Biographies*, Vol. 2, pp. 159, 166.

From the start Brother Louis-Marie had made it his business to lay down the main parameters of the the juniorate regime. His advice to Brother Cléomène was clear:⁷⁹²

"In terms of clothing and food they are to have everything they need. On that point, dear Brother, I ask you to be vigilant. [...] Give them nine hours of sleep, three recreations per day, and two walks per week. They are to have a spartan upbringing: no soft mattresses, no eiderdowns, and no mollycoddling of the slightest sort; prepare men for us who will be strong, vigorous, true and sturdy Christians, and religious who will be happy to have as their nourishment sacrifice and immolation."

And it was indeed a spartan regime:⁷⁹³

"The bell for rising went at 5.30 am. Each one attended to his toilet and tidied his bed, then, with that done, went down into the courtyard. There, without anyone supervising, the children walked back and forth reciting the Rosary in silence and with the seriousness of seasoned religious, until the ringing of the bell called them to the chapel for prayers."

The scholastic work was intense. Its programmes and methods seem to have been inspired by the Jesuit colleges and upper level primary education, with competitions, honour boards and academic groupings for the best pupils.⁷⁹⁴ In short, the juniorate was a mixture of college and monastery with the addition of games like *billes* (marbles) and *barres* (prisoner), solemn liturgies, theatrical evenings, picnic days in the country⁷⁹⁵ or pilgrimages to nearby sanctuaries or monasteries. The studies were so advanced that occasionally a certain number of Juniors sat for the Elementary Brevet or the Baccalaureate.⁷⁹⁶ We can understand how, "the passage to the novitiate was made with a minimum of fuss and, indeed, there was hardly any change in the rules... Everywhere postulants and young Brothers were all together and continued their studies..."

Thanks to this system of a preparatory school, the novitiates found a sort of regulator valve. When numbers were dropping, a larger number than usual of Juniors could be brought in. If there were too many novices, some of the Juniors could be held back. The convenience of this arrangement, however, was almost nothing when compared to the increased number of entries, at least in certain Provinces. Thus it was, according to the biography of Brother Cléomène, that the Province of Bourbonnais, which between 1880 and 1885 had only had a dozen receiving the Habit per year, was having thirty three per year between 1886 and 1893, thanks to the establishment of the Juniorate at Digoïn.⁷⁹⁷ The advantage of the juniorate was also that the worth of the aspirants could be tested, and any who were not suitable could be directed elsewhere. In the Province of Beaucamps⁷⁹⁸ it was estimated that half of the youngsters who entered the juniorate went on to receive the Habit, one third made Profession, and a quarter persevered.

⁷⁹² *Biographies*, Vol. 2, pp. 159, 166.

⁷⁹³ A.F.M., Dossier GRO 550-6 N 6, Letter of Br Victus to Br Luigi.

⁷⁹⁴ A.F.M., Dossier GRO 550-6 N 6, Letter of Br Victus to Br Luigi.

⁷⁹⁵ *Biographies*, Vol. 2, pp. 159-160.

⁷⁹⁶ A.F.M., Drawer 560, Dossier M, testimony of Br Amabilis (Henri Mallet).

⁷⁹⁷ *Biographies*, Vol. 2, p. 151.

⁷⁹⁸ Archives de Beaucamps, BE 8, Histoire de Beaucamps de 1842 à 1932, p. 65.

Thus, in the juniorates the time could be taken to deliver a high quality education in secular and religious subjects. But with this choice would bring certain consequences in its wake; on the one hand, more than before the Institute's focus was now on candidates capable of studying, and on the other, the age of entry into the novitiate was dropping even lower, confirming a trend that had been going on for some time whereby adolescents rather than young adults were being admitted. In fact, between 1850 and 1879 the percentage rate of those taking the Habit at less than 17 years of age had risen from 35.2% to 51.3%. The ten year period 1880-1889, however, reveals a percentage rate of 70.9% for under 17 year olds, and for the period 1890-1899 it was 79.3%. In addition, the improvements in formation may have been having a beneficial effect on the Brothers' perseverance; from 1875 to 1885 the average number of Professed Brothers leaving the Institute was 12.5 per year, but in the fifteen years following (1886-1900) this number fell to fewer than eight. These brilliant outcomes which had resulted from the establishment of juniorates, however, concealed a problematic reality, namely, that the Institute was scarcely able any more to attract young and mature age adults.

There were other problem areas too. The cultivation of vocations was taking the search further afield. Whereas between 1850 and 1859, 87% of recruitment was being carried out within a well-defined zone of ten Departments, between 1880 and 1889 recruitment outside of this central zone had provided 29% of vocations. In the period 1890-1899 the proportion was even higher – 36%. Henceforth, recruitment was largely disconnected from the Brothers' works, instead systematically concentrating on rural areas where Catholic life and practice was still strong. This explains why there is a change in the socio-professional background of aspirants. Before 1850, 70% of Brothers were the sons of small rural landholders. From 1850 to 1879 this proportion dropped from 72% to 65.7%, but this evolution did not continue; the sons of peasant farmers stood at 67.7% between 1880 and 1889, and at 68.5% in the period 1890-1899. So, whereas at the beginning recruitment was following the general evolution of a society on the path to urbanisation and industrialisation, by the end of the century recruitment was still dependent on a rural world that was in slow decline.

This having been said, the trend towards a more broad based approach to recruitment needs to be nuanced, because the Brothers' schools were still supplying very large numbers of vocations (see the table below). However, the survey carried out between 1897 and 1901, enquiring as to how effective the schools were in providing vocations, made it obvious that numbers going to the priesthood⁷⁹⁹ were often higher than those going to the Brothers. This was particularly true in the South of the country (Vaucluse, Bouches-du-Rhône, Var), as well as in the North (Pas-de-Calais, Nord, Somme, Oise), as if recruitment to the priesthood tended to win out in areas that were less religious. The Brothers' school therefore kept its function as a nursery of vocations of which 40% were just for the Institute. However, many of the children in the juniorates were also coming from schools run by other congregations. In any case, after 1903, because of their role in providing vocations to the priesthood, the clergy would be keen to see the Catholic schools continue.

APPENDIX 6: Vocations from our schools (1897-1901) – Page 366

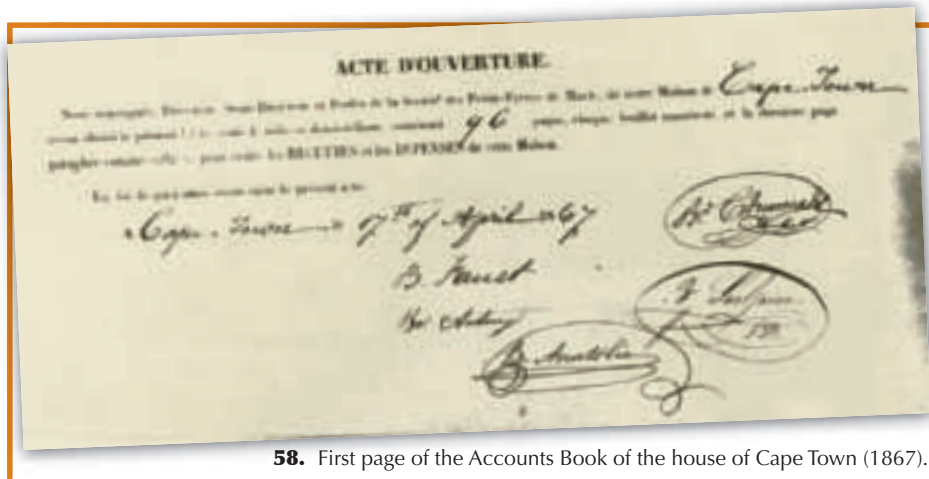
⁷⁹⁹ A.F.M., Enquêtes de 1897-1901.

Missions and internationalisation

According to Brother Stratonique (C XIV, p. 24), Brother Louis-Marie had decided in 1875 to make France proper his priority and it was only in 1884, with the secularisation laws helping, that a systematic policy of expansion overseas began to develop. This policy quite quickly came to be known as “the missions.” We do need to be careful, however, about taking this assertion too literally.

Even during the lifetime of the Founder (in 1836), Brothers had been sent to Oceania, and between 1836 and 1859 a total of 37 Brothers had gone there. When, however, the collaboration with the Marist Fathers proved to be difficult, the departures were stopped. When in 1865 Cardinal Barnabo, Prefect of Propaganda, asked the Brothers to found a mission in Cape Colony, Brother Louis-Marie had no choice but to accede to his request, and on 12th February 1867, five Brothers left for South Africa. The foundation in New Caledonia came about because of a request from the Ministry for the Navy and Colonies, which wanted teaching Brothers for the Administration’s schools. Brother Louis-Marie jumped at the chance because the Ministry would pay the costs of the Brothers’ travel and provide them with a salary once there.⁸⁰⁰ Thus, in 1874 the Brothers opened a school in Nouméa. However, it was not long before they became the butt of harassment from the very anticlerical local government. The triumph of the Republicans in France removed any desire the Superior may have had to invest men in the French colonies. All the same, Algeria, officially part of metropolitan France, did attract foundations because Brothers going there had their time of military service reduced.

This decision to stop sending Brothers to the missions may have been motivated by the difficulties in New Caledonia or in Syria. The Brothers had gone to Syria in 1868, invited by the Jesuits who “had promised mountains and marvels,”⁸⁰¹ but had returned to France in 1875. In these various experiences of distant missions the problem



58. First page of the Accounts Book of the house of Cape Town (1867).

⁸⁰⁰ C. 4, p. 342.

⁸⁰¹ *Abrégé des Annales*, 1868.



59. London, 1892. First residence of the Brothers in England

was always the same; the Brothers were only there to be of service to other missionary orders or to the government. The sole exception to this was South Africa. We will return to this question in Volume 2 of this work.

In fact, although it was not clearly thought of as such at the time, missionary work was already well and truly under way, with the Province of Beau-camps as its starting point. The foundation of this

Province does indeed, to some degree at least, form part of the Institute's missionary history for, although it was founded by Father Champagnat in 1838 at St Paul-sur-Ternoise, for men from the south of France like the Brothers at the Hermitage, it was a far distant place where the customs were quite different. France at this time was still a place very much enclosed within its own regional cultures, and where distances had not yet been reduced by the railways. For a long period of time regular inputs of Brothers from the south would be required to boost Province numbers. Local recruitment grew only slowly, even after the transfer of the Provincial House to Beau-camps. However, Beau-camps was close to Lille, and thus at the crossroads of France, Belgium and England, and not far from Germany. It was so to speak destined for an international vocation.

In response to an appeal from the Marist Fathers, the congregation did indeed make a foundation in London in 1852. It was actually our first school outside of France. In 1858 another foundation was made in Glasgow, and our first foundation in Ireland was made at Sligo in 1862. In 1874, since Brother Louis-Marie had few Brothers who could speak English, a novitiate was established at Dumfries in Scotland. It was destined to provide missionaries and, furthermore, it meant that English speaking candidates no longer had to leave their country and go to Beau-camps.

So, Brother Louis-Marie had not forgotten South Africa or Oceania, but he did not want the Brothers to be tied to the Marist Fathers or to other missionary orders. In 1871 the Brothers set out for Sydney, where in 1872 they opened a school, thus guaranteeing their autonomy. The creation of an Australian novitiate in 1873, allowed that mission to have a secure future for at least the foreseeable future.⁸⁰²

The rapid development in these non-French speaking territories led to the foundation of the Province of the Isles in 1873 with a French Brother, Brother Procopé, as

⁸⁰² On this business of the missions : C. 1, p. 468; C.2, pp. 474-475; C.3, pp. 547, 568-569; C. 4, pp. 480-482; C. 8, p. 468.

Assistant. The Brothers of the Province of the Isles would have preferred Brother Alphonsus (John O'Hara). He was an Irishman who had entered the novitiate at Beaucamps in 1854, and was later Master of Novices for the English speaking novices there, as well as being Visitor for the British Isles. It was he who had translated the Morning and Evening Prayers into English, along with the *Common Rules*, *The Teacher's Guide* and *The Principles of Perfection* during his stay at Beaucamps. Brother Clare, the historian of the Province of the Isles, stresses that Brother Procopé and numerous French Brothers were afraid that too much autonomy would lead to "a comfortable interpretation of the rule [...] and the decline of the Province".

This is confirmed by Brother Norbert in the history of the Province of Beaucamps:

"The Rule – as Brother Pascal, the Assistant at Beaucamps for the British Isles Brothers, had already written – is for all countries, and it must be observed in England the same as in other countries. He put them on their guard against what was called the comfortable, the immoderate use of sugar, jams, etc., which were being allowed under the pretext of being customary in the country."

Nevertheless, Brother Avit (*Annales* 1861, no. 29) emphasises that Brother Procopé, the Assistant for the Isles and a naturalised Englishman who spoke that language "better than the French language" [...] "would not willingly allow any uncomplimentary remark, even the slightest, to be made about these people in his presence."

The other great man of this Province was Brother John, an Irishman born in 1841, who did his novitiate in Beaucamps in 1858 and who, from 1863 to 1873, was successively in charge of two schools in Glasgow. In 1875 he was sent to Australia from 1875 to 1893 and he was to preside over the creation of a Province of Australia, which was erected in 1903. Called back to the British Isles as Provincial, he proceeded over the next four years to embark on a harsh purging of the personnel of the Brothers. In the estimation of the Province historian Brother John refused to give way on any national cultural traits which he saw as signs of decadence. It seems therefore that he had absorbed a certain type of uncompromising Marist spirit, something which the French superiors had manifested before



60. Novitiate of Hunters Hill (Australia) 1878-1906.

him. In 1900, after the death of Brother Procopé, he became the first Assistant who was not a Frenchman, and naturally was given charge of the Province of the Isles. Thus, even before 1884, the theoretical point of departure for a policy of worldwide expansion, the Institute had experienced with the Province of Beaucamps, and then with the British Isles and the British Empire, a missionary development that was also raising some questions for it at a time when the distinction between faith and culture had not yet been thought of.



61. Arlon
(Belgium)

In the early stages at least, this problem was not very much felt in the case of Belgium where, in 1856 at Fleurus and at Montceau-sur-Sambre in 1857, the Province of Beaucamps had established schools which simply continued the French way of doing things. From 1879 there was an acceleration in the rate of new foundations. The establishment at Arlon (1888) was to become a second Beaucamps, and the novitiate there began welcoming candidates from Germany, Luxembourg and Alsace-Lorraine in very great numbers.

The Circular of 10th May 1883 (C. 7, p. 187) gave an account of Brothers sent “to the foreign missions”, that is to say, anywhere outside of Europe, between 1867 and 1883. A total of 78 Brothers had left in 25 separate embarkations, of whom 17 were “of English or Irish origin”. A further 17 others, French or Belgian, had lived in the British Isles and therefore knew English.⁸⁰³ If we add to this number the 37 Brothers who had left for Oceania between 1836 and 1858, as a total it appears very meagre. But we should not let ourselves be deceived; thanks to novitiates founded in Dumfries, Sydney and Arlon, Oceania, the British Isles and Belgium underwent a period of significant development based on local recruitment, which resulted in a rapidly expanding network of schools. Even the Cape Sector (South Africa) had a novitiate with three novices.

That having been said, it is not really adequate to speak of there being a missionary policy in place before 1884. This was rather a case of limited internationalisation. Its starting point was the Province of Beaucamps situated at the juncture of several countries which were likely to request new foundations and to provide many vocations. The decisive factor in the Institute embarking on a programme of internationalisation based on missionary foundations was the anticlerical policies of the Republican government beginning in 1881. Thus, on 14th December 1881, Brother Nestor replied to a request for Brothers from the Apostolic Delegation in Tunisia, that foundations would be envisaged,⁸⁰⁴ “if the Brevet were not required in our schools, and if our subjects

⁸⁰³ C. 7, p. 187.

⁸⁰⁴ A.F.M., Volume of the Letters of the Administration: no. 8123.



62. Founders of Marist Colombia together with Br. Nestor, Superior General

would be dispensed from military service". In 1886, the year in which the ten year commitment to teaching seemed to be less sure, "the decision was taken to send some Brothers to Spain to learn Spanish with a view to establishing a presence there". In 1892, Brother Avit established a clear link between missions in other countries and difficulties in France:

"It took the laws on taxation of schools and military service to make it clear that the only way to preserve the

work of our holy Founder and to save it from the destructive effects of these laws, was to establish it in places beyond their reach."⁸⁰⁵

The congregation began therefore to choose among the very numerous requests for foundations it was receiving from corners of the globe. Between 1884 and 1902 foundations were made almost everywhere, and Brother Théophane undertook a number of journeys around the world. In 1887 he went to the U.S.A. and Canada; in 1892, it was to Tunisia, Algeria and Spain where he visited the first communities of Brothers. In 1894 he travelled as far as to Oceania, visiting the establishments in Australia, New Zealand and New Caledonia. In 1897, he left once again for America, and he delegated Assistants to go to South Africa, Colombia and Brazil.⁸⁰⁶

Nothing speaks more eloquently in this matter than the number of departures for the missions:

DATES	NUMBER OF BROTHERS DEPARTING	ANNUAL AVERAGE
1836-1858	37 ⁸⁰⁷	1.6
1867-1876	38	3.8
1880-1890	154	22
1891-1895	200	40
1895-1900	231	38.5
1901-1902	220	110

⁸⁰⁵ *Abrégé des Annales.*

⁸⁰⁶ C. 7, pp. 355-357; C. 8, pp. 206-220 ; C. 9, pp. 209ff., C. 8, pp. 592,622; C. 9, p. 400.

⁸⁰⁷ Various items of information in C. 5, p. 304.

In 1902⁸⁰⁸ the Institute announced that it had 1655 Brothers in foreign countries, teaching 43,500 pupils in 237 schools. Of these 686 were French. In less than twenty years the congregation had founded 57 schools in America, 32 in the Middle East and Asia, 26 in Oceania and 18 in Africa (16 in Algeria and 2 in South Africa). By contrast, in other parts of Europe there were just 56 additional schools.⁸⁰⁹ It is true that there was wide variation in the solidity of these foundations. In 1902 novitiates were operating in Spain, Canada, Australia, Belgium and South Africa. In other countries, like in Brazil,

Map 13. Development of the province of Constantinople, founded in 1892



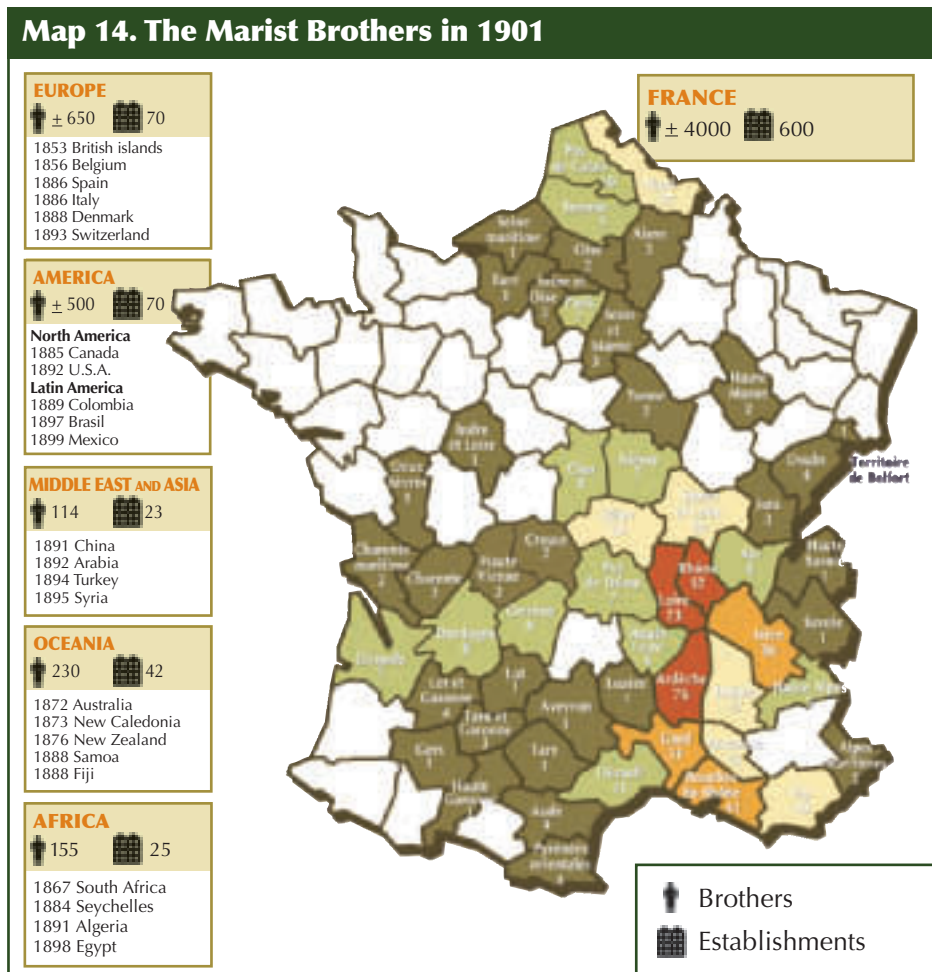
the foundations were too recent to have picked up local recruitment, but there was cause for hope.⁸¹⁰ By contrast, there were some countries, like Turkey or Egypt, where we went without much hope of significant local recruitment, but which were important as places where Brothers could be sent who were liable for military service.

To a greater or lesser degree, the idea of mission therefore tended to form part of a mix of ideas about colonisation, French expansion or internationalisation, and

⁸⁰⁸ C. 10, p. 281.

⁸⁰⁹ C. 13, pp. 372-408 ; C. 10, pp. 291ff.

⁸¹⁰ *Abrégé des Annales*: between May 1883 and May 1891, numbers coming out of the novitiates: St-Genis-Laval – 521 novices of whom 200 were for Bourbonnais, which was to have a novitiate of its own at Varennes-sur-Allier; L’Hermitage – 397; St-Paul-Trois-Châteaux – 433; Aubenas – 242; Beauamps – 283; Lacabane – 112. Outside France: Arlon (Belgium) – 25; Dumfries (Scotland) – 59; Sydney (Australia) – 65; Uitenhage (South Africa) – 4; St-Athanase (Canada) – 36; Mataro (Spain) – in preparation.



even, in the event of persecution in France, with the organisation of places where Brothers could take refuge.

Finances on a very sound footing

This worldwide expansion had been made possible also by the congregation's very real financial strength, arrived at thanks to the adventurous financial policies of Brother Louis-Marie, who had seen the importance of establishing some twenty boarding schools. At the time of his death, his successor *ad interim*, Brother Théophile, calculated that the institute's debts were between 2.5 and 1.7 million francs. Brother Nestor implemented a policy of austerity,⁸¹¹ and by 1883 the debt had been

⁸¹¹ *Abrégé des Annales*, 1880.

reduced to 485,343 f. This pause did not last long however, as in 1883 the Province of l’Ouest began construction of a Provincial House to be called Lacabane. In the Province of Bourbonnais the Provincial House at Varennes-sur-Allier was completed in 1891. The expansion of boarding schools was continued. In 1886 a great deal was spent on two, one at Pont-Sainte-Maxence (Oise) and one in Paris.

During the first eight years of his generalate (1883-1891), Brother Théophane would have spent 2,179,000 francs on all construction work undertaken, whilst in 1891 debts only rose to 1,200,000 francs. Between 1893 and 1903 the Econome General’s Office either bought or constructed further buildings to the value of 3,595,145 francs.⁸¹² A projected budget for 1883 indicates the following for general receipts:⁸¹³

Payments from Provinces	60,165 f.
Boarding schools	237,116 f.
Products (<i>Arquebuse de l’Hermitage</i> ; <i>Biphosphate de chaux</i>)	70,835 f.
School textbooks, royalties from publications	12,500 f.
TOTAL	437,436 f.

The table above highlights the importance of new sources of income. Already, in order to extinguish the congregation’s debts, Brother Louis-Marie had encouraged the production of *Arquebuse* at the Hermitage and the *Biphosphate de chaux* (the medicinal tonic based on calcium biphosphate) at St-Paul-Trois-Châteaux. Sales of these two products, however, did not really come into their own until later. The first was the *Biphosphate*; the *Arquebuse* took longer to take off but in the end it was to prove the more lucrative. Between 1899 and 1901 sales of *Arquebuse*, after all excise duties had been deducted, amounted to 293,146.56 francs per year, whilst those of the *Biphosphate* came to 130,592.59 francs per year.⁸¹⁴ Between them these two activities were bringing in revenue close to that from the boarding schools.

The Brothers also acquired another source of revenue, one more closely related to their vocation, namely, the sale of school textbooks and manuals. In Brother Louis-Marie’s time few texts were produced



63. Brother Théophane

⁸¹² Actes Capitulaires, 1903.

⁸¹³ Actes Capitulaires, 1883.

⁸¹⁴ A.F.M., Drawer France, dossier 1903, affaires commerciales. Drawer K 13-15, dossier 541-43 N 15: sales of liqueur and *Arquebuse*.

because – according to Brother Avit – the Superior wanted to have total control over any works produced. The Institute mainly continued to use the Brothers of the Christian Schools’ textbooks. The only textbook the Institute had of its own was a Grammar composed by Brother Louis-Marie around 1841. It was accompanied by a set of spelling exercises. An Arithmetic book appeared around 1866. It had been written by Brother Marie-Jubin and corrected by the Reverend Brother Superior General, but it was at a level too advanced for the children, and had little success. In 1877 Brother Eubert wrote “*Le Guide de l’enfance*” (The Children’s Guide) to replace the *Bible de Roy-aumont*,⁸¹⁵ which the Inspectors no longer wanted to see used in schools. It enjoyed great success; by 1891 it had been reprinted eleven times. To that we must add the “*Principes de lecture*” (The Principles of Reading), the first edition of which dates from the time of the Founder, which sold widely. Its 35th edition appeared in 1891.

Under Brother Nestor the Brothers were encouraged to produce teaching materials and the results were to make themselves felt after 1883.⁸¹⁶ It gave rise to the F.T.D. collection, so named for the Superior General, Frère Théophile Durand. In just a few years an Arithmetic textbook for the Middle Level had appeared, along with a geography Atlas for the three Primary courses, treatises on Algebra and Geometry, and one on Surveying and Measurement. There was an illustrated History of France (for both the Elementary and Middle Levels), as well textbooks for Physics and Chemistry, a manual on style for the El-

ementary Level and Middle Level, and others besides. In this way the congregation was producing enough textbooks and manuals for its own needs and even to sell to others outside it. The financial return on this operation took some time to be felt; in 1883, the receipts from book sales and royalties had only risen to 12,500 francs, but an agreement arrived at in 1888 with the Lyon publishing house of Emmanuel Vitte⁸¹⁷ permitted a rise in returns to 19,000 francs in 1893, and between 1893 and 1903 sales of school textbooks was bringing in 80,000 francs per year.⁸¹⁸



64. *Nouveaux principes de lecture* (1838). The first edition dates from the time of the Founder. One of its contributions is the way of naming the letters being more attentive to the sonorous or rich image rather than to the name of the spelling.

It was the boarding schools that had become principal source of income for the congregation, although this varied greatly in size.⁸¹⁹ Certain ones like Valbenoîte near St-Etienne had close to 300

⁸¹⁵ A school reader with texts drawn from Sacred History.

⁸¹⁶ C. 7, pp.328, 419; C. 8, pp. 56, 63, 218, 565-566, 727.

⁸¹⁷ Marc Rochet, *La maison Vitte. Une page d’histoire lyonnaise*, distribution by the author, 2011, 387 pages.

⁸¹⁸ Actes capitulaires, 1893.

⁸¹⁹ C. 10, p. 279. In a memorandum written in 1901 to provide the Deputies in Parliament with information on the congregation, the Institute declared it possessed 10 boarding schools with more than 100 pupils boarding, and 30 full time or part time boarding establishments with fewer than 100 pupils boarding.



boarders. Aubenas in Ardèche, Charlieu in Loire, Neuville-sur-Saône near Lyon, St-Genis-Laval, Beaucamps near Lille and Rue Pernety in Paris were of comparable size. However, a network of smaller boarding establishments existed, where daystudents would have constituted a strong minority or even the majority, for example, Beaujeu (Rhône), which had just 65 boarders out of 180 pupils, or even St-Genest-Malifaux with 50 full time boarders, 50 part time boarders and 28 daystudents. Depending on the place, boarding fees varied from 350 francs to 500 francs. The profit per Brother therefore was enormous. The record appears to have been held by the Paris establishment. In 1891, with 38 Brothers on the staff, it posted a profit of 100,202 francs.⁸²⁰ Between 1883 and 1891, St-Genis-Laval, with 12 Brothers, was bringing in an average of 34,875 francs per year. Taken as a whole, the revenue from the boarding schools came to between 500 and 3,000 francs per year.

The situation with the day schools was in complete contrast. The laicisation of the schools meant that the Brothers no longer had the advantage of being state employees, and the committees financing the independent schools were tight with their money. Around the period 1897-1900 salaries were frequently from 650 to 700 francs per Brother.⁸²¹ At best, this sort of income could provide just 100 to 200 francs per Brother to the common fund. Very often the schools made no profit or even ran a deficit.⁸²²

⁸²⁰ *Annales de Beaucamps*, enquêtes de 1901.

⁸²¹ At this time the salaries of teachers in public schools ranged from 800 to 2,000 francs.

⁸²² A.F.M., Register of Deliberations (1880-1889) and the years 1844 and 1888. Drawer K 13-15/541-4 3n15.

History of the Institute

Furthermore, the resources Provinces could call on varied greatly, and by means of these figures we can perceive a whole history of the Institute in France, with the older Provinces combining parish schools and boarding schools, and the newer Provinces offering a complete contrast – Beaucamps situated in a prosperous part of France and supported by a network of boarding schools, and the West and Varennes struggling to break even.

PROVINCE	TOTAL REVENUE PER BROTHER	REVENUE PER BROTHER FROM DAY SCHOOLS
Ouest	127 f.	50 f.
Bourbonnais (Varennes)	127 f.	4 f.
Aubenas	419 f.	18.5 f.
Hermitage	451 f.	50 f.
St-Genis-Laval	590 f.	4.5 f.
St-Paul-Trois-Châteaux	761 f.	53 f.
Nord	1168 f.	78 f.

The congregation therefore had two income streams at its disposal; the boarding schools which were largely bringing in good amounts of revenue and the independent school bringing in very little. There were therefore two complementary aspects in the Institute's response to the Republican challenge, better organised recruitment and formation on the one hand, and a fairly systematic worldwide expansion with as its base a very solid financial position and strong demand. All the same, a part of these resources was coming from commercial activities which had rather little to do with the Institute's primary vocation.

20.

DEALING WITH A MULTI-DIMENSIONAL INTERNAL CRISIS

Deepening the Institute's spiritual life and strengthening its spirit

By driving the religious out of the public school system, the state laicisation policy forced them to become more directly answerable to a society which, even though it was Catholic, treated them as subordinates, even while compelling them to engage in an exhausting competition with the public schools.

From now on, in parishes the Brothers were employees of school committees headed by the parish priest and leading local persons. There was a great deal of variation in how much and how regularly these committees paid the Brothers, even as they were demanding still more services.⁸²³ By way of example, Brother Marie-Eugène, Director of Souvigny from 1887, relates the difficulties he had with the Countess who had founded the school, with the Bishop's Office⁸²⁴ and also with the Municipal Council. This Council was politically Republican and had the surreptitious support of the Administration. In the boarding schools, where the Brothers had to turn their hand to all sorts of tasks, life was quite basic,⁸²⁵ but there at least the Institute could be master in its own house.

In the schools founded by mining or industrial companies, where the school population was made up of the sons of the workers, the situation was even more difficult. The Brothers found themselves facing hostility from the children. Wave after wave of strikes and trade union action had turned the population against anyone who appeared to be in league with the despised boss.⁸²⁶ The biggest complex was at Blanzy and Montceau-les-Mines, in Saône-et-Loire. There the Brothers were staffing all of the boys' schools that belonged to the mining and industrial companies, approximately 2,000 pupils in all.

⁸²³ A.F.M., dossier Br Philogone: letter of Br Assistant to the Very Reverend Brother Joseph, Superior General of the Brothers of the Christian Schools; he notes a tendency on the part of school committees to set congregations competing against each other.

⁸²⁴ A.F.M., dossier COUD. 560/6 n. 2, biography of Coudert Eugène.

⁸²⁵ A.F.M., dossier Desplace Antoine (Br Augustin-Joseph).

⁸²⁶ A. Lanfrey, "Eglise et monde ouvrier: les congréganistes et leurs écoles à Montceau-les-Mines", in *Cahiers d'Histoire*, Vol. XXIII, pp. 51-71.

In addition, the owners of the companies showed little consideration in the way they treated the Brothers. At Montceau, despite many misgivings, the Brothers had to give in to the wishes of the owner, Monsieur Chagot. In 1887 he had started up a number of youth groups, which although theoretically the responsibility of the clergy, ended up in the care of the Brothers. At the school at La Machine, run by the *Compagnie du Creusot*, the demands were even more draconian. The company required the children to be taken for a walk each Thursday and Sunday afternoon, and on Thursday mornings the four top classes had to be given at least one hour of lessons. At Lafarge (Ardèche), in addition to the work in the school, adult classes were being run on Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays for sixty young men. There too a youth club was set up in October 1887, with one Brother set aside to be in charge of it. This club brought together fifteen to thirty young men every evening except Thursdays, occupying them with various musical and sporting activities. It is important, therefore, not to forget that before 1903 the Brothers were already experiencing a great deal of lay control. The schools where they were teaching were now in the hands of eminent personages, who kept a close control over them and often demanded that the schools expand the range of courses they offered – all in the name of competition, of course.

Extracurricular activities as an apostolic ministry

In the industrial centres in particular, the clergy saw no value in having schools and the Brothers were to have bitter experience of their disfavour. At Firminy, an industrial area near St-Etienne, the people used to say, “The priests in the parishes are the friends of the secularisers and the enemies of the Brothers.”⁸²⁷ An evolution in pastoral ministry lay behind this negative attitude. In the eyes of many of the clergy the Catholic school was no longer an adequate response to what was coming to be understood as a process of dechristianisation. What was needed was to substitute extracurricular and post school activities like youth clubs. These would have the advantage of bringing together the children in the public school with those of the Brothers’ school. The Pope himself had given Brother Joseph, Superior General of the Brothers of the Christian Schools, some directions in this sense.⁸²⁸ Just as was the case among the Lasallians, there was great reluctance on the part of the Marist Brothers to move into this new form of apostolate with children. The Superiors were afraid that the Brothers would fall prey to a secular spirit if they became involved in cultural activities like brass bands, theatrical productions, night classes and programmes for post school youth.⁸²⁹ However, they could not remain completely apart from what was beginning to be called “Catholic Action”. It was also happening that in places here or there a Brother, whether a Director or not, and with or without permission from the Superiors, was taking initiatives of his own. In general the Institute refused to take charge of youth clubs and post school activities. Instead most of the time the Brothers settled for helping the parish’s assistant priest, who was the one in

⁸²⁷ *Ibid.*, 213/18.

⁸²⁸ Max Thurman, *Au sortir de l'école, les patronages*, Paris, 1898.

⁸²⁹ A.F.M., Drawer Varennes, dossier Bois-du-Verne.

charge of the group. It was only in his Circular of 24th May 1898 that Brother Théophile recommended works with the youth,⁸³⁰ while reluctantly admitting that the Christian school was no longer sufficient to ensure a complete Christian formation.

The problems with Rome stir up trouble at home

The Superiors, however, were not in a strong position to require the Brothers to maintain a reserved attitude towards these new developments, because the Brothers did not necessarily share their pessimistic politico-religious outlook. Furthermore, the Constitutions had still not received definitive approval from Rome, and the disagreements around this matter were getting worse and were becoming known outside the circle of the Capitulants. At the Chapter of 1883 the Administration was accused of “having concealed the Constitutions that had been approved on a trial basis and [...] until now no one, or almost no one outside the regime of the Institute, would have known anything about them.” Added to that:

“It would have resulted in such a strong feeling of discontent with the Administration that fifteen or twenty of the leading Brothers, and among them some members of the Administration, would be prepared to leave the Institute.”

These accusations were not aimed at Brother Nestor, but essentially at his predecessor and his closest collaborators, among whom, it would seem, was Brother Théophile. Rome then ruled that the trial Constitutions had to be published, which was a partial success for the opposition, but this matter was held to be responsible for the premature death of the Superior General on his return from Rome. The election of Brother Théophile, the most senior Brother in the Administration, reduced to nothing these accusations of discontent within the congregation, and the majority of members of the Chapter decided that a letter of protest be written to the Holy See rejecting these accusations.⁸³¹

The leader of the protest group was Brother Jules. Born at Lambesc (Bouches-du-Rhône) in 1842, he had entered the novitiate at St-Paul en 1857. In 1880 he was Director of one of the congregation’s top boarding schools, Paris-Plaisance. Following that, he was placed in charge of Neuville-sur-Saône, the other leading boarding school. Neither were the three protesting with him any less significant. Once again we find among them Brother Marie-Jubin, who had already been the author of a protest in 1857-1858, and who in 1887 was Vicar Provincial of St-Genis-Laval. Brother Placide was the Visitor for the Province of Nord. Finally, there was Brother Louis-Bernardin, former Director of La Côte-St-André, who was at that moment employed at the Mother House, probably in the office staff.

Despite the smallness of their numbers, they were going to make their voice heard, criticising the opaque organisation of the Chapter and advocating decentralisation,⁸³² but the Chapter did not follow them. Finally, the Superiors published a wa-

⁸³⁰ C. 9, pp. 330, 447.

⁸³¹ As four Capitulants did not append their signatures to the bottom of the document, it seems evident that the plotters had been unmasked.

⁸³² A.F.M., dossier 352-220-1.

tered down version of the Constitutions given by the Holy See.⁸³³ So, once again recourse was had to the Holy See, denouncing the alterations that the Superiors had forced to be made to the Rule, and Brother Théophile would have to justify himself. As for Brother Jules, he was removed from his position in the boarding school at Neuville-sur-Saône and appointed Director of a small school at Pont-de-Claix (Isère). It seems that the other protestors also had to suffer some unpleasant consequences. It is difficult to know how far echoes of these quarrels extended out into the rest of the congregation,⁸³⁴ but the underlying problem was still not settled.

Nevertheless, in 1890 the old question of the manifestation of conscience was settled with the publication by the Sacred Congregation for Bishops and Regulars of the decree *Quaemadmodum* (17th December 1890), which forbade the manifestation of conscience to Superiors of lay congregations, who were often abusing their prerogatives. As a consequence, the regular exchange of correspondence between the Assistants and the Brothers came to a stop.⁸³⁵ The Superiors lamented the loss of such a means of closely following their subordinates, even if at the same time this measure relieved them of an extremely heavy task.

The return of tension-generating situations

The Superiors elected in 1883 found themselves facing a further problem, the ageing of the first generation of Brothers, who were many in number and whose members, now reaching their sixties, occupied important positions. The custom had grown up that once a Brother had been placed in a position of responsibility he kept it for life, unless he proved unworthy or voluntarily resigned, or else was promoted. This tradition was therefore standing in the way of younger and better educated Brothers taking up important posts.

Now, after the Chapter of 1883, there was a concerted action on the part of the Superior General, along with Brother Adon, the new Assistant for the Province of St-Genis-Laval, and Brother Bérillus, Assistant for St-Paul-Trois-Châteaux. In the Province of St-Paul Brother Bérillus, beginning in 1883, secured the resignation of a good number of Brother Directors.⁸³⁶ The same year it was more or less the same scenario in St-Genis-Laval.⁸³⁷ This programme of replacements lasted quite a long time and extended to other Provinces. In the Province of Nord,⁸³⁸ on the eve of the close of the retreat, 28th August 1893, the Reverend Brother Superior General relieved Brother Aidant of his position as Director of the Provincial House at Beaucamps, a post he had held for thirty eight years.

⁸³³ There were numerous copies of these Constitutions in existence. They were in printed fascicules of 29 pages.

⁸³⁴ A.F.M., dossier 352-220-5.

⁸³⁵ A.F.M., Drawer K 14-5, dossier GRO 550-6 n. 2.

⁸³⁶ *Ibid.*, dossier GRO 550-6 n. 2.

⁸³⁷ *Ibid.*, dossier SIR 550-6 n. 10; 6 n. 2.

⁸³⁸ Archives de Beaucamps, BE 1 Annales.

At the Chapter of 1893 there was a revolt on the part of a group of malcontents, directed especially against Brother Bérillus, the Assistant for St-Paul. They had written a protest letter,⁸³⁹ which was communicated to the Superior General on 15th April 1893, three days before the opening of the Chapter. The authors of the letter were Brother Xénophon, Visitor for St-Paul and a delegate to the Chapter, Brother Anaclétus, Provincial Director, Brothers Landolphe and Marcellin, Directors at Péage, Brother Zoël, Director of the important boarding school of Le Luc-en-Provence and finally Brother Jules, a former member of the Province of St-Paul and a long-standing member of the opposition. It was a sort of revolt of the notables and, at the same time, a calling into question of centralised power.

The start of the Chapter was marked by a violent incident, with the Superior General threatening to resign and backing his Assistants against the protest group, who had read out the text of their letter. The government of the Institute finally won the day, but a motion put to the capitulants censuring the manoeuvres that had gone on in the Province of St-Paul, was only carried by a slim majority of 30 votes for and 18 votes against. (The 30 votes for the censure motion included those of the Superior General and his Assistants). As usual this quarrel had taken place behind closed doors, but the accusations and complaints turned up again, and in 1898 the Regime had to respond to new attacks against it, which had been sent to the Sacred Congregation concerning the Constitutions and an overcentralised system of government.⁸⁴⁰

New norms from Rome and the Waldeck-Rousseau Law

Very quickly, however, the Superiors were obliged to abandon their determination to maintain the status quo. There were two causes for this; first of all, in 1900 Rome published the constitution *Conditae a Christo* on congregations with simple vows. Then in 1901⁸⁴¹ the “Norms for the approbation of new Institutes” imposed on congregations wishing to be approved a precise form of Constitutions. These norms did not please the Superiors as they were in line with the Roman position which they had been battling for forty years. Under these conditions, what would they be able to do in 1903 to secure a renewal of the provisional approval of the Institute’s Constitutions?

For the first time there was a split within the bloc of Assistants. Brother Stratonique, at least from 1901, opted for a decentralised system of government based on Provinces governed by Provincials.⁸⁴² The reason he gave was that the Assistants were no longer able to keep up with their task. On 24th November 1902 he refused to sign a new “petition to the Holy Father to obtain the definitive approbation of the Constitutions”, signed by the Superior General and six Assistants.

⁸³⁹ A.F.M., dossier STP 631-2, An unsigned copy of this protest letter.

⁸⁴⁰ A.F.M., dossier 355/1,2 or Registre des projets de constitutions 3, doc. 103.

⁸⁴¹ *Encyclopédie, “Catholicisme”,* Vol. 3, p. 128.

⁸⁴² A.F.M., dossier 353-1-4. Draft of a letter addressed to Brother Théophile (March 1901). Other than that, the idea of decentralising was in the air. In 1899, (document 353-1-2), Brother Romain, former Provincial Director and Master of Novices, advocated a gradual handing over more power to Provincial Directors.

However, a far more serious problem had arisen. On 2nd July 1901 the Waldeck-Rousseau Law was passed. This Law granted the right to all citizens the right to form associations, but created an exception in the case of religious congregations. They would have to be authorised by an act of Parliament, and no new establishment could be set up without a decree of authorisation. From that moment on, the Little Brothers of Mary were wondering if they needed to seek authorisation. Since the Council of State had only recognised as valid the authorisations granted previously to five men's congregations (Brothers of the Christian Schools, the Society of Foreign Missions, the Vincentians, Sulpicians and Holy Spirit Fathers), they resolved to seek recognition. The arrival of the Combes ministry, however, meant that from 1902 onwards any hope that the Institute might get out of the situation lightly was utterly annihilated.⁸⁴³

The Chapter of 1903 – decentralisation in an atmosphere of catastrophe

On the matter of the Constitutions therefore, the Superior General and his Council reversed their strategy because, now that it was under threat from the State, the congregation had to receive its definitive approbation from Rome. The Congregation of Bishops and Regulars was therefore asked for a rapid examination of a new set of Constitutions consisting of 150 articles set out in conformity with the Roman norms of 1901, so that they could be approved by the next General Chapter. With these Constitutions the Superiors finally accepted a system of government based on Provinces, and election of a Superior General for a limited term and not for life.

It was in an atmosphere of catastrophe that the Chapter opened on 20th April 1903.⁸⁴⁴ As Brother Théophile wished, and without any real debate, the Chapter voted to approve the Constitutions and elected the Superiors in accordance with the new Constitutions, despite the lively protestations of one Brother. Thus a quarrel that had lasted forty years was theoretically ended just as a Decree of Dissolution hit the congregation in France. The least that can be said is that the government of the Institute had not been a shining example of transparency.

A general crisis for the teaching congregations?

Almost all congregations were in difficulties at the same time, not only because of the government's policy of extermination but also because, while they felt the need for reform, they had no clear idea as to which direction that reform should go. Rev. Father Lecanuet has recounted the history of Mother Marie du Sacré Cœur, a Religious of Notre Dame who, having become aware of the weak formation being given to Sisters in the teaching congregations, envisaged the foundation of "a teaching training centre where members of teaching orders, especially from the small convents in the provinces,

⁸⁴³ Antoine Prost, *L'enseignement en France, 1800-1967*, Armand Colin, Collection U, Paris 1970.

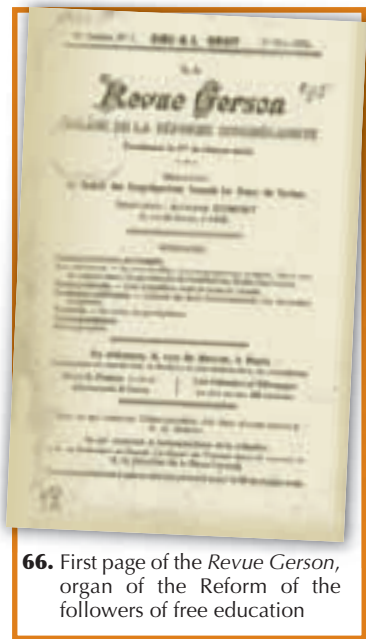
⁸⁴⁴ A.F.M., dossier 353-1-13, letter of 14th May 1903.

could send their most promising members to prepare for their future ministry.”⁸⁴⁵ Prevented by several Bishops from founding her project, she published a book entitled *Les religieuses enseignantes et les nécessités de l’apostolat*⁸⁴⁶ (Teaching Sisters and the needs of the Apostolate), with the imprimatur of Bishop Sueur, the Bishop of Avignon.

It was an explosive work. Comparing the religious congregations’ boarding schools with the State lycées, it demonstrated clearly the inferiority of the education being offered by the teaching congregations. The press got hold of the story, and a section of the episcopate supported it, along with some leading Catholic intellectuals. Finally, on 27th March 1899, Rome, while fully recognising the rightness of the author’s intentions, censured her book. She then founded an institution in Paris but died in an accident on 6th July 1901.

A somewhat similar case can be found among the teaching Brothers. In 1894 an ex-De la Salle Brother, Firmin Counort, published a book entitled *Un pensionnat de frères sous la III^e République* (A Brothers’ boarding school under the Third Republic), denouncing the authoritarianism of the Superiors and the poor way the boarding schools were run, and calling for a reform of his Institute. The affair settled down until in 1898 Counort wrote a new book, *A travers les pensionnats de frères* (Across Brothers’ boarding schools),⁸⁴⁷ which repeated his previous accusations in more detail and called for reforms, in particular for a democratisation of the Institute.

In its wake came a tougher and more widely based committee,⁸⁴⁸ formed in 1895 and composed of members of several Brothers congregations. It published *Frère Malapion ou les frères congréganistes sous la III^e République* (Brother Malapion or Religious Brothers under the Third Republic), denouncing the shortcomings of the Brothers’ congregations and advocating radical reforms: Constitutions had to be revised, all minor novitiates and juniorates closed and the religious habit done away with, as not suited to the times. Election of the Superior General would be by all the Brothers, the vows suppressed, and so on. Basically, it was a call for “the free Brother in a free congregation.” At the conclusion of the work, the committee announced the appearance of “*La Revue Gerson*” (The Gerson Review), the organ of the Reform of Reli-



66. First page of the *Revue Gerson*, organ of the Reform of the followers of free education

⁸⁴⁵ E. Lecanuet, *L’Eglise de France sous la 3^{ème} République. La vie de l’Eglise sous Léon XIII*, Paris, 1930, pp. 282-295.

⁸⁴⁶ See also Mme D’Adhemar, *Une religieuse réformatrice, la Mère Marie du Sacré-Cœur*, Paris, Bloud.

⁸⁴⁷ P. Zind has collected an oral tradition concerning this production. Brother Bertholier (Louis-Salvatoris ?) stated that it had been put together by some ex-Marist Brothers who had teamed up with some ex-De La Salle Brothers.

⁸⁴⁸ This movement had in fact preceded the book by Br Algis, because the *Revue Gerson*, its organ, existed before his book of 1894 sold “At la revue Gerson”.

gious Brothers teaching in the free (that is, independent) schools. Seven issues appeared from May 1895 to 10th March 1896. Its tone was becoming more and more violent and its projects more and more whacky. The review was of interest to the Marist Brothers because, out of the 111 pages of the review, thirty were given over to them.

The criticisms were divided between two articles. The first, entitled “Le bagne de St-Genis-Laval” (The prison camp at St-Genis-Laval) accused Brother Théophile of being too authoritarian and being under the thumb of the Jesuits;⁸⁴⁹ of diverting the Institute from its proper purpose by setting up industries (the *Arquebuse* and the *Biphosphate de Chaux*), and squandering the congregation’s money on gifts to the Holy See (on his visits to Rome). He, however, was not the only one in the firing line. His two assistants were there too, Brothers Adon and Bérillus, as well as other Brothers from the Administration at St-Genis-Laval. The second article was called “Cahiers congréganistes No. 1: Institut des Petits Frères de Marie” (Notes on the congregations No. 1 : the Institute of the Little Brothers of Mary). It mainly concentrated on the affair of the Constitutions spoken about above, and gave a great deal of detail.

This initiative, utopian as it may have been, revealed a real depth of malaise within the congregations and in particular the Marist Brothers. The last traces of this movement can be seen in the book by a certain Auguste Dumont: “*Les dossiers congréganistes: La Morale de ces messieurs; Roman psychologique de mœurs congréganistes*” (The congregational dossiers: the Morality of these gentlemen; a psychological novel on the practices of religious Brothers), a badly written anticlerical novel exploiting documents originating with the Marist Brothers. Using pseudonyms, it attacked Brothers Théophile (Brother Prosper), Adon (Magelon) and Bérillus (Satanius).

Strengthening and renewing Marist identity

The Superiors were far from settling for measures of this administrative type which, after all, were defensive. Reference has already been made to the measures taken by Brother Nestor between 1880 and 1883, and to the establishment of special schools, soon called scholasticates, where Brothers could prepare for their exams. On a more strictly spiritual level, in 1884, just as the full effects of the laicisation laws were being felt, recruitment had dropped sharply and there were many departures, the Superiors established the Exercises of St Ignatius on a trial basis for Brothers wishing to make their Perpetual Profession. During the school holidays, ninety three Brothers gathered in the boarding school at La Côte-St-André (Isère) and followed the Exercises, preached by Father Siveton SJ. The Superiors were so happy with the result that they established the practice permanently.⁸⁵⁰

In 1885 they decided to re-establish the Retreat of the Third Year,⁸⁵¹ a practice which some fifteen to twenty years earlier had functioned under Brother Jean-Baptiste’s

⁸⁴⁹ Probably because Brother Théophile had organised the Great Exercises of St Ignatius and begun a second novitiate.

⁸⁵⁰ C. 7, pp. 203, 217, 233; A.F.M., *Registre des projets de constitutions* 3: Letter of Br Théophile to Cardinal Howard, 28th September 1886.

⁸⁵¹ C. 7, p. 233.

direction but which had been dropped after some years.⁸⁵² Seventy Brothers, Directors and Professed, from the principal houses of the Provinces of Centre and Midi, were thus brought together at Bourg-de-Péage (Drôme) from 23rd August to 30 September.⁸⁵³ Subsequently, Professed Brothers were brought together in various boarding schools (Paris-Breteuil, Bourg-de-Péage, La Valla, St-Didier-sur-Chalaronne) to immerse themselves in the Great Exercises of St Ignatius and renew their fervour. These retreats were often preached by Father Combaluzier SJ.

In October 1897 the second novitiate was started at St-Genis-Laval.⁸⁵⁴ The Professed Brothers called to this formation had as their mission “to instruct themselves more perfectly in the duties of the religious life, to renew their spirit of piety and in particular to form themselves to solid virtue”. We will come back to this initiative which did not reach its full development until the Twentieth Century. In regard to the novitiate itself, a Circular from Brother Théophane in 1898⁸⁵⁵ recommended that it last two years and that secular studies not exceed two hours per day. It would then be completed by a period in the scholasticate.

The opening of the Diocesan Process in 1888 as the first step in the cause of canonisation of Father Champagnat was another feature of this same effort to strengthen the Marist identity. The decree from Rome in 1896, declaring Father Champagnat Venerable, was the occasion for numerous ceremonies and for the publication of a volume of *Panegyriques allocutions et discours* (Panegyrics, Allocutions and Discourses) and of a new edition of the *Life* of Father Champagnat in 1897.⁸⁵⁶

In addition, although the Circulars of Brother Théophane, which were mainly accounts of his travels, were far from doctrinally comparable with those of Brother Louis-Marie, he did publish collections of the Circulars of his predecessors in two volumes. The volume published in 1885 (492 pages) took up Brother François’ Circular on the Spirit of Faith plus eleven others by Brother Louis-Marie on the Rule, Piety, Charity and the formation of the Brothers. It constituted a veritable synthesis of Marist spirituality, according to Brother Théophane. At the same time it was a response to the needs of the times. The collection published in 1900 (623 pages) contained the great Circulars of Brother Louis-Marie from the period 1872 to 1879. Thus, by the start of the Twentieth Century a body of solid and easily accessible doctrine was now readily available to the Brothers. In the area of their teaching a new edition of *The Teacher’s Guide*, published in 1891, had removed from the text archaic elements like “The method of sharpening pens”, since metal nibbed pens had long ago replaced goose feathers. It had also removed references to corporal punishments like the *férule*.

⁸⁵² A.F.M., actes du chapitre de 1883.

⁸⁵³ C. 8, pp. 103, 221, 502; C. 9, pp. 132, 401.

⁸⁵⁴ C. 9, p. 222.

⁸⁵⁵ A.F.M., dossier 541-413 n. 62.

⁸⁵⁶ Lyon, imprimerie X. Levain, 1897, 434 pages ; Lyon, E. Vitte, 1897, 647 pages.

A renewed emphasis on the biographies of the deceased Brothers

The relaunch of the biographies of deceased Brothers was another part of this effort to enhance the value of the Marist identity. However, before speaking about this in the period under discussion, it would be useful to recall the broad lines of what the practice of this literary genre had been in the Institute. The first medium used for this practice was the Circulars. Very succinct accounts were given of the last illness and holy death of the more noteworthy Brothers (Brother Dorothée in 1837, Brother Louis in 1847, and so on). When Brother Stanislas died in 1854, his death notice could be more truly seen as a biographical pen portrait, in which he was presented as a model of constancy (C. II, pp. 178-184). The death of Brother Bonaventure in 1886 was the occasion of a new stage, as Brother Louis-Marie himself devoted some twenty pages to an account of his life (C. III, pp. 277-296). This concern to provide at least an outline of a deceased Brother's life became more acute as more and more of the early Brothers began to die. As in the case of Father Champagnat, the notification of the death of the Assistant, Brother Pascal, in the Circular of 19th July 1867, was accompanied by a request for testimonies and documentation with a view to writing his biography.

The edifying life of Brother Pascal did in fact appear shortly after, but not in the Circulars. Instead it appeared in 1868 in Brother Jean-Baptiste's work, the *Biographies de quelques frères*. In a single step we moved from biographical notices of a few pages to a work of 477 pages. As a work, it was somewhat of a mixture. First came biographies of sixteen Brothers (with two for Brother Louis). Several of these Brothers had already benefitted from the other type of biographical notice. Then came a chapter on "The Infirmary or the grace of a happy death", in which twenty one Brothers are mentioned. A final chapter entitled "The root of solid virtue", that is, the love of one's vocation, consisted of short biographies of five Brothers. Thus, while using a number of somewhat different approaches, out of a total of almost 600 Brothers who had died (*Biographies*, p. 421), this work was preserving the memory of forty three of them.

In writing an entire book on deceased Brothers, not all of whom had known the Founder, Brother Jean-Baptiste was making a strong statement about the continuity of the spirit of the origins. At the same time, it was a memorial to the primitive Marist spirit, and an invitation to preserve the heritage, not only by a saintly death but also by a life lived in conformity with the Marist ideal. After the *Biographies* in 1868 the Circulars continued the former tradition for a time, notably in April 1872 (C. IV, pp. 239-306) with Brother Louis-Marie's biography of Brother Jean-Baptiste. After 1878, however, mentions of deceased Brothers were becoming rarer. The deaths of Brother Louis-Marie in 1879 and Brother François in 1881 scarcely elicited any call for testimonies and documentation in order to prepare future biographies. The search was on for a new formula and a new medium for a literary genre that no longer seemed to be valued.

Starting in 1892 compilations of biographies of recently deceased Brothers began to appear annually. Sixty six of these were selected by the Institute to create a collection of biographies of Brothers who had died between 1890 and 1899. This collection was published in 1900.⁸⁵⁷ A valuable index at the end of the work provides us with a

⁸⁵⁷ Published in Lyon at the house of E. Vitte.

succinct resume on each Brother. Thus, ten are declared to be “disciples of Father Champagnat”, because they had entered the Institute before 6th June 1840. Twenty five (among them most of the “disciples”) were men who had taken the vow of Stability. Each notice gave information on the Brother’s character, his virtues, more rarely his spiritual life, and often carried an overall assessment of his reputation as well. Thus for Brother Avit, the first on the list:

NAME	QUALITIES	VIRTUES	DEVOTION	GENERAL OPINION
1. Br Avit (1819-1892)	Active, with a gift for originality and sharp comments	Simple, upright, pious, regular		An excellent religious

As it was a question of highlighting the exemplariness of the Brothers, each of them was endowed with a certain number of virtues, the most frequently cited of which were:

Piety	34
Attachment, devotedness to the Institute, to his employment, generosity , esteem for his vocation	30
Regularity	26
Zeal (education, vocations, formation)	18
Family spirit, good spirit, cheerfulness, joy	17
Respect, love for Superiors, obedience	13
Gentleness, kindness, charity	11
Patience in illness, spirit of sacrifice, mortification	11

This list closely matches the qualities of a good Marist Brother listed in *The Manual of Piety*. As to the Brothers’ inner spiritual life these biographies contain little information, but this lack is made up for by the overall comment offered on each one:

NAME	OVERALL COMMENT
1. Br Avit (1819-1892)	Excellent religious
4. Br Marie-Protais (1822-1891)	Left a memory of sanctity wherever he passed
5. Br Marie-Lin (1813-1891)	True Little Brother of Mary. Left behind him the sweet smell of sanctity
6. Br Jean-Pierre (1815-1891)	Model for Brothers in manual employment
7. Br Romanus (1824-1891)	Model of devotedness to the Institute
8. Br Alphontius (1836-1891)	Model of zeal and devotedness to the Institute
18. Br Albert Dominic (1861-1892)	Could serve as a model for missionary Brothers
22. Br Malachie (1811-1894)	Called the Saint. Model for the Brothers of Mary in all kinds of positions and in the practice of all the virtues
23. Br Liborius (1819-1894)	A faithful copy of the virtues of Br Malachie.
25. Br Jean-Claude (1809-1894)	Model for Brothers in manual employment

NAME	OVERALL COMMENT
30. Br Philogone (1826-1895)	A faithful copy of the Ven. Fr Champagnat, model for Brothers in all kinds of positions
31. Br Marie-Candide (1856-1895)	Missionary Brothers have in him a perfect model
27. Br Onésiphore (1821-1894)	A saintly religious, making religion something lovable
33. Br Athanasius (1851-1895)	Model for Brothers in all kinds of employment, in health as well as in sickness
34. Br Marie-Pétras (1871-1895)	Model for novices and for Brothers on military service
35. Br Benoît-Joseph (1815-1895)	Recalled the first days of the Institute
37. Br Joseph-Francis-Xavier (1851-1895)	Excellent model of the missionary Brothers
39. Br Adelphe (1817-1896)	Model of the humble and hidden life
40. Br Ambroise (1819-1896)	Excellent model of all the religious virtues
46. Br Amétus (1869-1896)	Perfect religious
47. Br Azarias (1831-1896)	At Notre-Dame de l'Hermitage he was venerated by all as a saint
48. Br Polyeuacte (1839-1896)	Accomplished religious
49. Br Sébastiani (1839-1897)	Interior religious
50. Br Engelbert (1825-1897)	A model religious
51. Br Ulbert (1835-1898)	Excellent missionary Brother
52. Br Henri-Désiré (1869-1898)	Model for Brothers on military service
54. Br Gonzalve (1826-1897)	Excellent model for Brothers employed in manual work
63. Br Epiphane (1844-1891)	Beautiful example to propose to Brothers in different positions
66. Br Aggée (1848-1898)	Excellent religious. He was involved in the preparation of a number of our school textbooks

Brother Avit had a sharp tongue and his biographer took care to give large extracts from his personal notes, the tone of which was very different from that of his other writings:

“With the grace of my Beloved, and of your constant help, O sweet Mother: 1. I will advance in the love of my Jesus and in yours, by following my Rule to the letter, in the company of and under the auspices of the Holy Family of Nazareth. 2. I will make every effort to acquire in particular humility, love of prayer and silence, purity, Poverty and obedience; 3. I will take great care with my Communions, and each time, I will remind myself that my Beloved comes to me with an ardent desire to do good to me, to bear witness to his love for me... [...]. 4. I will carry out the duties of my employment with ever growing devotedness [...]; 5. You will be the one who in charge of my treasure, O good Mother, and you will do what you wish with the merits of the good works that I will do through you and with you,” [...]

Brother Avit also reveals in his personal notes that he was a great reader of the *Imitation of Christ* and confesses to having felt deeply moved by the life of Blessed Margaret Mary, and in particular by “her ardent love for that loving Heart, her outstanding humility, her perfect obedience and her insatiable love of sufferings and humiliations”. (He is referring to the now Saint Margaret Mary Alacoque, the Visitation nun of Paray-le-Monial, who received revelations concerning the Sacred Heart in 1673). Also, from 1864 he always wore a crucifix next to his heart. In his notes from the retreat of 1882, when he was almost blind, he wrote the following:

“I accept my painful infirmity, and all that it may please you to send me, O my God, so that I may conform myself to your adorable will, following the example of my Lord Jesus. O my good Mother, bless my resolution and obtain for me the grace never to fail in it. Keep me in spirit at Nazareth, or before the tabernacle, or at Bethlehem, or on Calvary.”

Insights of this sort into a very Christological and Marial spirituality were rare in the biographies. We might suspect as well, that Brother Avit’s biographer gave these extracts to correct a reputation he had acquired of not being a very spiritual man. Nevertheless, here and there some snippets of information can be gleaned on the spiritual life of this or that Brother. Thus, we learn that Brother Jean-Pierre (1815-1891) made his Stations of the Cross daily, that Brother Héliodorus read St Francis de Sales’ *Treatise on the Love of God*, and that Brother Adelphe (1817-1896) was a great reader of the Circulars and the books of the Institute.

In these biographies, there is no lack of Assistants (Brothers Avit, Eubert, Philogone), Visitors, Vicar Provincials and Masters of Novices, but space was also made for Brothers engaged in manual work (Brother Jean-Pierre, a tailor, Brother Optacien, and others), young Brothers subject to military service (Brother Henri-Désiré), to Brothers who had left France for the mission fields (Brother Jules-Raphaël and others) and for the sick Brothers. Evidently, there were many teachers among them. The biographies occasionally stress the veneration that was manifested on the occasion of their death, as in the case of men like Brother Tertullien at St Rambert. Brothers who were not French also featured in the list, for example, Brother Albert Dominic, born in Ireland, Brother Kenny, an Englishman, and Brother Joseph Francis Xavier, an Australian. In short, the function of these biographies was the same as that of the *Life* of the Founder. It was to offer to the Brothers models for all the various types of life in the Institute. The difference was that these were men who died recently, and their biographies were celebrating their fundamental equality at the level of their virtue. It was a history of the illustrious men of the congregation, illustrious not so much because of the brilliance of their accomplishments but because of the brilliance of their sanctity. All the same, since the intimately personal qualities of their spiritual life do not feature greatly, apart from some exceptions as in the case of Brother Avit. Thus, what we have here is a phenomenology of Marist sanctity, based on a list of virtues, rather than a precise spirituality.

From a purely historical point of view, these biographies teem with highly valuable information. For example, Brother Firmin, who died in 1893, was the postulant hesitating about his vocation spoken of in the *Life* of Champagnat, and who began his novitiate in 1840. The life of Brother Malachie (1811-1894) gives us a description of life at La Bégude over the course of fifty years. In the life of Brother Basile (1814-1897) we learn much about the missions in New Zealand, and there are others.

Brother Aggée's biography reminds us that he was one of the great authors of the textbooks used in the congregation's schools. The most astonishing, perhaps, is the biography of Brother Marie-Lin (1813-1891). He was first a Director, then head of a district, then Master of Novices and regularly a capitulant, but he had been relegated to the tiny school of Beacroissant in Isère for thirty nine years, because he had been among those opposing measures at the Chapter of 1852-1854.

A third volume on the deceased Brothers was in the course of preparation, but all that appeared were the first instalments for Brothers who had died between 1899 and 1901,⁸⁵⁸ some twenty three biographies, a few of them very detailed, particularly when it came to former Superiors (Brother Norbert with 31 pages). Certain of them give us a lot of information on the life of a District or a Province, for example Brother Procopé and the Province of the Isles; Brother Louis-Antonio and the District of New Caledonia; Brother Aidant and Beaucamps, and there are others as well. More than in the preceding series we see in detail the internationalisation of the congregation, notably in the case of the biographies of the Brothers in China. Here and there private reflections and notes, along with their correspondence, delineate the particular features of the spirituality of one or another. Thus, the biography of Brother Cléomène, Director of the Juniorate, highlights the originality of a very controversial educator, and even formulates a theory of spiritual biography that breaks out of the usual pattern of systematic edification.

Finally, this last volume leads us into the Twentieth Century. We see Directors facing the laicisation of their schools in France, Brother Norbert struggling in Paris during the Prussian siege of the city in 1870 and risking his life at the time of the Commune in 1871. Further afield, we see Brother Louis-Antonio in New Caledonia having to deal with an administration dominated by Freemasons, and above all the Brothers in Peking, French and Chinese, dying of typhus or being killed during the Boxer Rebellion.

At the dawn of the Twentieth Century, then, by means of better intellectual formation in the scholasticates, more thorough spiritual formation both initial and ongoing, a powerful reactivation of the memory of the Founder, and even by means of the Collections of Circulars and the Biographies of the deceased Brothers, the Institute had succeeded in confronting and dealing with a serious internal crisis. The attack from outside experienced in 1903, has tended too much to obscure this change and negate the importance of what it had achieved. By this time, however, this internal transformation was sufficiently well advanced for the Institute to be able to put up a more than honourable resistance to what was to come.

⁸⁵⁸ Often in the communities the Brothers had these instalments bound, so in effect they became a third volume.

21.

SECULARISATION (1902-1906)

Aggression by the State and the unfinished debate on the identity of the apostolic religious

By the Law of 1st July 1901, the government of Prime Minister René Waldeck-Rousseau obliged all non-authorized congregations to lodge an application for authorisation by Act of Parliament within three months. The Marist Brothers were in that situation because the Council of State had decreed that the only authorized congregation of Brothers was that of the Brothers of the Christian Schools.⁸⁵⁹ Thus, their recognition as an association of public utility, obtained in 1851, was no longer valid.

Sacrificing the religious to save the Catholic school

What approach should the Institute take? Should we, like the Jesuits, refuse to apply for authorisation and, without waiting, disperse or go into exile? Could we consider a policy of resistance to the law? The congregation, like many others, followed the advice of the committee of Catholic legal experts headed by Baron de Mackau.⁸⁶⁰ This committee had been defending the congregations since 1880,⁸⁶¹ and its view was that the congregations should apply for authorisation.

This committee also took the position that, if the congregations were dissolved, the laicisation of its members should be real, and that there should be no retention of congregational links. As a precaution the ex-religious would request a letter of laicisation from the Bishop. Community life must cease but individuals, “in the internal forum”, would be able to continue fulfilling their spiritual obligations as religious, because acts carried out in isolation could not attract any charges of re-establishing the congregation. In regard to the schools of the congregations, if the request for authorisation were to be rejected, they must have a director ready beforehand, and all legal declarations in place, for him or her to take over from the one leaving.

For its part, on 23rd January 1902 the Council of State declared that any establishment where religious were teaching would be considered to be a congregational

⁸⁵⁹ Consultation of 16/01/1901.

⁸⁶⁰ A.F.M., Register of deliberations (1897-1906).

⁸⁶¹ A.N., 156 API 187 dossier 2.

school, “irrespective of who the owner may be or the person renting the buildings or the method by which the teaching personnel are remunerated”. This meant that religious would not be able to withdraw in a more or less fictitious fashion by placing the direction of their establishments in the hands of persons other than themselves.

A death sentence executed in several stages

Despite these menacing threats, teaching in the independent schools continued as usual. The vast majority of congregations had lodged their applications for authorisation in the hope of seeing their previous authorisation confirmed, but at the beginning of June 1902, the Prime Minister, Emile Combes, put together a ministry, fully determined to finish off the congregations once and for all. On 17th June, fifteen days after constituting his cabinet, a decree was issued ordering the closure of 135 establishments that had been opened after 1st July 1901 without authorisation.⁸⁶² In July, 2,500 independent schools, in general in the hands of religious Sisters, opened before 1901 (and therefore not subject to authorisation by decree), were closed by order of a simple ministerial circular. This act violated the principle of non-retrospectivity of laws,⁸⁶³ but the Sisters in the schools let themselves be intimidated by a government, which was showing itself extremely zealous in the application of the circular. Rather than staying put and resisting, they took refuge in their Mother Houses, making legal resistance impossible.⁸⁶⁴ Here we have all the ingredients of the history of the suppression of the religious congregations, namely, arbitrary government action employed by an administration to systematically intimidate congregations that were divided and psychologically ill-equipped to resist.

Dismayed by the congregations’ lack of resourcefulness and willingness to put up a fight, the leaders of the Catholic cause made defending the Catholic schools their priority, without concerning themselves too greatly with the fate of the orders.⁸⁶⁵ Hence, the Société Générale d’Education et d’Enseignement, the principal body supporting Catholic education, thought of calling on lay teachers, supported by associations, who could replace the religious in order to defend the schools and keep them running.⁸⁶⁶ Thus the year 1904 became the great moment when a system of independent Catholic education was established. Between 1901 and 1906 the number of pupils in religious order schools fell from 1,257,000 to 188,000, whilst the independent schools, often now in the hands of ex-religious, picked up 695,000 pupils. Thus, religiously affiliated schools would on the whole have lost just a little less than a third of their enrolment,⁸⁶⁷ and the Société Générale d’Education could well have been rather satisfied with that result, except that in the meantime the religious congregations had been sacrificed.

⁸⁶² Louis Caperan, *L’invasion laïque*, Paris, 1935, pp. 26-27.

⁸⁶³ Antoine Prost, *op. cit.*, p. 207.

⁸⁶⁴ Bulletin de la Société Générale d’Education et d’Enseignement (S.G.E.E.), 1902, p.635.

⁸⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, September 1902.

⁸⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 1902, pp. 98, 290, 555, 894.

⁸⁶⁷ Antoine Prost, *op. cit.*, p. 208.

The Republican State's determination to exterminate the congregations cannot fully explain how in just a few years it had been able to carry out this execution. There were also internal weaknesses within the congregations, and first and foremost among them their lack of unity, brought about by the fact that the situations they were in varied widely. Indeed, what common measure could be applied to groups like the Jesuits, the first ones in the firing line, the Brothers of the Christian Schools, an authorised congregation, unauthorised congregations of priests like the Marist Fathers, and a group like the Marist Brothers, with its official recognition as an association of public utility? Among the religious Sisters, the situation varied even more widely.

Already in 1895, with the matter of the Right of Accrual,⁸⁶⁸ the religious orders had demonstrated their inability to maintain a common front.⁸⁶⁹ In 1898 Brother Théophane had headed a movement for consultations between Brothers' groups and two inter-congregational meetings had been held, the first in Paris at Notre Dame du Sacré-Coeur, the Marist Brothers' boarding school at 48 rue Pernety, and the second in 1901 at St-Genis-Laval. However, no concerted plan of action was arrived at,⁸⁷⁰ and the meetings ceased.

After 1902 congregations that had not applied for authorisation broke up. When a congregation had no juridical status, the government, without any clear legal justification, adopted a single line of conduct; if any of its former members engaged in a form of common life or work, they were to be prosecuted for the crime of reconstituting their congregation.⁸⁷¹ Furthermore, instructions issued by the Ministry for Public Worship recommended that the systematic implementation of secularisation begin.⁸⁷² Nevertheless, interpretations varied as we learn from the Deputy Chesnelong, a Catholic, in June 1903:

"There are Departments where the secularisation of the entire staff of a school is carried out right there and then; in other Departments the administration is exercising a good deal of latitude in regard to the secularised Sisters, but on condition that those in charge of the schools be moved to other places; finally there are some where the way the secularised Sisters are being hunted down is truly appalling."

In the month of June 1903, on the eve of their dispersal, the men's congregations might have considered that the choice for secularisation was risky, since it could expose them to the risk of prosecution, but from a juridical point of view it was defensible.

⁸⁶⁸ The press reports indicate, however, that there were attempts to arrive at a common policy. *Le Figaro* of 26th January 1903, quoted in the *Bulletin des congrégations* No. 368, claimed that "the congregations have taken a definitive resolution." They had decided unanimously to allow themselves to be arrested and removed by force. *Le Temps* of 27th January also noted this decision to resist in the case of a wholesale rejection. The article made clear, however, that the Brothers' congregations had not participated in that meeting.

⁸⁶⁹ In June 1894, Cardinal Séraphino Vannutelli, the Apostolic Nuncio, had suggested that the Brothers unite, but this did not succeed because of the refusal of the De La Salle Brothers. The Cardinal, who in the meantime had become Prefect of the Sacred Congregation of Bishops and Regulars, had more success despite a second refusal on the part of the Lasallians.

⁸⁷⁰ A.F.M., dossier 441/3 n. 2.

⁸⁷¹ Circular from the Minister of Justice to Procurators General on the application of the Law of 10/07/1901, quoted in the Jesuit review *Les Etudes*, Vol. 89, p. 117.

⁸⁷² A.N. F17 12 405: Replies from the Prefects (of Departments) to the circular of 4th August 1906; 156 API 192: Letter of 6th June to Baron de Mackau.

Anyway, if they wanted to save their works in France, it was the only solution. The men's congregations, more and more certain that their application for authorisation would be refused, could look at three solutions: resistance, which consisted in taking no notice of the law, even if it meant suffering the consequences; secularisation, which would allow them to keep their educational works; and finally, exile, which would safeguard their principles and the existence of their congregation, but at the price of sacrificing their works and their property. A vigorous argument ensued in the Catholic press,⁸⁷³ essentially along two lines: what is the right thing to do, save the schools or save the congregations?

Within the congregation of the Marist Brothers, discussion was lively, many echoes of which are to be found in the archives. Brother Emile-Gabriel summarised the situation rather well:⁸⁷⁴

"Among the Brothers and even within individual communities, events had resulted in the formation of two parties. Some were not willing to abandon the works in France, they were the pro-secularisation party; others wanted to preserve religious life in its integrity, and for them the thought of abandoning their religious habit was particularly repugnant. Excellent reasons were advanced in support of both sides of the argument and leading to some heated discussions ..."

According to Brother Hermeland from the Province of St-Paul, in 1902 almost all of the Directors there⁸⁷⁵ were for "resistance unto death". Brother Stanislas (M. Subrin),⁸⁷⁶ Director at Thizy (Rhône), said he would willingly have remained "while awaiting events even if it meant being removed *manu militari* (by force). However, he was not supported by the local authorities nor by all of his Brothers, some of whom were much more afraid than he of the measures announced". The Superiors were themselves uncertain what to do and the advice from Rome was vague:⁸⁷⁷ "Try as much as possible to preserve your works. Move out into other countries in Europe, and especially to America and to missionary countries."

Finally, the Superiors followed the plan proposed by Monsieur Auguste Prénat, Secretary of the Comité de Défense de St-Etienne, which was linked to the General Society for Education and Teaching.⁸⁷⁸ This plan had the approval of the Archbishop's office. The congregation would be divided into four categories: Brothers fully laicised, Brothers laicised *pro forma*; elderly Brothers in the retirement houses, and those going into exile.⁸⁷⁹

⁸⁷³ *Les Etudes* of 1901-2-3, Vols. 86-97, published an extensive bibliography "to be used for defending the congregations" by Fr E. Capelle: Vol. 86, pp. 552, 694, 833; Vol. 87, pp. 127, 548, 694. For the review's own leanings appear clearly in the following articles: "La loi Waldeck, mort des congregations", Vol 87, pp. 721-725 by Hippolyte Prélot SJ; Vol. 88 p. 828: "Soumission ou résistance. La parole du Pape", by J. Br., SJ. (At a time of state hostility towards the Jesuits, the author (Br.) did not reveal his full name).

⁸⁷⁴ A.F.M., a handwritten biography of 92 exercise book pages (1867-1927).

⁸⁷⁵ A.F.M., dossier GRO 550-6 n. 62.

⁸⁷⁶ *Biographies*, Vol. 5, p. 310.

⁸⁷⁷ *C. 10*, p. 248.

⁸⁷⁸ A.F.M., dossier 1903, Procès de l'Alma (Trial of l'Alma): extract from the minutes from the Office of the Clerk of the Civil Court of St-Etienne (Loire); judgement handed down on 15/10/1903.

⁸⁷⁹ Brother Adon mentions this several times in his diary for 1903 (SIR 550-3 n. 4). Allusions are clearly made there to the four categories of Brothers. See also SIR 550-3 n. 4; 1904 recollections concerning 25/07/1903. At the end of 1904 or early in 1904 M. Auguste Prénat wrote a second very similar report on the application made by the De La Salle Brothers. (A.F.M., dossier sécularisation 1903). In the A.N., F. 17/12 495 a typewritten sheet notes the denunciation of a Brother, probably from the Christian Schools, which states that the Brothers had been divided into four categories.

When a Brother Director received the order to close his school, he would cease all teaching and give fifteen days of holidays. If the owners of the school agreed that he should remain he would ask the Superiors for a letter of laicisation, and put on civilian clothes. The other Brothers would do the same. He would then enter into a new contract with the owners, move back into the buildings and inform the Prefect by registered letter of his change of status. If he were threatened by the administration, he must claim his right as a citizen to live as he wished. If he were brought before the courts, a defence team would support him.

Such a solution was not without interest to the Superiors because they could not send all of the Brothers in France into exile, some 4,240 Brothers without counting those in formation. Moreover, for a whole host of reasons, a good number were not keen to leave. For example, if they were still minors their families could object; if they were elderly they may not have thought they could begin again from scratch. And then, many of the Directors, well entrenched in their local milieu, did not want to see their school perish.

The Superiors temporised as long as they could. Even when their application for authorisation was rejected on 18th March and notified on 3rd April, they still hoped to have recourse to the courts. Their resistance only ceased when the Institute's authorisation as an association, which had been in force since 1851, was annulled by a decree dated 9th April. Whilst they were still hesitating, the committees supporting the schools came to arrangements with the Brothers Directors, and the Superiors found themselves more or less presented with a *fait accompli*.⁸⁸⁰

Contrary to the advice of Monsieur Prénat who favoured the Brothers accepting a broad based laicisation, the Superiors saw it rather as few in number and purely a formality, with the essential signs of religious life (work and life in common) continuing as it had in the past. Moreover, their hands were tied by instructions from Rome, for on 9th December 1902 Cardinal Ferrata, in the name of the Sacred Congregation for Bishops and Regulars, had set out very restrictive instructions in relation to secularisation. Brothers in proceeding towards laicisation were told therefore that they continued to be fully religious, with almost all of the same obligations as before, notably in the matter of their vows.

1901 – departures from France begin on a large scale

In regard to exile, by far the easiest thing was to envisage each French Province having its own foreign works. The number of departures was rising even before the Institute was forced into it. Whereas previously some forty or so Brothers were sent annually to other countries, in 1901 the number was 94 and 131 in 1902. Obviously the year 1903 was going to break all records – 573 Brothers left Europe. The following table shows their distribution over the other continents:⁸⁸¹

⁸⁸⁰ A.F.M., Letters of the Administration, Vol. 13, Letter no. 14 188.

⁸⁸¹ C. 10, pp. 134, 276, 404, 616.

COUNTRY	NUMBER OF BROTHERS DEPARTING AND THEIR PROVINCES OF ORIGIN	FOUNDATIONS
China	28 (St-Genis-Laval)	3
Mexico	110 (St-Paul)	10
Syria	67 (Vareennes)	5
Southern Africa	41 (Aubenas)	
Egypt	3 (Vareennes)	
The Seychelles	2 (St-Paul?)	
Canada and U.S.A.	107 (N.D. de l'Hermitage)	2
Brazil	139 (Beaucamps, Lacabane, Aubenas)	5
Argentina	14 (St-Paul)	2
Colombia	4 (St-Paul)	1
Cuba	4 1	
Australia	15	
Turkey	39 (St-Genis-Laval)	2
TOTAL	573	31

In 1904, another 124 Brothers left for those countries where 31 establishments were founded. In 1905, only 57 Brothers left Europe and 18 establishments founded.

Approximately 500 Brothers moved to other countries in Europe. Between 1903 and 1905 there were 22 establishments founded in Spain and 13 in Belgium. There were some others also in England or Switzerland, places where several boarding schools were relocated (Grove-Ferry in Great Britain and St-Gingolph in Switzerland being among the more noteworthy).⁸⁸² For the houses of formation and the Mother House it was Italy that provided the principal place of welcome, with the majority of the acquisitions being made rather late in the day, between April and June 1903. Along the frontier with France there was a line of novitiates, San Mauro (Province of L'Hermitage), San Maurizio (St-Genis-Laval), Bairo (Bourbonnais), Ventimiglia (St-Paul), with the Mother House at Grugliasco. In Belgium the Province of Nord had the house at Pommeroeul available and in Spain the Province of Aubenas established its centre at Pontós. The Province of Lacabane went into exile in Spain, at Oñate first and then at Anzuola.

To populate the formation houses the Institute summarily proceeded to cream off the best, keeping just the most promising subjects and those who had parental permission to leave the country. Thus, in December 1902 at Aubenas,⁸⁸³ the Brothers began emptying house and sending all those in formation away. Finally, by the start of April 1903 there were only 30 young men remaining who had permission to leave. They were then sent home to their families for holidays. With the Notification of Closure being published on 9th April and due to take effect in twenty days, they were sent a circular letter summoning all who were still willing to leave to assemble

⁸⁸² A.F.M., registre des délibérations, 15/06/1903.

⁸⁸³ A.F.M., dossier DEY 560-3 n. 4, mémoires du C.F. Amphiloque.

on 22nd April. Twenty nine answered the call and embarked for Syria. At Beaucamps, after 18th March, the date when the application by the congregations for authorisation was refused, only 45 of the 70 novices were retained. Of the 80 Juniors, only between 15 and 20 returned after the holidays. In the Province of St-Genis-Laval all of the Juniors were sent home, with the exception of five who were able to enter the novitiate.⁸⁸⁴ At the Hermitage “the youngsters were left free to either return to their families or else move to another country”.⁸⁸⁵

The 446 elderly and sick Brothers were spread around the Provincial Houses along with those caring for them. The table below shows their distribution:⁸⁸⁶

	ST-GENIS	HERMITAGE ET RUOMS	ST-PAUL	AUBENAS	VARENNES	BEAUCAMPS	LACABANE CUBLAC
Elderly Brothers	105	52	85	52	30	57	15
Brothers carers	10	8	8	8	5	7	4
TOTAL	115	60	93	60	35	64	19

This move allowed the Brothers to block the sale of these houses by the government liquidators and to obviate the need to purchase retirement houses outside the country. Finally, the law allowed the elderly religious to receive a pension drawn on the funds created by the liquidation of the congregation’s assets.⁸⁸⁷ It was one small victory in the midst of disaster. In 1907 the government liquidator tried to have all the Brothers brought together at St-Genis-Laval but, in the face of their refusal, he did not push the matter.⁸⁸⁸

The balance sheet at the end of 1903

At the end of 1903, of the 605 Marist establishments of various types, 414 remained which were headed up by laicised Brothers. Of a total of approximately 4,548 Brothers, novices included, the Superior General counted 957 who had left the congregation, so a loss of 20% of the total. From a qualitative point of view, these losses were less serious because they mainly affected novices and young Brothers with the Vow of Obedience, for the most part. In one go their total number dropped by half. The body of the congregation properly so called, the Professed Brothers and

⁸⁸⁴ A.F.M., Témoignage de F. André Gabriel, dossier 1903. Sécularisation.

⁸⁸⁵ A.F.M., dossier RAM 560-5 n. 2.

⁸⁸⁶ A.F.M., dossier hospitalisation des frères ; démarches et listes (1903-1907).

⁸⁸⁷ A.F.M., dossier 1903 ; archives de L’Hermitage. The Superiors directed some forty or so elderly Brothers to go to the Hermitage “so as to have a good number ready to protest in case there was an attempt to expel them by force.”

⁸⁸⁸ Archives de Beaucamps, BE 1 Annales de Beaucamps.

those with Stability, had held up rather well, with somewhere between 115 and 120 Professed Brothers leaving the congregation, a loss of about 5% of the total, and just one with Stability. With just a little simplification of statistics for the period, which are already somewhat approximate, we seem close to the reality if we divide up the various choices made by the Brothers along the following lines. Out of a total of 4,200 Brothers:

More or less 1000 left France for other parts of Europe or for other continents

About 1000 left the Institute altogether

About 1500 were laicised (that is, remained Brothers but lived as laymen)

About 450 sick and elderly Brothers along with those caring for them

The implementation of the secularisation process went ahead between April and July 1903 in a relatively coordinated fashion according to the recommendations of the Prénat plan. Often, however, not all members of a community accepted laicisation, with a Director losing his staff or a Brother on the staff finding himself alone. Or again, a school committee, fearing prosecution, did not want laicised Brothers at their school, and asked the Superiors to withdraw them. So personnel were being moved backwards and forwards, as the Superiors tried more or less successfully to fill the gaps.

Secularisation becomes a long term problem

The Superiors made it very clear to the Brothers who had opted for secularisation that this new state would only last a short time and was a “pro forma” arrangement (for the sake of appearances).⁸⁸⁹ The clergy, however, and the General Society for Education and Teaching wanted genuine secularisation. The Law of 4th December 1902, moreover, stated that opening or running a congregational school was a crime that could attract fines of between 16 francs and 5,000 francs and terms of imprisonment ranging from six days to one year for the proprietor and the pretend secular. Those who had chosen secularisation were advised therefore not to do things by halves, that is, they had to change their way of life completely, even as far as getting married. Hence, faced with the policy of secularisation, Catholic attitudes could take a marked turn against the religious orders. What is more, the clergy were not always upset about getting control of an activity which up to now they had not been able to do, because of the power of the religious orders. What they wanted was to create a body of Catholic teachers out of the wreckage of the religious congregations.⁸⁹⁰

⁸⁸⁹ A.F.M., dossier 541-43 n. 16, carnet des renseignements divers p. 13.

⁸⁹⁰ A typical case of this desire to get a stranglehold on the congregations: on 9th March 1904 the Provincial Council of L’Hermitage examined the question of Brothers participating in the trade union formed under the patronage of the Committee for the Defence of Religion and the Archdiocese. Since the union was requiring its members to specify whether they had been members of a religious congregation, the Council refused permission to the secularised Brothers to take part in it. (Archives de L’Hermitage, 2nd book of annals and documents by Br Jean-Alphonse, pp. 223-224). This refusal brought about the setting up on 11th July 1904 of a society with the name “L’Aide Mutuelle” (Mutual Help) the purpose of which was to allow the secularised religious to “see each other again and provide mutual encouragement”. (Archives de L’Hermitage, 3rd book of annals and documents, p. 19).

Furthermore, a great number of the secularised Brothers were rather inclined to enjoy their newfound freedom. Thus Brother Joseph-Eugène, the secularised Director at Souvigny, was asking himself if new staff he had been given were not “escapees from prison”, and he had to get rid of them before finding a serious and capable secularised Brother. A Brother from St-Paul⁸⁹¹ spoke of “a crisis of confidence” likely to result in the collapse of the Province’s works and the unfaithfulness of many of its members.

Another contributing factor to the crisis was the setting up of Provincial level government following the acceptance of the Roman Constitutions by the Chapter.⁸⁹² The circular of 21st June 1903 therefore gave a list of Provincials now called on to govern a Province, but each Assistant still found himself with special responsibility for a Province. The old power arrangement and the new, however, often short circuited each other. One Brother relates somewhere how he had received two contradictory Letters of Obedience, one from the Assistant sending him to Italy, the other from the Provincial appointing him to a school in France.⁸⁹³ The power of the Assistants over the secularised Brothers was not to last long, however, because they were residing in Italy whilst the Provincials would be staying in France to see to the clandestine direction of their Brothers. The Superior General and his Assistants, moreover, were now removed from the actual situation, and still under the negative influence of what they had seen at the start of the secularisation process, and were thus inclined to view everything from a rather negative angle.

The secularised religious facing prosecution by the State

The legal situation of the secularised religious grew rapidly worse on the juridical level. On 1st May 1903, the Court of Cassation (the ultimate court of appeal) established that the persistence of community life and the continuance of their work was evidence that the accused (some Salesians) had committed the crime of reconstituting their society, notwithstanding their letters of secularisation and Papal dispensations which were deemed to have no value in law. Such a judgement appeared to favour of the government’s position. Fortunately for the religious orders,⁸⁹⁴ however, it raised a legal question, as the Court of Appeal seemed to be implying that the accused, presumed to be guilty, must prove their innocence.

⁸⁹¹ A.F.M., drawer K 14-5 GRO 550-6 no. 2.

⁸⁹² C. 10, pp. 326-327.

⁸⁹³ An interesting – although somewhat later – example of conflict between the two powers is given us by the correspondence of Brother Marie-Junien (Archives de L’Hermitage) with the Assistant. In it he denounces the manoeuvres of Brother Priscillien, the Provincial, who in 1912-1913 was trying to obtain reinforcements for his secularised Brothers whilst the General Administration preferred to make Brothers available for America.

⁸⁹⁴ According to Auguste Rivet, *op. cit.*, there were in 1903:

Brothers of Ploërmel	362 houses	2151 Brothers
Brothers of Saint Gabriel	161 houses	1183 Brothers
Marianists	95 houses	838 Brothers
Brothers of the Sacred Heart	163 houses	818 Brothers
Clerics of Saint-Viateur	112 houses	475 Brothers
Little Brothers of Mary	605 houses	4240 Brothers
Brothers of the Holy Family	47 houses	274 Brothers

The Marist Brothers were to be involuntary protagonists in an event which lent strength to the government's position. On 17th May at Torteron (Cher) the school which had recently undergone secularisation was subjected to a search.⁸⁹⁵ There the police found "Instructions setting out for religious conditions for secularisation", which was based on the rescript from the Sacred Congregation, along with a list of directives which showed clearly that the congregation had retained control of the school. No one could have dreamt up a more explosive proof of the desire of the congregation to continue its work in secret, and abundant use was made of these documents when, on 23rd June 1903, the Chamber of Deputies (the lower house of Parliament) was debating the proposed Massé law. This law would have imposed a three year ban on ex-religious, preventing them from teaching in the same commune or in the neighbouring communes. The law was finally blocked in the Senate but, for the Marist Brothers, the seizure of these papers was the cause "of veritable ravages in their ranks... The Public Prosecutor's Office [...] [pounced on these papers as a weapon which must certainly wipe out all the schools held by former Little Brothers of Mary."⁸⁹⁶

The Marist Brothers who had remained where they were at the time they had changed to secular status therefore had to face numerous court cases. However, in many cases the courts, in the absence of any formal proof of non-genuine secularisation, refused to find them guilty. Furthermore, at the end of 1903 the courts established some fairly moderate judicial guidelines, namely, that the continuation of a work and of life in common could establish a presumption of false secularisation, but that the court would accept evidence to the contrary. These guidelines were established as legal precedent at the beginning of 1904 when the Court of Appeal at Angers rules in favour of Cointe and Duret, two Marist Brothers. This judgement, handed down on 7th January, recognised the right of secularised religious to undertake secularisation where they were at the time, and declared that in the absence of definitive proof to the contrary, the continuation of life in common and the work of teaching were not sufficient proof of belonging to a religious community. After this judgement, things became calmer, with the courts granting acquittals in almost all cases.⁸⁹⁷

All the same, six months of intensive pursuit by the law had been catastrophic for the secularised Marist Brothers.⁸⁹⁸ Many abandoned their post to find a less compromising line of work, becoming insurance agents, or poultry merchants, or wine merchants, or selling bicycles. Some became sacristans or private tutors, and so on. Others changed schools, or went to live with their families, or moved to another country, or else left the congregation altogether. And then too, collaboration with the clergy and the school committees was not always easy. Many parish priests, in order

⁸⁹⁵ J.O. meeting of 23rd June, p. 2090.

⁸⁹⁶ *Bulletin de la S.G.E.E.*, 1903, p. 915 ; other documents were seized. For example a Brother went to the Police and denounced the manoeuvres of the Superiors. Dossier F 19 6272 bundle 2, Secularisation of members of religious orders: general matters, contains copies of Letters of Obedience which specified that they were to be destroyed upon the Brother's arrival at his new post. The Brother who handed these documents over was in conflict with his Director and with the Parish Priest over a question of salary.

⁸⁹⁷ *Bulletin de la S.G.E.E.*, 1903, p. 1150 ; 1904, pp. 44-52, 184.

⁸⁹⁸ A.F.M., Supplement to the Annals of Brother Avit, 212/26, 212/49. In the Province of Nord, some twenty establishments were charged. All then had to go before the Magistrate's Court. All appealed the verdict.

to avoid trouble, handed their schools over to lay teachers,⁸⁹⁹ and there were also clerics trying to get their hands on the boarding schools.⁹⁰⁰

For some time, therefore, whichever way they turned, the secularised Brothers found themselves in difficulty. They were under threat from the State, but the threat from lay teachers or clergy was just as bad and more immediate. Even their defence lawyers were not happy with them because, although in the external forum they were secularised, in the internal forum they were still religious, and they appeared ill at ease during their court appearances, especially when confronted by the Prosecution with papers discovered by the Police. Monsieur Jacquier, one of their lawyers in Lyon, lodged a complaint with the Archbishop of Lyon, Cardinal Coullié, on 24th July 1904,⁹⁰¹ in which he accused the Superiors of the Little Brothers of Mary of a lack of prudence by distributing confidential materials. There is certainly a connection between this complaint and a letter written by the Archbishop to the Sacred Congregation for Bishops and Regulars on 23rd September 1904, asking advice on the line of conduct to follow,

“because the fiction of internal forum and external forum had been exposed by the religious themselves; the courts regard it as a deceit, and the strongest Catholics among the lawyers are refusing to defend cases they see as lost even before they start.”

In terms of the attitude of the clergy on the matter of secularisation there is no more telling document than this letter. The Cardinal requested that jurisdiction over the Brothers be removed from their Superiors, whom he accused of incompetence, and given to the Ordinary of the place. In this way a system of independent diocesan education could be organised without the religious orders spoiling the party.

This affair was moreover just one episode in the question which had set Catholics at odds with each other since 1901: which should be sacrificed, the schools or the religious life? A great number of the Bishops and the leading Catholics were opting for the schools, but Pope Pius X settled the question in 1905 in a letter to the Very Reverend Brother Gabriel-Marie, the Superior General of the Brothers of the Christian Schools. Having lost their privilege status as a recognised congregation,⁹⁰² the Brothers had submitted to secularisation and were now preparing to hold their General Chapter:

“Let it be clearly established that the religious life is superior by far to life in common as members of the faithful and that, if you are greatly bound to your neighbour by the duty of teaching, far stronger are the bonds which bind you to God.”

For the Marist Brothers this letter arrived too late. From the wreckage of the congregations, the hierarchy was creating an independent diocesan system of education and, whether they liked it or not, the religious were being integrated into it. The authority of the Superiors now carried little weight in face of that of the episcopate. Nevertheless, neither were the Bishops, any more than the State, able to enforce a secularisation that went the whole way. In 1906 the Clemenceau government thought

⁸⁹⁹ A.F.M., *Annales du F. Avit*, 212/25.

⁹⁰⁰ Archives de Beaucamps, BE 1, *Annales de Beaucamps*.

⁹⁰¹ Archdiocesan archives Lyon.

⁹⁰² By the Law of 7th July 1904 the government prohibited all teaching by religious orders in France, which forced the FSC into dissolution.

for a while of relaunching prosecutions against the religious orders but gave up the idea because of the judicial precedent set by the courts. An opinion expressed by the Prefect of Pas-de-Calais summarises the general situation:

*“A great number of judicial investigations were begun in all parts of the Department. In some cases (very few and just when the law first came into force) the trial resulted in a token penalty (a suspended fine of 16 francs).”*⁹⁰³

For the religious, therefore, secularisation was going to become a long term situation.

From the secularisation of religious life to the secularisation of State and society

It could even be said that from 1904 onwards the nature of secularisation changed. The secular State, emboldened by the feeble resistance offered by clergy and Catholics who had shown little inclination to defend the religious orders, and despite certain internal tensions and some occasionally violent public agitation, now pressed home its advantage, and by an Act of Parliament passed on 9th December it legislated for the separation of Church and State.

In one fell swoop, Catholic illusions of a France Christian forever were swept away. State and society had demonstrated that from now on they would be founded on a secular vision of the world. Even if for a long time it would be difficult for the Catholics to think of France as a missionary country,⁹⁰⁴ they really needed to look hard at the evidence. Christianity, as they had lived it and thought of it until then, had disappeared.

This major event considerably modified the way the Institute viewed secularisation. In 1903 it had been seen as a matter of just being a little bit flexible in the face of a spell of turbulent weather, which it was hoped would soon pass. By 1906 it was quite a different matter. Those who had chosen secularisation were in danger of losing their fervour in a State and society growing progressively more and more dechristianised. A second danger for them as religious came from the fact that they were now part of an educational system that was under the control of the Bishops.⁹⁰⁵ So, the hour of reckoning had come and, as the following statistics show, the situation was not at all encouraging:

PROVINCE	BROTHERS SECULARISED	ELDERLY BROTHERS	OTHER
St-Paul	116	49	
Hermitage	105	48	22 in diverse situations with permission 22 in diverse situations but without permission
Varennes	115	34	9 Brothers dispersed here and there
Lacabane	46	15	6 in diverse situations

⁹⁰³ A.N., F 7 12 405 “Réponses de préfets à la circulaire du 4 août 1906.”

⁹⁰⁴ It was only in 1943 that there would appear the book by the Abbés Godin and Daniel: *France pays de mission?*

⁹⁰⁵ This was the great moment of the creation of diocesan Offices of Catholic Education.

PROVINCE	BROTHERS SECULARISED	ELDERLY BROTHERS	OTHER
Beaucamps	116	?	
St-Genis	151	80	20 in diverse situations
Aubenas	151	53	4 in diverse situations
TOTAL	840	279	101

In France, therefore, there were fewer than 1000 secularised Brothers,⁹⁰⁶ and with a good hundred their situation was such that they were living more or less separated from the congregation. By comparison with 1903 some sixty or so schools had disappeared and the number of secularised Brothers had risen from four to 500. Many Brothers had moved on from fictional secularisation to actual secularisation, others had finally left France for other countries. As all of these were Professed Brothers, it was an unprecedented loss for the congregation.

Everywhere the Brothers did not have the support of the local populations, places like Bouches-du-Rhône, Var, Vaucluse, Isère and Saône-et-Loire, the schools network collapsed. In places where the population valued the teaching of the religious orders (Ardèche, Loire, Rhône, Nord and others), the schools held up reasonably well. Because of this, by 1908 the 264 schools that still remained were mainly concentrated in areas that were strongly Catholic.

Moves to end secularisation for the Brothers

The death of Brother Théophane (1907) meant that a General Chapter had to be held at a very awkward moment. The capitulants, who were almost all French, were deploring the disastrous results of a secularisation that had impacted their lives in ways far more dreadful than anything they could have anticipated in 1903. The Commission on Secularisation, composed moreover of secularised Brothers, drew some very clear principles out of the experience; namely, that since secularisation had been an act of violence which had to be submitted to but not encouraged, a secularised Brother would have the right to put the soutane on again any time he wished without anyone being able to oppose it, even if it meant closing an establishment. This position was directly in line with the directives of Pius X, but the last measure formulated a very severe interpretation of those directives which would progressively put an end to secularisation:

“Brothers who are in regular communities, and in particular those who are in the missions, will not be permitted to return to France to live the life of the so-called ‘secularised’ Brothers. Only the Reverend Brother and his Council may grant exceptions.”

A position as harsh as this cannot be explained solely by circumstances that were only too recent and too violent, because this type of cordon sanitaire established

⁹⁰⁶ Another set of statistics from 1906 indicate: 1,113 secularised Brothers and 362 schools, but these seem less credible.

around secularisation remained in place until 1920. The capitulants were afraid also that Brothers who had left for overseas but who did not have the true missionary spirit may want to return, and that this would weaken the new arrangements with the schools and give legitimacy to a state of life that was outside the norms. The Institute therefore, confronted with two models of apostolic religious life, rejected the one which would have upset tradition and imperilled a worldwide expansion, which had rather too quickly been termed missionary.

The secularised capitulants themselves had been participants in this process of marginalisation, when they had not actually been advocating it. Their position, however, was not without its logic. First and foremost, they wished to be loyal to the congregation. And then again, experience had shown that many of the secularised men were not up to a life of resistance under persecution of the sort demonstrated by Brothers Elie-Marie (M. Rajon) and Joseph-Philomène (M. Beaupertuis), who had emptied their school at Péage de Roussillon from top to bottom, removing doors, windows and roof tiles, cutting down all the trees in the school yard and transporting the entire school furniture to Pélussin to continue the school there⁹⁰⁷ in spite of court cases and harassment by the authorities. The future was therefore still too uncertain in 1907 for anyone to envisage anything other than a sort of status quo. The Chapter of 1907 was also allying traditional principles and historical juncture to determine that France would be isolated from the rest of the Institute because “secularisation” was a “state of violence” made only for strong souls. It was moreover a way of implicitly recognising France as a mission country.

The first decades of the Twentieth Century were to be the occasion of a considerable evolution of the problem. On the one hand, the secularised Brothers would demonstrate in practice the possibility of living the religious life in a secularised environment in ways that were neither a dilution nor a withdrawal, but were a limited adaptation that preserved the essentials. On the other hand, in many countries (Mexico and Spain, for example) and in circumstances like wars and so on, the Brothers would be forced to live forms of secularised life. The period 1903-1907 was therefore the first blow that called into question the congregation’s tendency to distance itself ever more from the way of life of the laity in order to affirm itself more fully as a semi-monastic religious order.

The interpretation of the events of 1903 which prevailed, however, was that through exile from France the Institute had realised its original vision of universality. Favouring that providential interpretation allowed the Institute to dispense itself from a more profound reflection on the historical causes of such a trial, and likewise to let itself off lightly from responsibility for its part in the failure to win Nineteenth Century France back to Christ. When all is said and done, however, it was a brilliant way for the Institute to get itself out of an historic impasse, but it left more or less intact the necessity of having once again to face the question of negotiating new ways for Christian tradition to engage with the modern world, the very question which secularisation had in its own way posed.

⁹⁰⁷ *Biographies*, Vol. 4, pp. 283-284.

GENERAL CONCLUSION

SPIRITUALITY – THE FUNDAMENTAL KEY TO UNDERSTANDING THIS HISTORY

A conclusion should, it would seem, provide the opportunity to step back a little from the vast array of facts presented, while at the same time calling to mind the main thrust of the work. Thus, with the Institute defining itself as a body whose purpose is spiritual, its history, even while it touches also into the areas of sociology, economics and psychology, must first and foremost be interpreted in terms of spirituality. Spirituality, in this context, is understood to be the articulation of three fundamental realities: the mystical, the ideal or visionary, and the institutional. It would seem appropriate to offer some relatively precise definitions for these three terms.

By mysticism, or the mystical dimension, is meant the experience of the presence of God, not necessarily as visions or, *a fortiori*, as ecstasies or other extraordinary phenomena, but as the certainty of a mysterious presence, within oneself and yet other than oneself. The Old and New Testaments are full of accounts of such encounters with God, and spiritual literature also.

This properly-speaking indescribable experience opens up unexpected and inaccessible horizons – a utopian ideal or vision – leading the one who has received it to move towards it, at the risk of being taken for a crank. Very often this utopian vision gradually fades away, or else turns into a state of exaltation. At other times the one receiving this illumination succeeds in gathering around himself or herself a group of disciples. For the inspired person to truly become a prophet, he or she, and the disciples who have been drawn together need to be able to move on from a state where they are closely bound together around an ideal towards a desire to be incarnated in the world of here and now. They need to create an institution, that is, to formulate rules for behaviour and action and codify the primitive inspiration, so it can have a long term future. Thus, each of the elements in this mystical-idealistic-institutional triad regulates the others at the same time as it profits from them. The mystical is the unailing source; the utopian vision is the dynamic by which the saving good news is delivered; the institution purifies the mystical and the utopian of the illusions or superficiality that may still be present, and enflashes them in the here and now.

This process is not purely theoretical. It is a pattern evident in the foundation of the great religious orders. Let us think, by way of example, of Francis of Assisi and the Franciscan order. A theory of this process has moreover been elaborated by Raymond Hostie in his work *Vie et mort des ordres religieux* (The Life and Death of Religious Orders),⁹⁰⁸ although in terms that are psycho-sociological rather than spiritual. Again,

⁹⁰⁸ Bibliothèque d'études psychologiques des religions, Desclée de Brouwer, 1972.

the three religious vows reflect the three fundamental aspects of such a line of reasoning, with chastity more in the order of the mystical, poverty in that of the utopian ideal, and obedience the institutional. This triad can even function at the level of the secular. Many artistic, philosophical or even political movements have been begun by truly inspired founders of secular religions. As to the sources of such inspiration, that is another problem. The Apocalypse of St John, in its development of the theme of the Antichrist, is a reminder of the ambiguous nature of inspiration.

A Marist reader will have readily recognised that the process described above applies very well to our origins. Jean-Claude Courveille, the one inspired to found a Society of Mary, was able to gather around him a group of disciples powerfully inspired by a mystical and utopian vision, for whom the Formula and Act of Consecration at Fourvière in July 1816 would come to serve as an enduring foundation, even if its realisation would have to take place in the thick of everyday life, at the price of many misadventures, and ultimately in a form very different from what they had first envisaged.

With Courveille out of the picture, three principal actors would now become involved in the process of institutionalising the Society. Marcellin Champagnat interpreted his 1816 encounters as signs inviting him to press ahead; Jean-Claude Colin at Cerdon wrote a rule which he regarded as received from Heaven. For the Colin brothers Jeanne-Marie Chavoïn, foundress of the Marist Sisters, was also to become a charismatic person. Thus, in the period 1817 to 1824, Lavalla and Cerdon were functioning in an eminently mystical and utopian mode. Around 1820 Champagnat recognised the hand of God in the fidelity of his Brothers when he came under savage attack, and again in 1822, when he saw the postulants from Haute-Loire arriving, he came to the firm belief that the work of the Brothers was indeed willed by God. The construction of the Hermitage was undertaken because he wanted to bring into existence a Society of Mary (of Fathers and Brothers together⁹⁰⁹) destined to take up the battle against Satan.⁹¹⁰

At the Hermitage the period 1824 to 1826 was an acid test of the harshest sort smashing everything in the project that was utopian or not sufficiently strong institutionally. Courveille and Terraillon had to withdraw and Champagnat, in spite of his wishes, found himself alone at the head of the Brothers, who had insisted on their own vision of the Society. Courveille had crumbled because he had not been capable of relativising his Le Puy inspiration, and because of his utopian idealism in regard to the realisation of the Society. Terraillon, on the contrary, seemed to have lacked the capacity to bring a mystical interpretation to bear on the project. Only Champagnat had been able, through his *Nisi Dominus*, to look back at events with the eyes of a mystic, and then have the courage to provide for the Brothers' branch an institutional structure (with soutane and vows, for example). In this way, he took up the role of founder that had already been given him by the Brothers. We should add here that certain ones among the first Brothers⁹¹¹ also did not accept an institutionalisation, which they saw as too far removed from the utopian way things had functioned previously.

⁹⁰⁹ The feminine branch being constituted by the Sisters at Rive-de Gier and Saint Claire linked with Courveille.

⁹¹⁰ OM 1, doc. 173 no. 13.

⁹¹¹ Jean-Marie Granjon, Etienne Roumésy.

All the same, when Etienne Séon and the young priests came to the Hermitage to recommence the priests' branch, a new debate began. The young priests were operating from the mystical and utopian mode (the home missions), whilst Champagnat was seeing things in terms of the institutional (to help him with the formation of the Brothers). It is true that later, in 1834, there was to be a reversal of roles, when Champagnat thought that the priests at Valbenoîte were being too much caught up in a drift towards the institutional.⁹¹²

In a number of different ways, the year 1830 saw a return to Marist mysticism and the utopian ideal. When Champagnat instituted the *Salve Regina* at the beginning of Morning Prayers, he was stating clearly that just at the time France was changing its reigning dynasty, the Brothers' sole allegiance was to Mary, a Queen more capable of protecting them than His Most Christian Majesty, whose loyal subjects the first Marists had declared themselves to be at the time of their Consecration at Fourvière in 1816. Later in that same year, unity around the mystical was again expressed when, in October 1830, Jean-Claude Colin was nominated as the "centre of unity", in spite of the reservations of the episcopal authorities in Lyon and Belley.

It seems that the signs of the times and his election had designated Jean-Colin and the Belley model (a college, home missions, a feminine branch) as the Society of Mary according to the will of God, revealed by the events, Colin's election and the laissez-faire approach of the episcopal authorities. However, the Hermitage, although now pushed out to the margin of the priests' project, experienced a phase of numerical growth and institutional development, even though all efforts to secure civil recognition ended in failure. In Lyon Jean-Baptiste Pompallier, for his part, set up the lay branch of the project which, particularly in the case of the women's group (the Young Christian Ladies), embarked on its mystical and utopian phase.⁹¹³ In the case of the Tertiary Brothers the project seems to have been much more politico-religious,⁹¹⁴ and this could have been one of the reasons it did not last. So, when Jean-Claude Colin in Rome in 1833 presented his proposal for a Society of Mary in four branches, he was simply submitting to what the Marists believed to be the will of God, a Society only just beginning to come together but whose visionary ideals were still very much alive, even though they had been substantially whittled down by the realities of the situation, and were in partial contradiction with one other.

By granting canonical recognition and the title of Society of Mary to the Marist Fathers only, Rome thwarted the mystical-idealistic vision of a Society with four branches in a major way. To reconcile the canonical reality with their mystical hope for unity, the Marists proceeded in two steps. First came the canonical constitution of the Society of the Fathers at Belley in September 1836. This was immediately followed by the Brothers' retreat at the Hermitage, at the close of which the Brothers pronounced public vows, an act which in an ambiguous fashion made them members of the Society of Mary. In short then, the Society of Mary saw itself as two poles

⁹¹² OM 1, doc., 321. Champagnat offered the property at Grange-Payre to provide a place for the Marist Fathers.

⁹¹³ It seems that the role of Pompallier in the formation of the feminine Third Order has been greatly underestimated.

⁹¹⁴ It was necessary to replace the Jesuits who had been dispersed by the Revolution of 1830.

under the single Superior. It was a compromise between the institutional and the visionary, with a shared mystical dimension holding the various groups together.

One function of the mission to Oceania was to unify the branches of the Society around the realisation of their objective of a universal mission, but the mission was itself full of ambiguities. Pompallier had his own idea of the Society of Mary and of its relationship with the episcopacy, and this gave rise subsequently to stormy arguments with Colin and the Marist Fathers in New Zealand. Besides that, the role of the Brothers had not been clearly defined. Theoretically, they were there as catechists, but it was because of their technical skills that they were being sent to Oceania.

The year 1836 was therefore a moment of confusion when the institutional, the mystical and the idealistically visionary intermingled and impeded each other. The Society of Mary as realised appeared to be a faithful institutionalisation of the 1816 project, even if “the Constitutions of the Order” were not as yet fully realised. All the same, although Jean-Claude Colin and the Marist Fathers had realised the essentials of their objectives, the other branches had got scarcely anything out of it. The Hermitage was only loosely linked to the Society of Mary, and that was mainly thanks to the *laissez-faire* approach of the Archdiocese of Lyon. With the departure of Pompallier for Oceania the feminine Third Order in Lyon was more or less left to itself. The Marist Sisters too were somewhat left on the margins. In fact, historically speaking, two poles had emerged, and a third had just begun to see the light of day in Lyon under the leadership of Pompallier. It was out of these that the Missionary Sisters of the Society of Mary were to emerge.

It is not our task here to follow the ins and outs of the long and very conflictual processes involved in the institutionalisation of each one of the branches, a journey which would eventually end with a Colinian group constituted by the Marist Fathers, Marist Sisters and the Missionary Sisters, and that specific entity, the Marist Brothers, the evolution of which we will be pursuing in detail.⁹¹⁵

For the Marist Brothers the twenty years that followed this crucial step would prove to be the time of their emancipation from the utopian vision of a single order, a vision to which Champagnat had given renewed impetus in his *Spiritual Testament*. Jean-Claude Colin, the Marist Fathers, Rome, and finally the Marist Brothers, would come to accept the idea that the Society of the Hermitage was such that it could not be integrated into the Belley Society of Mary. In the middle of the Nineteenth Century the visionary ideal of a single order with multiple branches would be recognised as unrealisable, and would give way to a logic based on individual congregations. The original mystical impulse, with its foundation in the patronage of Mary and its concern to respond to the will of God, led inevitably to separation, but without ruptures that could not be healed. Each branch would therefore recognise the right of the others to describe themselves as Marist according to their own particular tradition. The Marist Brothers, however, by the fact they were heirs to the first realisation of the

⁹¹⁵ The mission in Oceania seems to have been one place in particular, where conflicts of interpretation over the nature of the Society of Mary renewed the 1822 scenario of the conflict between Courveille and Colin. It seems indeed that Pompallier saw the Society as a missionary agency set up to provide him with missionaries over whom he would have total authority, whereas Colin and his disciples saw it as an order having its proper Constitutions.

Society of Mary project, heirs too to a highly regarded Founder, and to an exceptional degree of growth, soon came to constitute a group standing a little apart from the others. Less directly influenced by the Fourvière Consecration, and regarding Jean-Claude Colin as Champagnat's successor rather than as the Founder, they were more than a branch yet less than a Society of Mary in themselves.

In the Brothers' case the process of institutionalisation was held back by the delay in obtaining their civil recognition, which only came in 1851. This lack was largely compensated for by the continuance of a powerful mystical and visionary spirit brought to the situation by key men like Brothers François and Jean-Baptiste, as well as by other Brothers, who were less to the fore but were strongly imbued with the charisma, men like Brothers Stanislas, Louis, Dorothée and Bonaventure. It is true that this first generation of Brothers often lacked education but they were austere, zealous and in some cases profoundly spiritual, Brothers Louis and François, for example, and they tended to be somewhat overshadowed by a second more educated generation, men who had had less contact with Champagnat (Brothers Louis-Marie and Avit, for example) and whose spiritual motivations varied a good deal in depth. It was for this reason that the Circular on the Spirit of Faith came as a first effort to synthesise the fundamental elements of the Marist spirit, a task taken forward to its completion by the Chapter of 1852-1854.

The *Common Rules* (1852), *The Teacher's Guide* (1853), and the *Rules of Government* (1854) were therefore the fruit of the teachings of Champagnat, which the Brothers had collected, and of the tradition witnessed to by the earlier generation of Brothers. Evidently, the codification of the primitive teaching in books, chapters and articles made it more difficult to perceive the overall unity of the doctrine. What's more, the interpretation of the spirituality as put forward by the three Superiors aroused some considerable misgivings among the early Brothers and the men in positions of responsibility. The *Manual of Piety* (1855) and the *Life of the Founder* (1856) then offered further syntheses of the spirit of the Institute. The most outstanding and the most lasting of these efforts was the second part of the *Life*, with the Founder presented as a model of the mystical life, the ascetical life, the fraternal exercise of authority, and of zeal. Even so, there was a tendency for piety to replace the mystical dimension and for the visionary dimension to become the captive of the institutional.

The risk was that now the novices would learn a set of rules rather than imbibe a spirit that was a living thing and not congealed in definitive texts. It seems, all the same, that Brother Jean-Baptiste, through his numerous retreat conferences and his later works, had been better able than the other Superiors to keep the primitive spirit alive, even if to some degree he tended to confuse his own interpretation of the origins with that of Marcellin Champagnat, and seems also to have lost some of his prestige in his later years. Brother Louis-Marie's part was to provide the congregation with a framework of solid doctrine strongly referenced to Champagnat. Older men, too, like Brother Sylvestre, were able to continue inculcating in the younger ones the same living tradition.

This work of institutionalising the tradition was necessary and could scarcely have unfolded without debate and conflict. However, the introduction of the Vow of Stability and of a Superior elected for life, meant that the congregation was moving away from the largely associative and egalitarian structure that had marked its origins. It also found itself embroiled in a politico-religious battle which evolved in a way

that was the reverse of what had happened in the years 1817-1830, when Champagnat's pro-ultra political stance had been replaced by one of great reserve in matters of politics, an attitude confirmed for him by the Revolution of 1830. By contrast, when the Chapter of 1852-1854 was taking place, the 1848 Revolution had only just occurred. Pius IX had been driven out of Rome, and subsequently became locked into a blanket condemnation of the modern world. The situation in France was influenced by the rise to power of an authoritarian Empire, which favoured the Church as a force for order. Hence, motivated by their convictions, their fear of revolution, and their concern for fidelity to Rome, the Superiors reactivated a Marist restorationist vision that dated back to their very beginnings. From that there developed an ever-widening gap between the Institute's leadership and a section of society, and even within the Brothers, that aspired to a greater degree of democracy and was turning against a Church it saw as too involved in politics. As well as that, the spirit of Republicanism was now on the scene offering a competing mystical inspiration, complete with utopian vision of an ideal Republic, egalitarian, secular and prosperous.

During the years 1852 to 1860, there was a shift of balance in the mystical-visionary-institutional articulation that favoured an institution with conservative leanings. This gave rise to a serious internal uneasiness and a shifting of forces within the group of three Superiors, with the influence of Brother Louis-Marie becoming preponderant after 1854. Brother François' withdrawal to the Hermitage, into "the great reliquary of Father Champagnat", was the sign of a rather different interpretation of the Marist tradition (which he had lived alongside the Founder from 1818), and a silent protest against an evolution he could do nothing to prevent.⁹¹⁶

Nevertheless, piety and the rule did not recover the earlier mystical inspiration with its strongly utopian overtones. Brothers Sylvestre and Avit, who still believed in the role the Society of Mary was destined to play in the battles of the end times, bear witness to this. A mystique of numbers was also strongly present, with numbers being seen as the sign of divine election. The Hermitage and Lavalla became centres of pilgrimage, and with the 1896 decree granting Champagnat the title of Venerable, he became a prestigious Founder. The Institute's early universalism ultimately found its expression in the remarkable expansion worldwide that occurred between 1885 and 1900. Better religious and intellectual formation contributed towards the Brothers having a more profound awareness of their vocation. With all that said: the mystique of conquest of 1816-1817 had now become a spirit of resistance in France and of a worldwide expansion of a somewhat ambiguous nature.

Finally, 1903 was the year when the Institute had to pay the price for the options taken in the years 1852-1854, although the religious congregations were the victims of a mystique of secular Republicanism only too willing to resort to extreme authoritarian measures. The French Church itself, deeply immersed in the process of a renewal of its pastoral works and finding new strength in its laity, had little interest in the fate of the congregations, and was even counting on using what remained of their works to establishing a system of Catholic education more directly under the

⁹¹⁶ The process of his Beatification, begun in 1901, indicates all the same that the tradition represented by Brother François had not been forgotten.

control of the Bishops. And so, with the Separation of Church and State in 1905, the school would once more have a strategic place in pastoral ministry.






Manifestly, the religious orders, which had established themselves in a strong position prior to 1848, were not entirely cut off from the wider society. Although democratic in their own social structure and far from being set in their ways, they had been unable to present a common front, or even to come to a clear awareness of just how much fear was aroused by their conservatism, real or supposed,⁹¹⁷ and their strong position on the educational front. In the early years of the Twentieth Century they might have been able to follow through on their evolution, if the State's aggression had met with stronger resistance from society in general and from the Church. The fact that significant numbers of Brothers refused to choose between exile and total secularisation demonstrated moreover that, in a situation of enforced deinstitutionalisation, they had a real capacity for thinking in renewed terms about the links between the individual, the religious body and the apostolate.

For all that, we need to be on our guard against thinking that among the Brothers there was some sort of deep-seated opposition between the partisans of exile and those advocating a *pro forma* secularisation. Members of both groups held to a strong and unshakeable Christian ideal, and the situation in 1903 is better described in terms of complementarity rather than opposition. All the same, under the weight of historical circumstances, these two attitudes, which at the start were more a matter of practicalities than theory, were to set in train a fundamental debate, not only in France but more or less everywhere, on the relationship between religious rule and mission, which would in time develop into a broader question of the relationship between faith and culture.

Over the period 1903 to 1907 the Institute manifested a real capacity for practical adaptation, and so was able to gain some time and space, but doctrinally speaking it was finding it difficult to integrate the idea that Western Christianity is not the final and finished form of the Church, and that mission is everywhere, including in countries reputedly Christian. This is why the years 1907 to 1967 will seem the years when a disconnect existed between a powerful dynamism at work on the practical level and a veritable stagnation in terms of doctrine. It is as if the Institute was finding it both necessary and yet impossible to forge a new synthesis between the institutional, the mystical and the ideal, at a time when it was living on a small scale the ecclesiological impasse that came to birth with Pius IX around 1848, was reactivated by the accession to the Pontificate of Pius X (1903-1914) and his war on Modernism, and only came to an end with John XXIII, launching the Second Vatican Council.

⁹¹⁷ The tone of the *Annales des maisons* of Brother Avit seems somewhat symptomatic of a profound inability to understand the times and a strong politico-religious bias that seems to have been dominant among the Superiors.

The principal founders of congregations of Brothers

FOUNDER AND FOUNDATION	BORN	ORDAINED	BRIEF BIOGRAPHICAL NOTE
Claude Bochard, Brothers of the Cross of Jesus (1822?) 	1759	1783	Vicar General of Séziz (1786-1790). Refused the oath. Imprisoned, exiled to Switzerland. Vicar General in Lyon in 1807. Founded the Fathers of the Cross of Jesus (1816), then the Brothers.
J. Vernet, Brothers of Christian Instruction of Viviers (1803)	1760	?	Sulpician. Refractory. Took refuge in Lyon 1793-1795. Vicar General of Viviers in 1795.
G-J. Chaminade, Marianists (1817) 	1761	1785	1781-1791: manager of the College of Mussidan. Member of a Congregation of St. Charles. Refractory priest at Bordeaux (1791-1796). Refugee in Spain (1797-1800). Foundation inspired at Saragossa. At Bordeaux restoration and direction of confraternities of laypeople and AA's. Politico-religious resistance. Focused on the direction of laypeople as well as secondary and primary education.
Dom Frécharde, Brothers of Providence (1817) 	1765	1792	Benedictine. Refractory. Exile in Switzerland and Germany. Clandestine apostolate in Lorraine (1795...)
Ignace Mertian, Brothers of Christian Instruction of Strasbourg (1820?) 	1766		Took the Constitutional oath then retracted (1792). Exile in the German lands. Returned after 1800.
J-F. Dujarié, Brothers of St Joseph of Mans (1820) 	1767	1795	In Minor Orders at the start of the Revolution, he supported the refractory priests. He was ordained clandestinely.



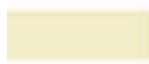


FOUNDER AND FOUNDATION	BORN	ORDAINED	BRIEF BIOGRAPHICAL NOTE
G. Deshayes, Brothers of Christian Instruction of Brittany (1820), then of Vendée. 	1767	1792	Refractory priest from 1792 to 1801. Parish Priest of Auray (1805...). Became Superior of the Montforts. (1821)
J-M. de Lamennais, Brothers of Christian Instruction of Brittany (Ploërmel) 	1780	1804	Very closely linked with Fathers of the Heart of Jesus of Clorivière. Active in the politico-religious resistance to Napoleon. After 1815 very active in conducting missions and against schools using the Mutual Method.
André Coindre, Brothers of the Sacred Heart (1821) 	1787	1812	A diocesan missionary, he gathered some Brothers to care for abandoned children. Established his Brothers in the Diocese of Le Puy. (1822)
M. Champagnat Little Brothers of Mary (1817) 	1789	1816	Assistant priest at Lavalla. Member of the Society of Mary of Lyon.
L. Querbes Clerics of Saint Viator (1831) 	1793	1816	Parish Priest of Vourles.
M. Fièrè Brothers of Christian Instruction of Valence (1823) 	1795	1816	Vicar General of Valence. Handed over his work to his cousin Mazelier.
G. Tabourin The only non-priest founder 	1799		Clerk and teacher at Bellydoux (Ain, 1817). Founder of the Brothers of St Joseph of the Diocese of St Cloud (1824), of Belley (1826), and the Brothers of the Holy Family (1835).

La Valla in 1875

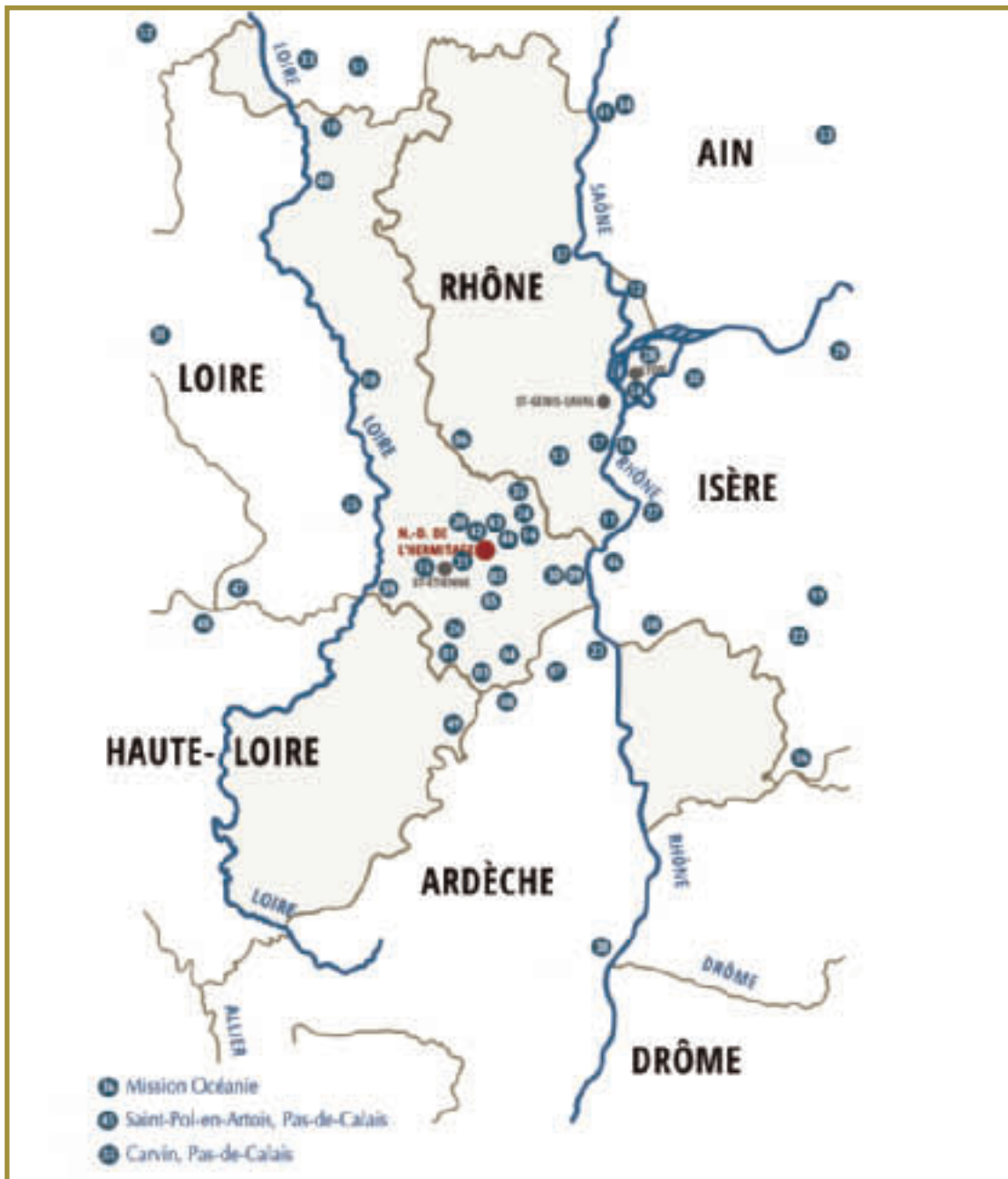




The defined areas have an approximate value and extension

-  Limits of the municipalities
-  Principal roads
-  The part of La Valla that is cold, is cold and poor but has a road that joins Saint'Etienne with the Rhone Valley
-  Lower part of the municipality, the most prosperous, facing Saint-Chamond.
-  High valley region of the Gier, a cold area, difficult to access, that lived off timber from the forest.

Schools founded by Marcellin Champagnat



1819

1. Marlhès, Loire
2. La Valla, Loire

1820

3. Saint-Sauveur-en-Rue, Loire

1822

4. Bourg-Argental, Loire
5. Tarantaïse, Loire

1823

6. Saint-Symphorien-le-Château, RMne
7. Boulièu, Ardèche
8. Vanosc, Ardèche

1824

9. Chavanay, Loire
10. Charlieu, Loire. Construction de N.-D. de l'Hermitage

1825

11. Ampuis, RMne

1826

12. Neuville -l'Archeveque, Rhône.
13. Mornant, Rhône
14. Saint-Paul-en-Jarret, Loire

1827

15. Valbenoite, Loire
16. Saint-Symphorien-d'Ozon, Isère

1829

17. Millery, Rhône
18. Feurs, Loire (fermée en 1831)

1831

19. La-Côte-Saint-André, Isère

1832

20. Sorbier, Loire (fermée de 1837 a 1844)
21. Terrenoire, Loire
22. Viriville, Isère. Réouverture de Marlhès

1833

23. Peaugres, Ardèche

1834

24. Lorette, Loire
25. Sury-le-Comtal, Loire
26. Saint-Genest-Malifaux, Loire
27. Vienne, Isère (fermée en 1840)

1835

28. Lyon Denuzière, Rhône
29. Belley, Ain (fermée en 1840)
30. Pélussin, Loire
31. Saint-Didier-sur-Rochefort, Loire
32. Genas, Isère

1836

33. Semur-en-Brionnais, Saone-et-Loire
34. Saint-Didier-sur-Chalaronne, Ain
35. Saint-Martin-la-Plaine, Loire
36. Mission d'Océanie

1837

37. Anse, Rhône
38. La Voulte, Ardèche
39. Firminy, Loire
40. Perreux, Loire
41. Thoïssèy, Ain
42. La-Grange-Payre, Loire

1838

43. Saint-Chamond, Loire
44. Izieux, Loire
45. Saint-Pol-en-Artois, Pas-de-Calais

1839

46. Roches-de-Condrieux, Isère
47. Usson-en-Forez, Loire
48. Craponne, Haute-Loire
49. Saint-Julien-Molhesabate, Haute-Loire
50. Bougé-Chambalud, Isère
51. Vauban, Saone-et-Loire

1840

52. Digoïn, Saone-et-Loire
53. Nantua, Ain
54. Lyon, Saint-Nizier, Rhône
55. Carvin, Pas-de-Calais
56. St Lattier, Isère

ANNEX 4 CHAPTER 12

Table of the main authors

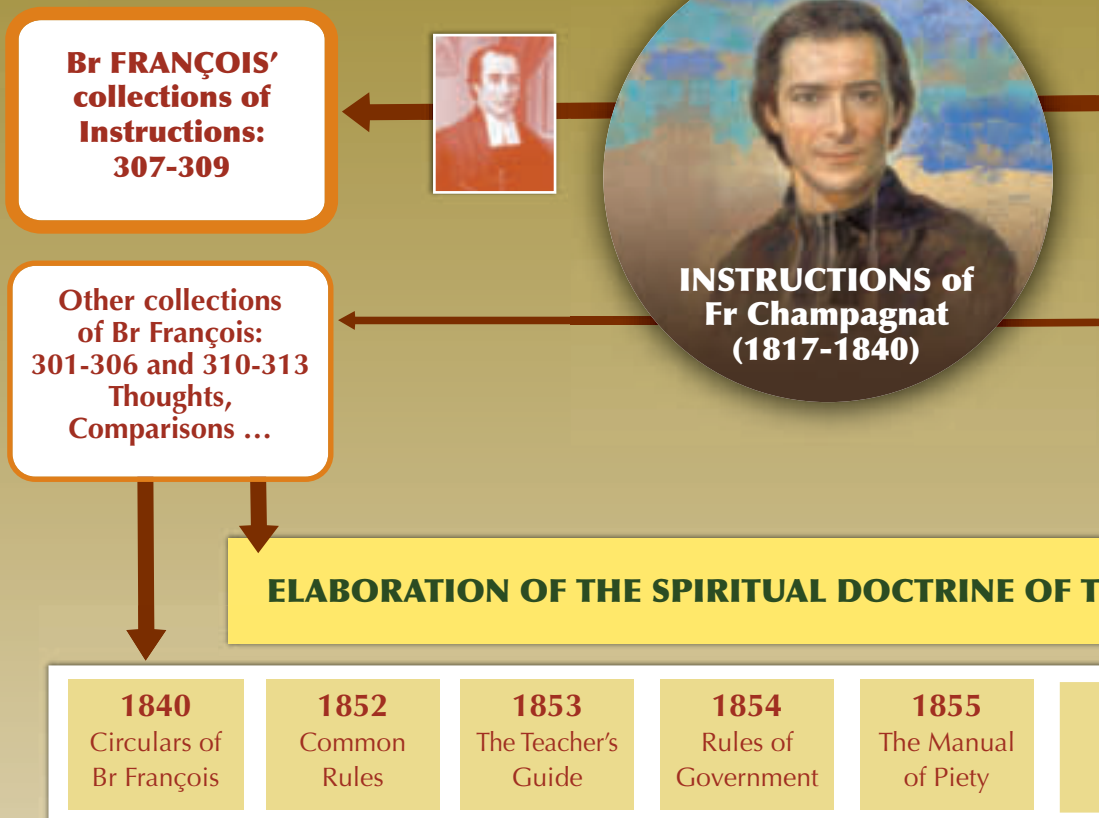
TREATISE	BR FRANÇOIS	LA SALLE	FAILLON	SAINT-JURE	BR AGATHON	RODRIGUEZ	DUPANLOUP	LA LUZERNE
1	■	■				■	■	
2	■	■	■			■	■	
3	■			■		■		
4	■			■		■		■
5	■		■			■		■
6	■	■	■	■	■	■		
7	■		■		■	■		■
8	■		■		■		■	
9	■			■	■			
10	■	■		■				
11	■	■		■		■		■
12	■	■		■		■		
13	■	■		■		■		
14		■	■			■		
15	■	■		■		■		
16	■		■			■		■
2nd part								
1	■		■				■	■
2	■		■				■	■
3			■				■	■

TRATADO	BR FRANÇOIS	LA SALLE	FAILLON	ST JURE	BR AGATHON	RODRÍGUEZ	DUPANLOUP	LA LUZERNE
4							■	■
5	■						■	■
6	■						■	
7	■		■				■	
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21			■	■				
22			■					

Note: A column has been reserved for Brother François to illustrate the convergences between the Treatise and François' own notes, a sign that both authors were drawing on the same source, namely, Champagnat. The dot indicates the presence of one or more quotations from the author in the chapter.

Table of doctrinal sources

FROM THE INSTRUCTIONS OF FATHER CHAMPAGNAT



TO THE SPIRITUAL LITERATURE OF THE INSTITUTE

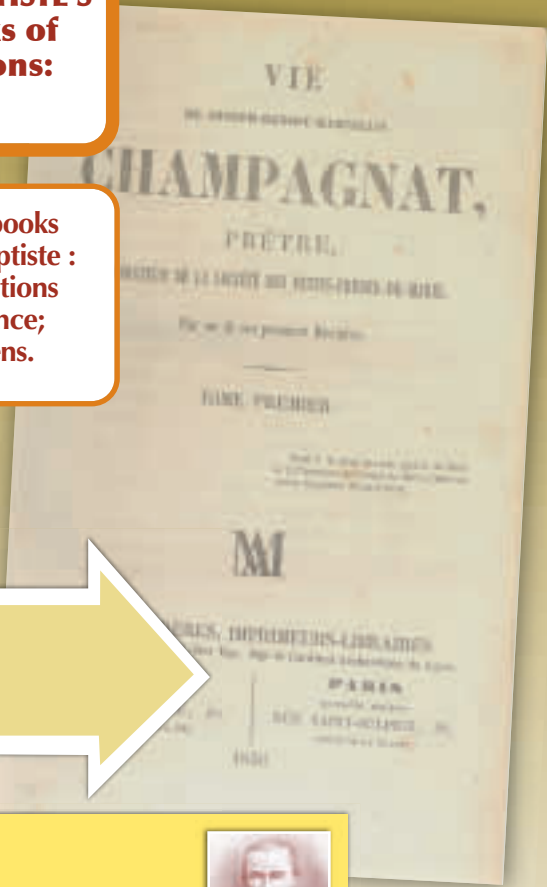


**Br JEAN-BAPTISTE'S
notebooks of
instructions:
E3, E4**

**Other notebooks
of Br Jean-Baptiste :
E1: Examinations
of Conscience;
E2: Examens.**

THE INSTITUTE (1840-1856)

**1856
Life of Father Champagnat**



- BR JEAN-BAPTISTE



1868
Our
Models in
Religion

1869
The Good
Superior

1870
Meditations
on
the Passion

1875
Meditations
on the
Incarnation

Vocations on it coming from our schools (1897-1901)

	PRIESTS	MARIST BROTHERS	OTHERS
Rhône	148	165	24
Loire	545	436	96
Saône-et-Loire	64	66	25
Ain	24	36	3
Isère	87	120	43
Drôme	51	68	13
Vaucluse	50	28	13
Bouches du R.	88	18	36
Var	43	8	3
Gard	42	119	27
Ardèche	249	330	29
Nord	218	128	85
Total	1609	1522	396

ACRONYMS and ABBREVIATIONS

AA	Abrégé des Annales. This acronym refers therefore to the summary of these records published in Rome in 1972.
A.D.F.M.	Apostolate of a Marist Brother.
AFM	Archives of the Marist Brothers.
ALS	Avis, Leçons, Sentences.
AN	National Archives (France).
C	Circulars of the edition of 1914-1916. The annexed number indicates the volume.
OFM	Origins of the Marist Brothers. It refers to the four volumes published on documents of the time of Fr Champagnat.
OM	Marist Origins. The annexed number indicates the volume (from 1 to 4).

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KEY SOURCES ON THE MARIST BROTHERS

This list is not intended to be exhaustive. Many of these sources have been computerized and published by the General House of the Marist Brothers in A4 size notebooks. Many others have been computerized by Brother Louis Richard and Brother Jean Rousson, retired residents in Saint Paul-Trois-Châteaux. A CD made in Rome in 2005-2007 by Brother Joseph de Meyer has collected many sources and works of diverse backgrounds. Many of them have been translated to Spanish, English, Portuguese... They often appear in French and Spanish on CEPAM's website of Brother Aureliano Brambila (Mexico).

Society of Mary

- *Orígenes Maristes*, Fathers Coste and Lessard, 4 volumes, Rome 1960-1967.
- *Orígenes Maristes, (1786-1836), extractos referentes a los Hermanos Maristas*, Roma, 1985.
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- *Maristes Laics*, collection of historic sources, by Charles Girard, s.m.
- *Autour des Origines Maristes*, Vol. 1: search base and state of the records, page 97; Vol. 2: Archives of the Chartreux, by Brother André Lanfrey, unpublished computerized edition.
- Bernard Bourtot, s.m., *Frères et Pères de, la Société de Marie en Europe de 1860 a 1903*, Centre de documentation Mariste, Paris, 250 pag.
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Writings by Champagnat and to Champagnat

- *Cartas*, 2 vol. Critical edition and repertoire by Pul Sester and R. Borne, Rome 1985.
- *Cartas recibidas*. Critical edition in French-Portuguese by Brother Ivo Strobino and Virgilio Josué Balestro, Brazil, 2002.

- *Nouveaux Principes de lecture*, (1838). Published in Marist Notebooks, number 22, December 2003. Introduction by Brother Maurice Bergeret.
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Writings of Brother François

Brother François left 22 notebooks with abundant notes and covering many different topics. All have been computerised by Brother Louis Richard. The most fundamental are:

- *Carnets de retraite*. (A.F.M. 4101. 302-304).
- *Carnets d'instructions*. (A.F.M. 4101. 307-308-309).

Brother Jean-Baptiste

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- *Life of Joseph-Benedict Marcellin Champagnat*, by Br Jean-Baptiste, Bicentenary Edition (1989) Reproduction of the text of the first edition. General house of the Marist Brothers, Rome, page 59. Critical notes + chronological indexes, of artwork, names, topographic and thematic. English, Portuguese and Spanish.
- Jean-Baptiste Furet, *Crónicas Maristas, I, The Founder*, translation and critical notes of Brother Aníbal Cañón, Luis Vives, 1979, page 652.
- *Chroniques de l'institut des Petits Frères de Marie. Avis, leçons, sentences et instructions du Vénéré Père Champagnat expliquées et développées par un de ses premiers disciples*, Lyon, Nicolle, 1868, page 536; edition in 1914.
- *Chroniques de l'institut des Petits Frères de Marie. Avis, leçons, sentences et instructions du Vénérable Père Champagnat expliquées et développées par un de ses premiers disciples*, Lyon-Paris, Emmanuel Vitte, 1927, page 453 + table of contents (p. 45-470).
- *Listen to the words of your Father: Opinions, Conferences, Sayings and Instructions of Marcellin Champagnat*. Translated by Br Leonard Voetgle, General House 1997.

- *Chroniques de l'institut des petits frères de Marie, Biographies de quelques frères qui se sont distingués par leurs vertus et l'amour de leur vocation*, Lyon, Nicolle et Guichard, 1868, page 477.
- Jean-Baptiste Furet, *Crónicas Maristas*, II, Biografías, Luis Vives, 1979, page 414. Translation and critical notes of Brother Aníbal Cañón.

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- *Sujets d'examen* (AFM. 5201.22). Computerized edition. Presented by Brother Paul Sester on 28/02/1998, 88 exams, page 94.
- *Carnets d'instructions*: AFM 5201,23 y 5201.24. Computerized edition.
 - Writings 3: Presentation by Brother Paul Sester, page 152.
 - Writings 4: Presentation by Brother Paul Sester, page 185.
- *Traité sur l'éducation (Apostolat d'un Frère Mariste)*:
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 - Computerized edition: Presentation by Brother Henri Vignau, Rome, 2000, page 258.
 - Computerized edition, Rome, February 1998, Critical introduction by Brother André Lanfrey (p. I-XL), page 285.

Brother Sylvestre

- Br *Sylvestre raconte Marcellin Champagnat*, Printed edition, Rome 1992, Page 320. Index of places and people.

Brother Avit

- *Annales des maisons*, Brother Avit: of the L'Hermitage Provinces, St. Genis-Laval, St. Paul-Trois-Châteaux, Aubenas, Varennes, Beaucamps and La-cabane. There is a multicopy and computerized version.
- *Abrégé des Annales du Frère Avit (1789-1840)*, Rome 1972, preface by Brother Gabriel Michel, page 334 + critical notes p. 335-350 + maps
- *Annales de l'Institut F. Avit*, Rome 1993, 3 vol. Presentation by Brother Paul Sester:
 - Vol. 1: *La rude montée*.

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- Vol. 3: *Route entravée*.
- *Anales del Instituto hermano Avit, Henri Bilon*. Printed edition in Spanish, Zaragoza, 2013, page 924 + subject indexes:
 - Part 1: *Dura ascensión*. Biography of Brother Avit (p. XIV-XXVIII), years 1775-1840).
 - Part 2: *La floración*. (1840-1860).
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General chapters

- *Deuxième chapitre général des Petits Frères de Marie: 1st session, 31 May-15 June 1852; 2nd session: 16-31 May 1853; 3rd session: 1-20 May 1854*, computerized edition, September 2001, page 112.
- The minutes of the other chapters of the nineteenth century have been computerized.

Circulars (1817-1916)

- Series of thirteen volumes of circulars, of the correspondence of the Founder and the superiors. Volume 13 includes numerous items of information on this first century: obituaries lists, chronology, list of houses, of the provinces, Emmanuel Vitte, 1914-1916.

Works of formation and piety

- Manuel de piété, 1855, Catechism for the use of novices and the collection of the main exercises of piety. Numerous editions under the title: Principles of Christian and religious perfection for the use of the Little Brothers of Mary.

Biographies and summaries of obituaries

By re-editing a first biography of some of the brothers in 1868, Brother Jean-Baptiste inaugurated a tradition. After its release, the congregation published:

- *Biographies de quelques frères qui se sont distingués par leur vertu et l'amour de leur vocation de 1890 à 1900*, Lyon, Emmanuel Vitte, 1900, 671 pag. Not to be confused with the volume published by Br Jean-Baptiste in 1868.
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ICONOGRAPHIC SOURCES

Captions

1. Source: Collection P. Joly. P. Zind, *Les Nouvelles Congrégations de Frères enseignants en France de 1800 à 1830*, p. 161.
2. Source: Photo taken by Br André Lanfrey
3. Source: *Marist Notebooks*, n. 25.
4. Source: *Bulletin de l'Institut*, T. 26, p. 474.
5. Source: *Bulletin de l'Institut*, T. 13, p. 289.
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Maps

- Map 1.** Source: P. Zind, 1969.
- Map 2.** Source: *Bulletin de l'Institut*, Vol. 2, p. 703.
- Map 3.** Source: Extract of Map IGN – Francia I: 100.000 n. 51. © IGN 1989 – Authorisation n. 50-9020.

- Map 4.** Source: Edelvives.
- Map 5.** Source: P. Zind, 1969.
- Map 6.** Source: P. Zind, 1969.
- Map 7.** Source: P. Zind, 1969.
- Map 8.** Source: Brothers André Lanfrey and Gilbert Pronost.
- Map 9.** Source: Brothers André Lanfrey and Gilbert Pronost. *Chronologie Mariste 2010*, p. 282.
- Map 10.** Source: Brothers André Lanfrey and Gilbert Pronost.
- Map 11.** Source: Chartier, Julia, & Compère, 1976.
- Map 12.** Source: Brothers André Lanfrey and Gilbert Pronost. *Chronologie Mariste 2010*, p. 283.
- Map 13.** Source: AFM, Rome.
- Map 14.** Source: Brother André Lanfrey.

Statistics

- Statistic 1.** Source: Br Avit, *Annales de l'institut*. A graphic elaborated from the lists of the habit-takings each year by the author.
- Statistic 2.** Source: Elaboration by Br André Lanfrey
- Statistic 3.** Source: Elaboration by Br André Lanfrey
- Statistic 4.** Source: Elaboration by Br André Lanfrey from different statistics.
- Statistic 5.** Source: Elaboration by Br André Lanfrey from different statistics.

Appendices

- Appendix 1** Source: P. Zind, *Les Nouvelles Congregations de Frères Enseignants en France de 1800 a 1830*, p. 13 - 15.
- Appendix 2** Source: of the map: Gérard Clerjon, 2012. Br André
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- Appendix 5** Source: Elaboration of Br André Lanfrey.
- Appendix 6** Source: Elaboration of Br André Lanfrey.

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