Chapter seven : 1839-2 *Gathering Speed*

In New Zealand: not a hearty welcome

Claude-André Baty was the only one who had known Pompallier in France. The three Brothers would at best have seen him when, already a bishop, he visited the Hermitage to bless the new chapel. Épalle and Petit had joined the Society after the first missionaries had left. But the man who walked in on them after two days in the bush was not the man they had known or heard about. They expected the charming and cheerful leader who only a few years earlier had aroused missionary enthusiasm among the Marists in France. Eighteen months of restless work, of hard living and tracking through the bush, of living roughly in Maori villages, of loneliness and frustration had taken their toll. They felt sorry for him, 'crushed down by the burden of work', as Baty described him. 'Let us hope we can comfort him and respond to his zeal'.[1]

But, comforting Pompallier was not easy. Their happy tales of visiting Wallis and Futuna were met with disapproval. The newcomers were convinced they had done the right thing: 'Our passage through the islands did the missions a lot of good'.[2] The only reaction was they should have come straight to New Zealand and not have gone there without permission.[3] When, two months later, Pompallier got around to writing to Colin, he needed only five lines in a letter of nine pages to tell Colin about the two islands, without even mentioning one of the four missionaries by name.[4]

The bishop reproached the newcomers for having unloaded a quantity of gifts in Wallis and Futuna. Everything should have come first to the headquarters of the mission. He was annoyed also that the little organ with which they had so much success in Wallis and Futuna, had stayed with Peter Chanel. In his next letter he asked Colin curtly to send another one: 'the heretics have one and we do not'.[5]

A source of particular irritation was the printing press. After muskets, nothing had so much prestige under the Maoris as books. Literacy had spread widely and the Protestants ran three presses in New Zealand, flooding the country with reading material.[6] The newcomers had bought a printing press with a stock of letters but it had been stowed away without being checked. When they opened the boxes, they found that the supplier had forgotten the letter 'o', frequent in Maori. Petit and the two brothers spent days filing away the bars from the letters 'b', not used in Maori.[7] Whether in the end the machines were incomplete or faulty, or whether it was their lack of training - on which Pompallier had insisted so much[8] - it took them weeks to get the printing press going. In September it finally produced an eight-page statement of the Catholic faith, the Apostles' Creed, the Lord's Prayer: the first Catholic printing in New Zealand. It gave the missionaries

---

[1] (..) *accablé sous le poids du travail; puissions nous le soulager et répondre à son zèle,* LRO, doc. 32 [2].
[2] LRO, doc. 32 [1].
[3] LRO, doc. 55 [12]: *qui a été fortement blâmé...*
[4] LRO, doc. 33 [6].
[5] LRO, doc. 34 [13] on the organ, doc. 37 [8].
[6] On literacy in NZ cf. Howe, op. cit. pp. 222ff.
[7] LRO, doc. 34 [5].
[8] LRO, doc. 7 [15] & doc. 8 [15].

something in hand they could distribute in the villages.[9] For the impatient bishop this was not fast enough; he sent a catechism manuscript to be printed in France.[10]

From the beginning the men were not happy with what they saw as the bishop's hyperactivity. They wanted a more regular life, and time for prayer and spiritual exercises. The bishop's zeal and good heart, wrote Maxime Petit later, makes him rush out at all times and do all sorts of things. 'He looks askance at us when we – more than he does - divide our time between duty to the neighbour and to ourselves. In the early days here, Father Épalle and myself did our spiritual exercises as much as possible at moments we thought he would not notice. Not that he stopped us from praying, but because on several occasions he reproached us for praying all the time'.[11]

All the upbraiding must have created a far from happy atmosphere in Kororareka: a repeat of what Servant and Michel had put up with in Papakawau for a whole year. What could they do but listen in stony silence to the constant nagging! Naturally they would afterwards talk - subdued - among themselves, which led the bishop to blow up and reproach them for ganging up on him, or, as he put it, nurturing an *esprit de corps*, that is 'forming a group apart'.[12] On one occasion he got so worked up that he threatened to get other missionaries from somewhere else.[13]

Action

With men at his disposal and money in his pocket, Pompallier wasted no time. He decided to leave the Hokianga area and move immediately to the Bay of Islands. He 'purchased a beach section with a house on it to serve as headquarters for the New Zealand mission, at a cost of £ 370'.[14] It meant the missionaries could begin unloading the *Reine de Paix*.[15] The house had a room big enough for Sunday Mass. The same year he bought two other sections of land adjoining the plot he had bought from John Roberton during the visit of the *Venus*.[16] He also acquired 'a large piece of land (..) for the sojourn of the natives and above all for several establishments of the Mission, college, store, hospital, workshop, school, church' and for a cemetery.[17] A young Catholic Irishman was employed to open a school for the children of the settlers as they had asked him to.[18]

From that moment Kororareka was the bishop's residence, the main station of the mission and the procure. He kept the Fathers Épalle and Petit and the Brothers Florentin and Marie-Augustin with him. Petit was appointed procurator in charge of sorting out and storing the mission goods. Claude-André Baty and Brother Élie-Régis were assigned to join Father Servant and Brother Michel at Papakawau on the Hokianga.

---

[9] Simmons, op. cit. p. 42.
[10] LRO, doc. 34 [8].
[11] Petit to Colin, 27.04.40, LRO, doc. 56 [6].
[12] LRO, doc. 56 [3].
[13] LRO, doc. 56 [3]. He asked Archbishop Polding to find him at least one English priest.
[14] Simmons, op. cit. p. 41, & p. 50, n. 8.
[15] LRO, doc. 33 [5].
[16] Cf. above, p. 90.
[17] Simmons, loc. cit. LRO, doc. 33 [5].
[18] Probably Henry Garnett from Liverpool. Cf. LRO, doc. 33 [6], p. 242, n. 12.

On the job

At this stage Father Catherin Servant had been in the Hokianga area for nearly a year and a half. English was still a problem, but he was fairly fluent in Maori.[19] However, the bishop had a low judgment of his abilities and considered him unsuitable for leadership. Claude Baty was put in charge, even though he had only just arrived and knew neither Maori nor English. He was told to take no notice of whatever Servant might tell him, as he 'was not of one mind with the bishop'.[20] Given the atmosphere in Kororareka, Baty lost no time getting away. He and Brother Elie-Régis packed their bags and walked across to the west coast.[21]

The first task of the new missionaries was studying languages. In spite of the fact that Pompallier had urged Colin already from Le Havre to have the missionaries start learning English[22] as soon as they were assigned to the missions, none of them had done so. Now they had to start from scratch. It meant that Pompallier was called in time and again to interpret. It cost him a lot of time and it hurt his pride to be reduced to be the interpreter whenever the carpenter needed a piece of timber or the cook a basket of potatoes: 'Bishop and all that I am, I have to be everybody's interpreter!'[23] At the same time the men had to learn Maori for which Pompallier had composed a grammar in Latin and a list of useful words.[24]

Unpacking the mission goods proved an unnerving job. Things had been packed helter-skelter, without lists of contents for each case. As a result several cases had to be opened at the same time to find specific items, which meant the locals were in the house all the time, admiring what came out of the boxes and trying to get hold of whatever took their fancy.[25]

Writing to Colin

Even before Pompallier reached Kororareka, Baty had begun a letter to his friend Claude-Pierre Nyd. He finished it a few days later.[26] Others also wrote.[27] Two months later, in August, a French whaler, the *Orion* entered the Bay of Islands, so they wrote again.[28] From the beginning the bishop had insisted that all letters to France be handed to him unsealed, even those to the superior general. He would take care of mailing them.

Pompallier himself sent a nine-page letter to Colin, dated 14 August, and entrusted it the next day to the captain.[29] Four days later, 18 August, he wrote what was meant to be a duplicate, but, before he got it away, another whaler, the *Pallas,* came in, delivering

---

[19] Servant to Colin, 31.05.41, LRO, doc. 97 [4].
[20] LRO, doc. 33 [7] & doc. 55 [6]: *à cause que je n'avais pas l'esprit uni à mon évêque*
[21] Cf. LRO, doc. 39 [2].
[22] LRO, doc. 7 [18]. doc. 8 [3] & doc. 21 [1].
[23] *Hélas, tout évêque que je suis, il faut alors que je sois l'interprète de chacun!* LRO, doc. 34 [7].
[24] LRO, doc. 34 [9 & 10].
[25] LRO, doc. 34 [3].
[26] LRO, doc. 32.
[27] Cf. LRO, doc. 84 [1].
[28] Cf. LRO, doc. 36.
[29] LRO, doc. 33, cf. doc. 36 [1].

a letter of Colin and one from the novices at Puylata.[30] He quickly answered both[31] and gave the two letters, with the mail that had come from Futuna two months earlier, to the captain of the *Pallas*.[32] On 28 August he wrote again via Sydney and London, expecting it to be the faster way.[33]

The bishop's letters are filled with the usual rhetoric about the immensity of the task he had faced for so long nearly alone – *presque seul* - and the paucity of the means at his disposal compared to the vast numbers of priests in France. He lavishes praise, in a rather condescending tone, on the Maori people: 'What simplicity, what frankness in those souls, what docility, what fervour for the instructions in the Faith'. He glories in his own role: 'It is a great consolation for a priest, for a bishop, to instruct those dear souls, to give them catechism and even a school education! Children, youth, men and women, girls and old men, they all crouch down around you and listen with the same docility'.[34]

He is grateful for all the clothing he received and suggests that the benefactors write their names in each piece, so that the catechumens who get the clothes can adopt the baptismal names of the benefactors.

He explains that, even with *Reine de Paix* at his disposal, he cannot go to Wallis and Futuna until the new missionaries speak enough English and Maori to manage by themselves.

He urges Colin to assign in each group someone who is in charge of packing and listing the missions goods they bring along. In France there should be a procurator to supervise the collecting and packing of mission goods and to help the missionaries who often lack experience in material matters.[35]

He needs a few really competent men to be pro-vicar or apostolic prefect for a part of the mission. He sees the need for someone to visit the missions to represent its interests in France under the responsibility of the superior general. From letters alone it is impossible to understand the situation.[36] He specifically names the Marists he would like Colin to send: Chanut, Lagniet, Forêt, men he knows well. 'France has enough priests for the salvation of the French. The Society should work for the salvation of Polynesia and its twelve to fifteen million inhabitants.'

Surprising is that Pompallier now asks Colin for someone to supervise the missionaries: someone who makes sure they follow the rule and apply themselves to their own sanctification.[37] Coming from Pompallier, bishop and superior, it sounds like an

---

[30] Colin's letter is dated 01.12.38 and the one of the novices of 02.12.38 have not been preserved. Cf. LRO, doc. 34 [14] & 35 [1].
[31] LRO, doc. 35
[32] LRO, docs. 34 & 35, cf. doc. 36 [4]. On the mail from Futuna, cf. above, p. 109, n. 67.
[33] LRO, doc. 37. The letters sent via Sydney and London arrived in fact first, i.e., in March 1840. Colin himself speaks of the end of April, CS, doc. 185 [4]. Chavas, in the original version of an official letter to the government says it was in March, cf. CS, doc. 177 [5]. As Colin is often careless in these matters, we agree with G. Lessard (CS, p. 288, n. 2) when he gives Chavas the benefit of the doubt. Shortly afterwards, in the first half of May, Colin received the mail sent with the *Orion* CS, doc. 185 [4]. The *Pallas* reached her home port Le Havre only in September, thirteen months after sailing from New Zealand! CS, doc. 200 [1]. Cf. above, p. 109, n. 67.
[34] LRO, doc. 33 [2].
[35] LRO, doc. 33 [9] & 34 [4].
[36] LRO, doc. 34 [16].
[37] (..) *dans la charge de veiller spécialement l'exécution de la règle et à la sanctification des sujets dans leur état* LRO, doc. 34 [15].

admission of defeat. After a year and a half with Servant and Colombon, and two months with the second group of missionaries, he in fact concedes that there is something he cannot handle. Not that he has complaints about their religious or priestly life. Nor can it be said that they neglect their prayer life. If anything, he finds they pray too much! Saying they need to apply themselves more to their 'rule' and to their 'sanctification' can only mean they fail in the sort of obedience he expects from them, and that is something he cannot cope with! The letter he writes the same day to the novices at Puylata confirms this interpretation.

To the novices

It is the sort of spiritual conference one would expect from a visiting bishop to a group of novices, underlining the importance of the novitiate and the value of the hidden life they lead in preparation to their future ministry, but at the same time it betrays the problems and the tensions of the day. 'We are overwhelmed by the task. Oh, come to our aid, dear Society of Mary! But come to our aid in the way of the obedience that is so dear to you, and that is the most effective cause of success and holiness. Obedience must be the virtue *par excellence* of missionaries and catechists (i.e. the Brothers) and the children of Mary'.[38]

Equally revealing is another passage. As mentioned above, the men wanted a regular life in which work and spiritual exercises alternated. They would have liked to say Mass every day, but there was only one Holy Eucharist a day, which limited each one to saying Mass every third day and on Sundays. It even happened that they said Mass only once a week, because 'the work had to go on'.[39] 'Prayer, pious thoughts and sentiments are good things', the bishop wrote to the novices, 'but what we need in the missions is action, the full commitment of all a man's faculties, full co-operation with God in everything of his service. Piety must not stand in the way of this commitment to the full.[40]

For the first time in all his letters Pompallier also mentions the need for sisters in the missions. 'for priests, brothers, and soon perhaps sisters, there are beautiful souls to win here'[41] What triggered this sudden interest in the sisters is not clear. Perhaps something in the letter from the novices.

On the Hokianga

When in June 1839 Pompallier moved to Kororareka, and Baty with Brother Elie-Régis joined Servant and Brother Michel in Papakawau, the Hokianga people missed their benefactor. As a result, the chiefs at first had little respect for Servant and Baty.[42] Some adherents threatened to give up attendance at religious services if the gifts did not continue to flow!

---

[38] LRO, doc. 35 [4].
[39] Petit to Colin, 27.04.40, LRO, doc. 56 [6].
[40] *ad robur, cf.* LRO, doc. 35 [4]. Cf. below, Epilogue, p. 3.
[41] LRO, doc. 35 [5].
[42] LRO, doc. 39 [4], doc. 55 [5].

The newly arrived missionaries had brought parcels of mail and on 15 October Servant took a day off to answer. The letter he had received from Colin must have been in the same spirit as the one to Bataillon that has been preserved.[43] Servant appreciated the firm spiritual guidance from the superior general:

> Your letter of 1 August 1838 has reached me here and it has given me unbelievable joy. I bless God a thousand times for the paternal feelings you express and for the concern you have for my spiritual welfare. How I am touched by your exhortations. How grateful am I for your directions and warnings that make me feel your love for me. I am very happy to live in your memory and in your vigilance.[44]

On four closely written pages Servant gives Colin a charming and realistic picture of his visits to the Maori tribes. He took Baty along from the beginning. He tells of their attempts to communicate, of the situations they run into, the misunderstandings and of how, in the end, through patience and listening, the message of peace and reconciliation gets across. They had to overcome the disadvantage of coming nearly empty-handed, but they managed to do some good. On one place in Whirinaki[45] they convinced chiefs and people to make peace with a neighbouring tribe instead of going to war, and in Waima they stopped a chief from killing a man who had committed adultery with his wife.[46]

The Protestants continued to spread all sorts of false information about the Catholic doctrine, but it had , writes Servant, sometimes the effect that people came to talk to the priest to hear his side of the story, which gave him a good opportunity to instruct them. He describes himself doing this, his three-cornered biretta on the head, breviary in the hand. The Protestants, he says, sometimes baptize people without previous instruct-ion so as to keep them from going to the priest. He too on one occasion was asked to baptize somebody alleged to be in danger of death, but he refrained from doing so, convinced the man would live. He did, and was instructed before baptism.[47]

From Terraillon too Servant had received a letter and on the same 15 October he answered him as well. Four pages show Servant to be a close observer of Maori ways. Nothing escapes his careful attention: their gestures, the tone of their voices in different circumstances, the horrible faces they pull at times, the decorations on the bodies of men and women, their works of art, their music and their dances. He describes it all in great detail, with respect and empathy, and without paternalism or romanticism. The letter was the first sketch of what eventually grew into a worthy monument of ethnography.[48]

In September Pompallier used the *Reine de Paix* for a visit around the north point of New Zealand to the west coast and the Hokianga area. He visited several Maori centres and bought a hundred acres of land at *Purakau,* as an alternative for *Papakawau* which had proved to be unsatisfactory.[49] The new site was not developed as a mission centre,

---

[43] Above, p. 82, CS, doc. 44.
[44] LRO, doc. 39 [1].
[45] We follow modern standardized spelling of Maori names.
[46] LRO, doc. 39 [3 & 4].
[47] LRO, doc. 39 [7 & 8].
[48] *Moeurs et coutumes des Neo-Zélandais 1838-42*, Ms, APM, 1661/24563. It was published as *Father Servant Marist Missionary in the Okianga*, transl. E Simmons, Reed, Wellington, 1973.
[49] Simmons, op.cit. p. 42.

there was not even a church built, but it served as a place for the missionaries to live and from where it was easier to visit the Maori villages. Strangely enough, Servant, writing around the same time, does not mention either the bishop's journey, or the land purchase. Did Pompallier not visit them? Or did Servant disagree with the move?

In Island Polynesia: Wallis

Already before the visit of the six new missionaries, in May 1839, several Wallisians had shown an interest in the *lotu.* Bataillon had gathered a group of catechumens, led by the chief Tuugahala. They met secretly for prayers and religious instruction on Nukuatea, a small island on the outer ring of the lagoon that belonged to him. The *Lavelua* liked the two missionaries personally but, as many of his people, he detested all the white men's religions. When, in March 1939, he fell ill, and his healers could not help him, the king ordered Bataillon in a fit of anger to get off the island. When Bataillon pretended to get ready to leave, the king did everything to keep him back.[50]

Wallis, or *Uvea* as the Polynesians called it, had a bad name. Many ships, whalers and traders, used its safe lagoon as a shelter, but looting ships was a national pastime and Tuugahala was feared by sea captains as a gang leader.[51] When in October 1838 people on Wallis planned to attack an American whaler, the *John Adams,* and had the *Lavelua's* permission to do so, it was Tuugahala who kept them back.[52]

The visit changed the nature of the mission. It tore off the last pretence and made it clear that Bataillon and Joseph-Xavier were missionaries and had settled on the island for no other purpose than converting it to their *lotu.* During Bataillon's absence on Futuna, Brother Joseph had baptized six children. One of the *Lavelua's* grandchildren too had become ill and it had died before Brother had a chance to baptize it. The number of catechumens was increasing but the *Lavelua's* resistance only grew stronger. He chased the catechumens from Nukuatea, beat up one of their leaders and destroyed a house. But all the time he allowed the missionaries to live in his own compound.

For a year[53] Bataillon had worked on a detailed, fifteen pages report on Wallis and its people.[54] While the visitors were there he added another seven pages[55] and handed it to them for mailing from New Zealand. In July 1839 he was back in Wallis and started another letter that eventually ran to eighteen pages. Because he had not thought in time of making a copy of the first one, he repeated – from memory – a lot of data already contained in the first one.[56]

Part of the letter[57], apparently written in view of being published in the *Annales* is a passionate appeal in the name of 'we, poor Ocean islanders' *nous pauvres Océaniens*

[50] LRO, doc. 28 [25].
[51] EC, p. 376, 29.08.38.
[52] EC, p.384, 02.10.38. Rozier thinks that Chanel got the story from Jones, and that Jones got it from Tuugahala himself, boasting of his own role and importance. The context allows to think that Chanel got the story from Bataillon's letter. Even if it comes from Tuugahala himself, it is remarkable as a change of attitude in comparison with his notorious behaviour.
[53] Starting in July 1838.
[54] LRO, doc. 28 [1 – 20].
[55] LRO, doc. 28 [21 – 31].
[56] LRO, doc. 38 [1- 27], especially [2].
[57] Especially the paragraphs 11 to 22.

and addressed to 'you, children of Saint Irenaeus' (the founder of the Church in Lyon)[58]. It is in very much the same bombastic style that Pompallier used and that must have been acceptable at the time.

Bataillon developed a broader vision of missionary work than the familiar 'saving of souls'. Already before we came here, he writes, other people had introduced cotton, water melon, maize, tobacco, and sweet potato. The Marists had brought in different varieties of vine to grow grapes, orange, pineapple, potato, flax, melon, beet, chicory, rape, mustard and the castor-oil plant. They were also trying to grow cabbage, onions and carrots. They had tried various grains, such as wheat, rye and hemp but without success. 'Perhaps the seed was too old', he explains, 'or we sowed it in the wrong season'. The vines were doing well, but Bataillon doubted if they would produce grapes. Some things died, others flourished. They already had a hundred orange-trees that were growing well. Cotton too was promising. Brother Joseph had succeeded in spinning a good quantity of cotton, ready for weaving. Hemp too would be useful. Although seldom mentioned in the letters, it is evident the Marists had a program of introducing useful plants into Polynesia, 'for the good of humanity and even religion!'[59]

Even more important for humanity and religion, Bataillon writes, would be to find remedies for the tropical diseases they encountered. He gives lengthy and detailed descriptions of what appear to be yaws, leprosy and filariasis. As the islanders blame these things on evil spirits, healing them would prove that the spirits do not exist or at least that the God of the missionaries is stronger than their evil spirits. The story went that the Protestant missionaries in Tonga had tablets against some of these diseases and Bataillon plans to find out. In the meantime he wants Colin to see if doctors in France recognize his descriptions and can supply remedies. He regrets not having used his time in France to learn more about diseases. He regrets not to have brought books of medicine.[60]

The missionaries, he reminds Colin, live and work in an English speaking world. There are many Protestants and he has to refute their calumnies and accusations but he knows not enough English. He begs Colin to send him books of apologetics in English, catechisms, bibles, Church history, especially on the Reformation, prayer books, etc. Especially among the Europeans we find all over the Pacific, he says, we should spread good books to replace the rubbish they often have in hand. They inhabit the islands where we work; we are just as much responsible for their salvation as for the heathens.[61]

He praises the Methodists in Tonga for having translated large parts of the Bible. The translator, a certain John Thomas (whom they had met when visiting the island of Vava`u) has caught the genius of the language, says Bataillon. He has obtained a copy of the translation and is going through it carefully and critically. On controversial issues he finds what he considers a few perverse and intentionally false renderings, but he also acknowledges the accuracy of texts on the Holy Eucharist. Only, he adds, it seems that in stead of bread they use the fruit of the bread-tree for Communion. How awful![62]

---

[58] And in fact published in 1841, pp. 396-397, and 388-401. Cf. LRO, p. 281, n. 15.
[59] LRO, doc. 38 [23].
[60] LRO, doc. 38 [24-25]. *Il seroit bon qu'un missionnaire en Océanie surtout soit un homme universel*.
[61] LRO, doc. 38 [25].
[62] LRO, doc. 38 [26]. *Il a bien saisi le génie de la langue.* The editor of the LRO notes that the translations were done by a group of people, and that Thomas was not the most important of them. LRO, p. 290, n. 27.

In early September Falemaa, a Wallisian chief, went across to Futuna on Jones' schooner and spread the story that Wallis would soon accept the *lotu.* When a Tongan chief, Tuponeafu, on a visit to Wallis, converted with his family to the Catholic faith, it made quite an impression.[63]

Futuna

Unlike Bataillon on Wallis, Chanel had never made a secret of his intention to convert Futuna, but his approach had been very low-key. After twenty months he could report only four adult and sixteen infant baptisms, all in danger of death. Tales of oppresssive conduct by Protestant missionaries reached Futuna from Tonga, Fiji, Samoa, Hawaii and Tahiti. As a result there was widespread distrust of the *lotu papalangi* (white man's religion). Nevertheless, Chanel could write: 'King Niuliki promised Bishop Pompallier that we would be well looked after on his island, and he has done everything to keep word. He likes us as a father'. In March 1839, an important advisor of the king said openly that this *lotu* would be a good thing for Futuna..

'Because the bishop had not come after six months as he had promised, Brother Marie-Nizier and myself were considered liars, and men who had been abandoned.' The visit of the *Reine de Paix* had changed their situation. 'The arrival of our confreres has the best possible effect on all the minds', he wrote during their presence, 'they listen to us with pleasure, everyone wants to meet the new arrivals, and they do not stop asking for their names. When told of the interest that the people in France take in them, their eyes fill with tears. Wherever we turn up it is: *marie Farani* (long live the French!)'.[64]

Still, if the two missionaries had never been considered a threat in any way, they had possibly been seen as rather harmless. The visit made clear that the religious future of Futuna was at stake, that Chanel and Marie-Nizier were not there because they had been abandoned by their own. On the contrary, they were on a mission, backed by a large organization overseas.

Once Bataillon had left (3 July), the two were on their guard for signs of estrangement. On 8 September Niuliki came and asked for goat's milk for his sick child, a week later (17 September) he visited them and prepared them a meal. On his way to Asoa Vere, on 16 October, Niuliki walked through Poi and passed the house where the two were pre-sent, without calling in. On his way back he walked past again. It was unusual enough to be noted in the diary, but as subsequent events show, relations between Chanel and Niuliki were as friendly as before.[65] On 5 December Chanel ate with the King and the senior chiefs as usual.

A few days later Chanel felt free enough to argue with the king when he wanted to make an offering to the *atua muri.* Niuliki did not give in but he listened. On 22 December Chanel had a friendly discussion with the king on religious matters. Also in December a group of people were building a little sanctuary for an ancestral spirit to

[63] Chanel to Bishop Devie, EC, doc. 56 [6].
[64] EC, doc. 56.
[65] François Roulleaux, later a missionary on Futuna and first biographer of Chanel, interprets Niuliki walking past the missionaries house without calling, as a sign of his growing resistance to the *lotu.* Neither the letters Chanel wrote at the time, nor the diary justify this conclusion. Rozier, the editor of Chanel's writings also disagrees with Roulleaux. Cf. EC, p. 472, n. 5 and p. 483, n. 3. More likely, as Chanel writes, it was connected with the long drought the ancestral spirits were failing to bring to an end (09.10.39).

obtain rain. Peter Chanel surprised them by not going to look at them and not lending them his tools for a job he said is for the devil. People put it down to a bad mood, and let him get away with it. On 15 November a pig he had just bought was stolen while Chanel was away. The relatives of the thieves came to apologize and gave him another one.

A few people expressed a desire to become Christians. On 29 September Chanel made mention of a young catechumen who came to apologize because he had carved his face for mourning, evidently something he knew Chanel disapproved of. 14 November Chanel speaks of a real interest in religious instruction among Singave people. They now, he noted, are no longer afraid to eat fish and birds that are taboo (*tapu*). After a baptism in danger of death the dying young man wanted to be assured that there are coconuts in heaven and the same clean water as on Futuna! On 3 December a chief told Chanel the whole island would turn Christian if the king allowed. One Futunan kindly brought a nice piece of pork so they could offer it to the God of the *papalangi.*

On 18 September Chanel baptized a sick child of Musumusu (a chief close to the king), it dies a week later. On 9 November a small son of Niuliki was seriously ill, Chanel baptized it with the consent of both father and mother, in a full baptismal ceremony in their presence. On 9 December he gave a Christian burial to a grandson of the King that he had baptized. People were moved to tears by the beautiful ritual and said they too wanted to be buried that way.

Chanel takes care of his correspondence

The *Reine de Paix* had brought a thick parcel of letters. Once the visitors were gone he had the time and the leisure to answer. He wrote a long letter to Bishop Devie, in which, with many other things, he reflected on the death of Claude Bret with the conclusion: 'Missionaries die; the mission goes on'.[66]

He wrote a long letter to his friend Bourdin and to Antoine Séon to whom he confided that the moment of grace for Futuna was near[67]. He wrote to Bajard, the chaplain of the sisters of Fourvière through whom he sent his regards to Canon Pastre, the man who set the Marists on the way to Oceania. He wrote to a priest near Cras, where his mother lived, and to Vincent Vuillod Bolliat, the parish priest of Cras whom he thanked him for looking after his mother. He wrote to two boys at the minor seminary of Belley, Claude Buiron and Loÿs, and an open letter to all of the boys.[68] His letters show Chanel to be a warm-hearted man. With every letter he sent greetings to former colleagues and to friends, often with special mention of their mothers or sisters. He retained an interest in what happens in France, and mentioned the new steam-boats on the Rhône that the visitors must have told about and that, he added, must make travelling a lot easier for Colin.[69] He did not forget the parents of his friend Claude Bret, of whom he had heard that they had taken their loss with edifying resignation.[70]

[66] EC, doc. 57 [3].
[67] EC, doc. 54 [2].
[68] Resp. EC, docs 56, 53, 55, 58, 52 & 49.
[69] EC, doc. 54 [6].
[70] EC, doc. 54 [9].

From France, group three on the way

Around the same time that, with the visit of the second group of missionaries to Wallis and Futuna, and their arrival in New Zealand, the missionary presence in the Pacific increased, the next group set out from France. After the professions on Pentecost Sunday, 19 May 1839, they were ready to leave.[71] Colin gave them some 2.000 francs in small change for travel expenses and on Tuesday 21 May the confreres in Lyon saw Petitjean and Viard off on the river-steamer leaving Lyon[72]: a lot more comfortable than the former coaches! As they drew out of the city, they felt the pain of leaving, but the comfort of the ship allowed them to get over it in what Petitjean remembers as 'sweet conversation'. They relaxed after the last minute bustle, and reflected gratefully on the eager care of Poupinel and the concern of their superiors. Mutual support carried them along and they enjoyed each other's company.

They moved up the Saône and via the canals of Bourgogne they reached Paris where they stayed at the *Missions Étrangères.* The bursar had already bought what was further needed (a list had been sent ahead), and they only needed to pack things. They visited the Ministry of the Navy and with the letter of recommendation from Archbishop de Pins, and the help of Vigneti, who was an acquaintance of Pierre Colin and secretary at the ministry, they obtained letters of recommendation from the Minister, Duperré, to naval commanders in the Pacific. They visited the Picpus head-house and met with a venerable old priest, an uncle of Fr. Bachelot whose death on the way to Pohnpei had recently become known in Paris.[73] Another steamer took them to Boulogne (although the coach would have been 18 francs cheaper!) where for an extra 1.25 franc they booked a bed on the ferry and reached London twelve hours later, well rested, on Monday 27 May.

Comte, Chevron and Brother Attale left Lyon the 23rd and reached Paris the 25th. They too stayed at the *Missions Étrangères* and left early the next morning. They made good use of the short time they spent at the seminary listening to the experienced missionaries in charge there, Dubois the rector and Tesson the bursar. The two found the Marists a bit supernatural, trusting too much in Providence. They drew their attention to the importance of the natural sciences, of botany and geology, and invited them to send plant seeds to the botanical society in Paris. Comte listened with some surprise and passed it on to Colin. They went on to Boulogne and crossed over to London where they arrived Tuesday 28 May. On 23 July the departure of five Marists, via London, was mentioned in the *Ami de la Religion.*[74]

---

[71] Cf. above, p. 105.
[72] Letters from third group during voyage, APM, 1405/20043. CS, doc. 70 [2].
[73] Bachelot and Maigret had sailed from Honolulu in November 1837, Bachelot died 5 December, Maigret left Pohnpei in July 1838 and reached Valparaiso in December, a few days after Baty *cum suis*, cf. above, p. 67 and 93. His letters do not mention it, but Petitjean must have heard in Paris that the second group had been in Valparaiso in December. Petitjean to Colin, 25.05.1839.
[74] *L'Ami de la Religion*, 23.07.1839 (102), p. 152.

London

In February 1838 Peter Dillon had met with Bishop Pompallier in the Bay of Islands.[75] He would have heard how the Marists had travelled around Cape Horn. Later that year he left the Pacific, passed through Paris and reached London 10 January 1839. He immediately attempted to start a commercial venture to exploit his knowledge of the Pacific and joined up with a Sydney man, Daniel Cooper, a pardoned deportee, who had built a successful shipping business in London. Dillon had an acquaintance in Paris, a certain Peter Scratchley, to whom he sent a letter that found its way to Father Colin. From his extensive knowledge of the oceans Dillon argued that Cape Horn was about the worst way to go to New Zealand. He recommended travelling through London where his friend Cooper offered passage to Sydney for £ 70, a journey of four to five months at the most. Cooper could also arrange passage from Sydney to New Zealand for a mere £ 10. Mission goods to Sydney cost £ 2 per ton.[76]

As far as we know the superior general did not react, but on 29 April Pierre Colin wrote to Heptonstall, Archbishop Polding's agent in London, asking for accommodation for five missionaries and begging him to look for a ship to Australia.[77] He may have mentioned Peter Dillon; in any case, Heptonstall contacted Dillon who came to a provisional agreement with Cooper for passage on the newly commissioned *Australasian Packet*. Dillon wrote to Pierre Colin but his letter, sent 23 May, arrived after the departure of the missionaries who therefore did not know that Colin Pierre had confirmed a booking through Dillon.

Heptonstall had arranged a boarding house for the missionaries, run by a respectable Catholic for 25 shilling a week: 'less expensive and more comfortable' than a hotel.[78] Petitjean and Viard ran into a local businessman, a Mr. Knill, who helped them get their luggage through customs without trouble and get it stored. Chevron, Comte and Attale followed two days later, but it was a hassle – with barely any knowledge of the language - for the two groups to find each other, and to contact Heptonstall.

Not knowing about the arrangements already made, the missionaries started looking around themselves for a way to book for Sydney and were directed by a Catholic but – they felt – not quite trustworthy character called Devoy, to the captain of a ship going to Australia, the *Sultan.* They had nearly come to an agreement when Dillon was informed by Heptonstall of their arrival and turned up with Pierre Colin's letter! Petitjean had no choice but wriggle out of his near-agreement with the *Sultan* but he cleverly used it to bring the fare with Cooper down from 64 to 60 pounds.[79] For that price they booked on the *Australasian Packet*.[80]

Petit-Jean reported to Colin that they had left Lyon with 40.781 francs, and having paid their expenses in London and their fare to Sydney (5 x 60 = £ 300, i.e. 7.500 francs), they had, including a few other gifts, 35.360 francs left.[81] Personal cheques for

---

[75] Cf. above, p. 70.
[76] Letters from Peter Dillon: APM, 2276/11653.
[77] Pierre Colin's letter crossed with a second one of Dillon, dated 3 May. Jean-Claude Colin wrote to Dillon on 16 May, possibly to acknowledge that second one, which has not been found. Cf. CS, p. 126, n.1.
[78] Heptonstall to Pierre Colin, 25.05.39, APM, 511/421.
[79] Heptonstall wrote that fares would be between £ 70 and £ 80.
[80] Dillon tells the story differently. Cf. Davidson, op. cit. p. 298. Davidson calls the ship the *Australia.*
[81] Petit-Jean to Colin, from Gravesend, 15.06.39.

more than £ 300 (7.500 francs) would take a month to be cashed in Sydney, so they divided the money among themselves and each one took a personal cheque.[82] It then appeared that the boxes of the second group were missing and Comte had to cross back to Boulogne to trace them. Their first conclusion: new missionaries should know at least some English before departure, even if, in Chevron's words, it is 'the most barbaric language spoken under the sun'. Second conclusion: the Society should as soon as possible, open a house in London, to facilitate travelling to Oceania, but also because of the vast pastoral opportunities the city offers. Petitjean gave Colin already several addresses of people who would be happy to help.

That left them with three weeks to explore London. They found things very expensive in what they called that Babylon near the port. They could not believe how big London was ('twice the size of Paris') and how well laid out it was: sidewalks everywhere, wide open squares and parks closed off for vehicles. *La plus belle ville du monde.*

Quite a few Catholic churches, 'small, poor but very clean!' They lodged near Saint-Thomas' but, in order not to embarrass the parish priest, they went to say Mass at different places. Everywhere they went, priests were friendly and invited them for breakfast.

They went on long walks, (dressed in the frock coats – *redingotes* - they had been fitted out with in Lyon), admired Saint Paul's, London Bridge and Westminster Abbey and, as they moved about without a map, they got repeatedly lost.[83]. They would go out without noting down their own address, and without money in their pockets to take a cab. Afraid to take a coach, for fear they would not find their way back, they walked for miles! England was a true discovery. They were surprised at how well the British people lived (carpets to the front door!), how calm and composed they were, and how courteous and helpful. Even at the customs office, things were tidy and clear..

Our Frenchmen got a good dose of culture shock. Comte found the English peaceful (police are unarmed!), phlegmatic, but, he added, they all look alike! Women lack the delicacy and modesty that only religion can give. Those big blond men, Comte felt, all stared at his black hair and beard.[84] They struggled with the English food (seasoned so as to melt one's palate!). To become an Englishman you have to eat all dishes at the same time and mix them together. Petitjean is full of praise for everything, except the English kitchen.[85] Not to speak about the British habit of drinking beer at table instead of wine!

They paid a visit to Lord Petre, of an old Catholic noble family, who was a director of the New Zealand Company that sent regular ships with migrants. They got various letters of recommendation.

They had a look at their ship, the *Australasian Packet.* A new ship, just being registered. Small, but beautiful and comfortable, *vraiment coquet*! They were assigned three cabins, Viard and Attale sharing one, Chevron and Comte the next one. Petitjean had a cabin for himself. They were given two little cabins to say Mass when the weather

[82] Comte to Poupinel, from London, 14.06.39, p. 2.
[83] Petitjean to Paillasson, from Sydney, p. 2.
[84] Comte to Colin, Poupinel, 14.06.39, p. 3
[85] *ce n'est que dans la cuisine que les Anglais n'entendent rien*

permitted. They bought Mass wine, flour (to make hosts), candles, paper and pencils, deck chairs and chamber pots.[86]

Travelling

Inspection by the British customs was a mere formality. When the customs officer saw a theology book he closed the bag and let everything pass. The missionaries got the mission goods and their personal luggage on board in London and followed it to Gravesend from where they sailed on 14 June 1839. In spite of their objections the two boxes that happened to hold their chalices were stacked under in the hold so they could not say Mass.[87] The ship sailed with 36 people on board, crew included. The courtesy and the respectful manners of the British surprised the French priests. They were even more sur-prised when they were asked to say a prayer before meals whereby all present, Jews and Protestants, would stand up, hats in the hand.

After a few rough days the sea calmed and a fine wind carried them to São Tiago, in Cape Verde, where they stayed four days to take on water. The captain kindly had the sailors go down into the hold to get the boxes with the chalices, so the priests could say Mass from then on.

Cape Verde was what the Canary Islands had been to the first group[88]: their first confrontation with a strange world. The tropical vegetation deceived them into thinking they had found the horn of plenty. 'If only their natural laziness would not prevent these people from working!'. They saw the numerous slaves and picked up stories of ill-treatment by their owners, and they met a poorly instructed clergy that – they found - showed little zeal. Their missionary spirit nearly tempted them to get involved, especially when people started kissing their hands, but they stuck to distributing medals.

Both Brother Attale and Petitjean sent letters home and the stories were published in the *Annales de la Propagation de la Foi* of January 1840. On 16 July they celebrated the feast of Our Lady of the Carmel and left that evening.[89]

During the three months sailing, from Cape Verde around the Cape of Good Hope, across the Indian Oceania, they knew rough days but for the most part the voyage was uneventful. Only in Bass Strait the *Australasian Packet* barely escaped being thrown on an uncharted submerged rock. Nearing Sydney the captain slaughtered the remaining livestock for a last festive meal when the ship was becalmed for a week. Finally in the early morning of 23 October the ship dropped anchor.

Sydney

The missionaries presented themselves to Archbishop Polding who took them to the chapel for a *Te Deum* and graciously offered them the hospitality of his residence.

---

[86] From London and Gravesend, Petit-Jean to Colin, 26.05.39 & 15.06.39. Also from London, Comte to Colin and to Poupinel, 14.06.39.

[87] One of them wrote it was done out of malice, which, given subsequent events is unlikely. The Frenchmen were inclined to suspect everywhere the anticlericalism common at home. Colin followed suit (CS, doc. 99)

[88] Cf. above, p. 46.

[89] From Cape Verde, Petitjean to Paillasson, Attale to Champagnat APM, 1405.20043. *Annales,* janvier 1840, LXVIII, p. 110.

Next Sunday there was a solemn High Mass in the cathedral in thanksgiving for what was announced as the fortuitous voyage of the new missionaries.[90]

The buildings in Sydney reminded the Frenchmen of London, except that Sydney streets were wider and the houses stood apart, well spaced, surrounded by gardens. Sydney had 'a population of over 20.000, and a main street two miles long, with splendid public buildings and residences that would have done credit to a provincial town in England.'[91]

The Marists were impressed by Archbishop Polding and his Benedictine monks, especially their care and compassion for the vast numbers of deportees, many of whom were Catholics from Ireland and Canada.[92] The positive impression they had gained of the British people in London changed when they saw the harsh and arrogant treatment meted out to prisoners in Australia. Petitjean accompanied Polding on a visit to the prisons. He was told how they were often sent off to Australia on the smallest of pretexts. He also heard from the Benedictines about the aboriginal people and the inhumane way they were treated.[93]

There were several ships to New Zealand, some were booked full, others had left by the time the Marists found out about them.[94] Finally, by the end of November they left on the *Marthe* and reached the Bay of Islands, probably on 10 December 1839.[95]

In France: a new player on the field

In 1838 a man entered the Society of Mary who was to play a major role in the running of the Oceania missions: Victor Poupinel.[96] He was born in 1815 in Vassy, in the diocese of Bayeux, Normandy, and had passed through the seminaries of his diocese. As a seminarian he learned of the Society of Mary and its missions from the Annals of the Propagation of the Faith. Shortly after his ordination as a deacon, in July 1838, he was given permission to enter the Society of Mary with a view of going to Oceania. He joined the community at the minor seminary of Belley when Jean-Claude Colin was officially still the superior there. It did not take Colin long to notice his extraordinary gifts. In September 1838 Poupinel was sent to Lyon to do his novitiate in Puylata under Claude Girard as novice master. Local superior was Pierre Colin who handled day-to-day business for his brother Jean-Claude, especially in financial matters and for the missions. In May Poupinel, while still a deacon and a novice, was asked to do secretarial work connected with the missions. Perhaps his Norman background helped, in any case, he immediately set to learning English. From that time on, letters to Rome, to the Propagation of the Faith and many others are of his hand. He made his profession on 3 September and was ordained a priest on the 15th. He was immediately appointed *procureur général de la mission*.[97]

---

[90] Montfat, op. cit. p. 108ff. Chevron to Colin, 23.11.1839.
[91] Yarwood, op. cit. p. 270, quoting a letter of Samuel Marsden from 1836.
[92] The armed rebellion of Louis Papineau, 1837-'38 led to a wave of deportations from Québec.
[93] From Sydney, Petitjean to Paillasson, undated.
[94] LRO, 46 [1].
[95] Pompallier to Colin, 08.01.1840, LRO, doc. 47 [2]. There are slight variations in the date of arrival.
[96] CS I, p. 111, n.1
[97] Pompallier alluded to the need of someone in this role in December 1836. cf. LRO, doc. 4 [7 & 16]. Again from New Zealand, 14.08.39, LRO, doc. 39 [9]. Bataillon also asked for it, cf. LRO, doc. 38 [27].

Still in May, just after Petitjean and his companions had left for London, a parcel of documents from Rome arrived in Lyon for Bishop Pompallier. Deacon Victor Poupinel forwarded them to Heptonstall with the request to hand them to the missionaries, or, if they had left, mail them to New Zealand. In a brave attempt to write in English he introduced himself as having been given the task of looking after the affairs of the mis-sions and humbly apologized for the mistakes he was bound to make, he wrote, in your 'outlandish language'.[98]

Heptonstall had graciously offered his services to the Oceania missions and between the two of them they quickly rationalized communications. From now on mail for Oceania will go via the superior of the Foreign Missions in Paris and the chaplain of the French embassy in London. Parcels are to be addressed to an agent in Boulogne. Every-thing comes together at Heptonstall's office who will take care of sending things to Polding in Sydney. Expenses will be refunded by Charles Weld of the Propagation of the Faith in London. Weld will be reimbursed by the Propagation in Lyon via Choiselat, their secretary in Paris. Poupinel offered to come to London if that would be useful.[99]

It was a learning experience for both Poupinel and Colin. Often Poupinel made the first draft (*minute*) for a letter and Colin would annotate. Some letters went through several drafts before the final text (*expédition*) was neatly written and sent off. The drafts were often filed for reference, but Poupinel always kept a summary as well. For Cardinal Fransoni Poupinel wrote a draft that contained minor matters such as asking advice on the possible opening of a Marist house in London, the disappointing lack of news from Wallis and Futuna, the increasing numbers of migrants from England to New Zealand etc. The final version was trimmed back to the business at hand and dispatched.[100] It gave Poupinel a chance to learn from Colin's way of handling affairs: short and to the point.

From then on all letters were acknowledged and referred to by their dates, something that – to the irritation of Pompallier - Colin seldom did. Amounts of money were given in exact figures with indications of how and when they were sent. Little things, but they added a welcome edge of professionalism to the administration of the missions.

Widening the horizon

Victor Poupinel took over the contacts with the Propagation of the Faith and in lengthy discussions with Meynis he enquired how other missions operated. He wrote to the Picpus head-house about shipping opportunities and got a prompt answer from the superior general, Mgr. Bonamie, about a navy vessel due to sail for New Zealand.[101]

At the end of September Colin sent Poupinel with Antoine Dubreul, still a novice, on a tour to Paris and Normandy. They returned the first week of November, about the time that Colin moved from Belley to Lyon. They stayed at the Foreign Missions as all the missionaries had done.[102]

---

[98] CS, docs 73 [1].
[99] CS, doc. 80 [3].
[100] CS, doc. 82 shows two drafts, final version and summary.
[101] *L'Aube* that in fact sailed only 19 February 1840 under Captain Lavaud. Cf. Jore, op. cit. I, p. 197f.
[102] If Poupinel kept notes of his contacts they have not been found back. The following details are found in the letters he wrote after his return to Pompallier and the people he had met. Cf. CS, docs. 97ff.

They visited the new[103] foreign minister, Marshal Soult, whom they found enthusiastic about the support that the French government could and should give to its foreign missionaries: bringing Catholicism to those islands means making them French![104] French commanders must protect French missionaries, because they spread French influence in the Pacific and open the way to French commerce. If the mission buys land it should be registered with naval captains. The government must establish French stations, send consular agents and give financial support. Poupinel got the impression that the minister's concern was not only commercial and political, but religious and humanitarian as well. Soult was indignant at 'the barbarous way Britain was destroying primitive peoples' and. France should call a halt to the English invasion into the Pacific (*paralyser l'envahissement des Anglais*)! He asked for a detailed report on the activities of the Marist missions. They also visited Jean-Baptiste Teste, the finance minister who promised a thousand francs for the missionaries who, a few weeks earlier, had visited the ministry when passing through Paris.

Poupinel and Dubreul went to see the nuncio, Antonio Garibaldi and McSweeney the rector of the Irish college in Paris who immediately offered the Society of Mary a college in Limerick and they paid a visit to the Picpus head-house.

They travelled to Normandy where two priests in Caen, friends of Maxime Petit, had donated altar linen and vestments for the missions. In Le Havre they renewed contact with Mr. Franques who had been of great help to Pompallier in December 1836. Franques undertook to notify the Marist administration regularly of ships travelling to the Pacific. Poupinel gave him the names and the whereabouts of the Marist missionaries with the request to pass the information to captains sailing for the Pacific.

Politics

As it happened, Paris was around that time buzzing with rumours of projects concerning New Zealand. The claims of the self-styled Baron Charles de Thierry of having obtained vast tracts of land in New Zealand, and of being recognized by indigenous chiefs as a sort of sovereign had been discredited. Now shipping interests in Bordeaux had an eye on the Banks peninsula and the Chatham Islands while London and Paris suspected each other of planning to take possession of New Zealand. The French Navy wanted a permanent base and the Ministry of Justice a penal colony. The feeling in Paris was that France was letting the British get away too easily with establishing dominance over the Pacific. A convention was worked out in secret between French officials and the *Compagnie Nanto-Bordelaise*, specially founded to settle French colonists in the South Island. The convention foresaw in the appointment of a *Commissaire du Roi.* Even those who were not privy to the deal were convinced that the appointment of a consul with a wide mandate and the stationing of a naval vessel were the least things one could do.[105]

As Poupinel was visiting ministries and dignitaries he must have picked up some rumours. He knew of Pompallier's contacts with the navy and he had read the bishop's

[103] A reshuffle of the cabinet in May 1839 had put two men at crucial positions to support the missions.
[104] *Si l'on catholise ces ìles, on les francisera.* Cf. CS, doc. 97 [4].
[105] Through bureaucratic fumbling and indecisiveness nothing came of the ambitious plans to annex at least part of New Zealand. *Cf.* Jore I, op. cit. pp. 188 – 205.

letter of 14 May 1838 with the story of the visit of the *Heroine.* At the Picpus head-house they would have told him of the intervention of the *Vénus* in Tahiti[106]. Naturally Poupinel would consider it part of his mandate to promote the good cause.

In the course of these events he met with a certain Emmanuel Eveillard, a fervent Catholic, who had already applied for the post of French consul in New Zealand. The man had been received by the foreign minister, but his written application was full of self-praise and far-fetched dreams. He argued that many of the poor British settlers as well as the Polynesians would easily rally to the French cause if only there were more French Catholic priests than Protestant ministers. There should be monks of different orders to found abbeys and develop agriculture, establish schools and take up the role of the ancient monasteries in France. His application made much of the spiritual benefit of the French presence for the Maoris. The government should actively support this development, not excluding significant financial support for the missionaries. He supported the idea of buying the Chatham Islands for the foundation of a college of higher education, including a seminary. Without telling Éveillard, the ministry quickly put his application aside. They opted for Lavaud, a diplomatic naval commander.[107]

Eveillard saw in the Marists a promising avenue to pursue his ambitions. He wrote a seven page letter to Colin expounding not only the need for a French consul in New Zealand, but also for the Society of Mary to take on the pastoral care of the penal colony he expected to be established in New Guinea.[108]

After his return to Lyon Poupinel kept up a busy correspondence with the officials he had met with in Paris[109], with the nuncio[110], and others.[111] From the letters received so far from the Pacific a report was composed for Marshal Soult.[112] Poupinel was evidently not aware of the decision of the ministry concerning Éveillard and in all his letters he kept pushing for free passage on government vessels and for the speedy appointment of a French consul in New Zealand, but also for Eveillard's candidacy. He even tried to get the backing of the nuncio, of Archbishop de Pins, of McSweeney and of a prominent cleric, Olivier, who was a personal counselor of the Queen.[113]

What Jean-Claude Colin thought of Poupinel's involvement with the high and mighty he kept to himself. He knew what was going on. It was not his style but he signed the letters, inserting little corrections here and there. When the missions and the Society were mentioned in secular papers like *la Gazette* and *la Quotidienne* he had Poupinel urge Eveillard to hold off. On the wild project for the Chatham Islands he urged that nothing be done without Bishop Pompallier's concurrence. A commitment to pastoral care for deportees was thinkable if the government asked for it. Although the new mission secretary still needed to develop a degree of circumspection, the superior gave him plenty of room.

---

[106] Cf. above, p. 69.
[107] Later admiral. Jore, op. cit. I, pp. 29, 279ff.
[108] Eveillard to Colin, 15.11, Poupinel to Eveillard, 23.11, Eveillard to Poupinel, 26.11, to Colin, 07.12. Cf. CS, doc. 102, 104 & 113.
[109] Colin to Soult, 30.11, 24.12., 03.01.1840, 08.01.40, CS, docs. 106, 119, 123 & 129.
[110] Colin to Garibaldi, 22.11, 04.12 & 07.01.40, CS, docs. 101, 108 & 128.
[111] Colin to Teste (Minister of Justice and Cult), 06.12., again 07.01.40. CS. docs. 111 & 127. Colin to Duperré (Minister of the Navy and the Colonies) 13.12, CS, doc. 115, and to Vigneti 04.01.1840, doc. 125.
[112] Dated 29 November 1839, CS, doc. 100.
[113] To de Pins, CS, doc. 107, to McSweeney, doc. 103, to Olivier, doc. 109.

Buying land in New Zealand?

When passing through London Petitjean had noted the lively interest many British people took in New Zealand, and the talk about cheap land there. Several people had suggested that to acquire substantial land-holdings would be of advantage to the Catholic mission. Petitjean found the suggestion rather distasteful, but at the same time important enough to add a special postscript to his letter to Colin after boarding in Gravesend.[114]

In his talks with Meynis of the Propagation of the Faith, Poupinel had been told how Mgr. Portier, bishop of Mobile (today Alabama) who had initially relied on support from the Propagation, had attained financial independence by the judicious acquisition of land, and how Mgr. Loras, bishop of Dubuque, was well on the way to do the same.[115]

Colin found the question important and difficult enough to submit it to Cardinal Fransoni in Rome.[116] His letter, dated 20 July was answered on 27 August: 'You ask my view on the advisability of buying land and properties in New Zealand in order to make the mission self-supporting. I do not think it would do damage to the mission provided the income from those properties is used exclusively for the benefit of the mission. It is done in other mission fields without prejudice to the Church. It did not cause a scandal and people did not take offence.'[117]

They need not have worried. The missionaries had quickly discovered how much the Polynesian people valued land, in New Zealand as well as in the tropical islands. They saw the Protestant ministers involved in buying land and knew what it did to their reputation. As a result they took a more restrictive view than Propaganda in Rome and the Propagation of the Faith in Lyon. When Pompallier bought land around this time from the Maoris at Kororareka, a casual visitor overheard the bishop saying he would 'hold the land in trust, to be returned to the Maori people when the possession of land would be of greater importance in their eyes than it was at that time.'[118]

Writing to Pompallier

The new man alongside Colin made all the difference also to the correspondence with Bishop Pompallier. Colin had written only four letters in three and a half years.[119] From the time Poupinel became involved four went in half a year.

The first one, of which we only have a résumé, is dated 24 May, the day after Comte, Chevron and Brother Attale left Lyon. It announced their departure, how much money they carried for the mission and permission to buy a schooner.[120]

Occasion to the second one, dated 21 September 1839[121], was information about a navy store ship about to leave Brest for New Zealand. Poupinel referred to the nine letters

[114] Letter dated 15.06.39. Cf. CS I, p. 143, n. 1.
[115] CS, doc. 82 [19 & 20].
[116] On 20.07.1839. CS, doc. 82 [26].
[117] CS. I, p. 156, n.2.
[118] R.G. Jameson, a visitor to New Zealand in 1839, the quote (1842) is in Simmons, op. cit. p. 43.
[119] In May 1837, 27 November 1837, August 1838 and 1 December 1838.
[120] CS, doc. 72. When the second group left, Colin did nothing to notify Pompallier, even though letters through London could have reached him four or five months ahead of their arrival. Cf. above, p. 98.
[121] CS, doc. 89.

sent since 24 December 1836, that Pompallier listed on 21 May 1838, and assured him that all of them had arrived.[122] He also acknowledged the ones of September 1838.[123] From later than that one, he tells Pompallier, nothing has been heard in France. There was always a chance that letters had gone astray, he admitted, but it seemed imprudent to send more missionaries until there was further news! The reminder was not unjustified. Apart from the March letter to Meynis and the letter he tore up later[124], Pompallier did not write for a whole year, from September 1838 to August 1839!

Poupinel accounts for all money sent so far: 8.700 francs in May 1837 to Valparaiso with Captain Brelivet; 2.240,80 francs with Baty in September 1838 and 41.738,60 francs with Petitjean via London, in May 1839. Another thousand francs promised by the government in Paris will be sent as soon as possible. By September 1839 nobody in Lyon knew if any of this had reached Pompallier!

The bishop is told of the suggestions that the new missionaries had been given in London about buying land in New Zealand, about the consultation of the cardinal prefect of Propaganda and of the answer given. In any case, 'there are letters from Rome on the way through Polding's agent in London'. The bishop is also informed of the new arrangements by which all mail will now go to Oceania and asked to use the same channels.[125]

Although Poupinel addressed Bishop Pompallier in the letter with the same *Votre Grandeur* that Servant used and that had annoyed the superior general – who had always stuck to the less formal *Monseigneur* - Jean-Claude Colin signed the letter.

When Poupinel returned from Paris and Normandy[126], there was good reason to write a third letter to Pompallier, dated 9 November 1939.[127] He was happy to tell the bishop of the enthusiastic support he had met with in Paris, involving several ministries. Naturally he did not forget Soult's remark: make those islands Catholic and you make them French! He also passes on the foreign minister's suggestion to have all land deals registered with French naval captains – a thing Pompallier had already done.[128]

Poupinel's hand shows where he does what Colin refused to do: he slipped in a few news items. A little small talk smooths communications! Of course for Pompallier, a priest of the Archdiocese of Lyon, it was more than small talk to know that Cardinal Fesch had died in Rome, whereby the See of Lyon had become vacant. Pompallier must also have been grateful – but perhaps not so happy - to know that his supporter de Pins was for political reasons passed over for the succession in Lyon, in favour of Cardinal Isoard, archbishop of Auch, who then died before he could take possession of the See.[129]

Poupinel's concern to improve communication shows again when, 29 December, he sent a fourth letter to Pompallier informing him that Baty's letter from Tahiti had been received in Lyon, as well as the one that Petitjean sent from Cape Verde.

---

[122] LRO,doc. 24 [10].
[123] Pompallier to Colin, 04.09.38 & 14.09.38, resp. LRO, docs 29 & 30. Received in April, cf. above, p. 88.
[124] Pompallier to Meynis (*Propagation de la Foi*) 17.03.39, OPM, H00867, was received in Lyon a few days before Christmas 1839, cf. CS. doc. 119 [1]. On the letter Pompallier tore up, cf. above p. 115.
[125] Cf. above p. 136.
[126] During his absence Colin moved from Belley to Lyon, 4, montée St.-Barthélémy (Puylata).
[127] CS, doc. 97.
[128] When captain Dupetit-Thouars called in the *Vénus* in October 1838, cf. above, p. 90.
[129] Fesch died 13 May 1839. De Pins was known to be a *legitimiste*, i.e. he opposed the House of Orléans that had supplanted Louis XVIII in 1830. Cardinal d'Isoard died 7 October 1839.

SUMMARY and REFLECTION

For the first two and a half years the Catholic Church in New Zealand consisted of a bishop with one priest and a lay-brother in a remote corner of the country. Mid 1939 saw significant developments. By the end of the year the Catholic Church was well established in what was then the political and commercial centre of the country: a bishop with two priests and two lay-brothers in a good house on a nice property and a ship for anchor. A second station on the west side of the island from where two priests and two brothers provided pastoral care to the local settlers and were constantly visiting the Maori tribes.

In tropical Polynesia the four men divided over two small islands were no longer seen as derelicts, dropped on the beach and left to fend for themselves. They were now recognized as representatives of a vast organization introducing a *lotu papalangi* that was significantly different from those already established in Tonga and Samoa.

A third group of missionaries was on the way, no longer by the long and dangerous route around South America, but by the safe and shorter way via Australia.

In France, when the right man presented himself the superior general grabbed at the chance and appointed him general mission procurator. Colin stepped over his tendency to keep things in his own hands and allowed the young procurator – twenty-four – all the room he wanted, even when it meant getting involved in politics. Until now there was no attempt to keep letters and documents orderly at hand. Colin gave him whatever was found and Poupinel set up a filing system. He understood what Bataillon wrote around the same time: the Marist missions are part of an English speaking world.[130] Perhaps it was not so uncommon in his native Normandy as in land-locked Lyon, but Victor Poupinel quickly became proficient in English.

The new procurator felt that the constant complaints of Bishop Pompallier about Colin's poor communications were not entirely unjustified. He came to an understanding with Heptonstall in London over mail and money transfers. He notified Pompallier when missionaries left, and of money sent, how much and by which way. He acknowledged the letters received and kept Pompallier informed of significant political developments.

Advisors from Lyon, London and Rome thought it a good idea to buy land. The missionaries gave preference to the moral advantage their celibate state gave them over the Protestants, who had to buy land to provide for the future of their children.[131]

The prudish Colin kept fearing for the virtue of his religious, while the missionaries moved around alone, unconcerned by the airy fashions of Polynesia.

Colin's devotion to Mary wanted his missionaries to bury medals and put statues everywhere. The missionaries' first concern and their success lay in learning the island languages, observing the customs and simply making friends.

Colin wanted his religious to become saints through unquestioning obedience to their bishop. The absence of more balanced structures must have contributed to turning the bishop into an impossible autocrat.

---

[130] Bataillon to Colin, September 1939/May 1840, LRO, doc. 38 [25]. The division into an Anglophone and a Francophone Pacific is of later date!

[131] Pompallier to Francis Murphy, Vicar General of Sydney, 05.07.1841. OPM H00872, p. 14.

In spite of all, the Gospel was being proclaimed. An observant globetrotter expressed his surprise when he saw the same bishop treat a native chief with grace and respect. A Maori chief refrained from waging war on the word of two Marist missionaries and another one curbed his just fury against a man who took his wife. A Wallisian chief, notorious among sea-captains for looting ships, held his people back from doing so again. A Polynesian *ariki* asked Chanel to care for his defeated enemies and a Futunan granny was surprised when a *papalangi* gently turned down the offer of her granddaughter.