

Marcellin Champagnat and the Marist Brothers

Teaching Congregations in the 19th Century

By André Lanfrey FMS

Edited and Translated by Colin Chalmers FMS

Translator's Introduction

This work by Brother André Lanfrey was published in 1999 as part of a series of books on education in France entitled "Collection Sciences de l'éducation". It is extremely important as a source of information on the background of the founding and early history of the Institute and, as far as I am aware, this is the first time it has been translated into English. The work was aimed at an educated, non-Marist, French readership and a significant knowledge of French history and culture was assumed. However, this assumption cannot be made for an English translation, particularly when it may be read by English-speaking Marists whose cultures are not based on European historical concepts. I have aimed my translation at a readership which has some knowledge of the life and times of Marcellin Champagnat and the Marist story and have therefore taken a number of liberties with the French text and the results must be regarded, not as a direct translation, but as a heavily-edited translated version of the original.

Many parts of the text, particularly from Chapter 2 onwards, retell the story of Marcellin Champagnat and the first Marist Brothers. Where it has been possible, I have omitted these parts and relied on the reader's own knowledge. Further problems arose in those parts of the text where Brother André assumed a knowledge of details of French cultural or religious history. I have omitted citations of French academic literature and added a large number of explanatory footnotes. This means that the numbering and placing of footnotes in the English translation differs widely from that of the French original. I would suggest that a basic knowledge of French political history during Marcellin's lifetime would be useful in reading this translation. At the very least a basic awareness of the French Revolution, the Empire and the Restorations is necessary in order to get the most out of this extremely important work which fills in the gaps that we now know are in the Founder's biography by Brother Jean-Baptiste Furet¹.

¹ [Translator's Note] In the original text, Brother André refers extensively to Brother Jean Baptiste's Life of the Founder and to the Founder's Letters. I have taken references and quotations from these works from the Bicentenary edition of the English translation, using the name *Life* to denote the Furet book, and from the standard English translation of the Letters.

MARIST BROTHERS OR LITTLE BROTHERS OF MARY

The Congregation of Marist Brothers was born in 1817 in a village in the Loire, La Valla. The aim of its Founder, Marcellin Champagnat, a curate in the parish, was the instruction of country-children. The Congregation developed rapidly in France in the 19th century, especially in the south-east and north, constituting a tight network of country- and town-schools. In 1902, on the eve of its dissolution by the State, the Congregation was strong, with around 600 establishments for primary or secondary education (parish schools, industrial schools, boarding schools, houses of formation...) run by around 4,300 Brothers². Among the Congregations of Brothers created in the

19th century between 1815 and 1830³ (De la Mennais Brothers, Marianists, Brothers of St Gabriel) the Congregation of Marist Brothers was numerically the most successful. At the beginning of the 20th century, its workforce was 45% of that of the De la Salle Brothers, themselves founded in the 17th century by Jean Baptiste De la Salle, the creator of the model of the teaching Brother. From the 1880s, the Congregation rapidly became international. Its suppression by the French State in 1903, did not prevent a thousand Brothers from continuing to teach as seculars from then on. By training its successors and lay helpers, it contributed to the change in Catholic education, which ended up at that time with lay people taking on responsibility for what had become a public service on two levels, directed almost entirely by the laity.

Thanks to its expansion abroad, the Congregation saw its workforce grow to around 10, 000 members in the 1960s. Then the workforce was reduced considerably: it numbers today around 5,000 members in around 75 countries⁴, continuing a work of education which has diversified into secondary education, higher education, social education and religious education. Essentially a French enterprise throughout the whole of the 19th century, it then became an international organisation in which the weight of the French is marginal. This story resembles that of numerous Religious Congregations.

My aim is not to add the umpteenth monograph to the very large body of histories of Congregations, more or less relevant to the history of education, but to attempt to integrate this history with a religious and educational current and allow the opening up of the major traits of this complex educational universe. So, I will consider the Marist Brothers as a teaching body without hiding its religious roots insofar as they are indispensable for explaining their educational thought and practice. In sum, this work is a case-study, not a monograph.

² [Translator's Note] These figures refer only to France. There were a further 1,655 Brothers in other parts of the world.

³ [Translator's Note] ie in France.

⁴ [Translator's Note] Brother André took these figures from the Bulletin of the Institute for 1997. Today, the number is around 3,000 Brothers in 80 countries.]

PART 1

THE WORLD OF THE CONGREGATION

Towards a General Theory of a Congregation's Approach to Education

My intention of portraying a Religious Congregation solely in an educational light immediately opens up a formidable methodological problem since Congregations defined themselves as religious societies where their educational task was only the consequence of their religious engagement: an apostolate, a ministry, not a profession. Paradoxically, because their apostolate demanded concrete action for children from them, these Religious invented teaching methods, authored school books, brought together educational communities. In the majority of cases, they barely considered compiling systematic theories from these practices since they appeared to them simply to be the consequences of their Christian-belonging. In sum, they signed up to what was for them the eternal work of the Church: to teach all nation and practice the works of mercy, that is: to feed the hungry, to visit the sick and prisoners, to clothe those who are naked. ... They were often happy to move these charitable works to a spiritual level: to feed those hungry for knowledge, to visit those imprisoned by ignorance, to clothe with knowledge those who have been lacking it. The methods they invented were meaningless in themselves, but were only manifestations of the “caritas” which makes the one wanting to come to the help of his neighbour resourceful.

1. Can there really be a Congregational approach to education?

Nevertheless, it is pertinent to speak of “education by Religious Congregation” because these religious bodies never wanted to situate themselves outside the world, even if living in relatively closed-off communities, obeying a particular rule, wearing a distinctive habit. Because they were formed by celibates, the Congregations could not reproduce themselves by endogamy. The world was the breeding-ground for their successors, where they could exercise their charitable action, where they had to negotiate with civil and ecclesiastical authorities and particularly with parents in order to have them entrust their children for education. For these private educational enterprises, facing tough competition from lay masters and Master-Writers⁵... confronted by the apathy or distrust of society and the State, it was important to offer a quality service.

In sum, enclosed within the institutional triangle of State, Church and Society, the Congregations had to respond to the specific objectives of each of these stake-holders. Relations were always delicate, even with the Church and the members of the Congregations were obliged to provide each of the three with the discourse they wanted to hear: for the State, to demonstrate the political usefulness of their action; for society, the advantages that educated children could

⁵ [Translator's Note] In pre-Revolutionary and early-nineteenth century France, a Master-Writer was a specialist in calligraphy and the teaching of writing.

bring to its tranquillity and prosperity; for the Church, faithful and literate parishioners capable of following the parish priest's sermons. Even in a time of Christianity, even if being defined only as a religious body, the Congregations evolved in a secular world, in a lay world. Even if they resisted, they were constrained by political, economic and social behaviour.

It is through this permanent gap - seen in the literature of the Congregations⁶ as a necessity rather than an opportunity - between their religious ideals and the exigencies of the secular world, that Christian education slipped, and in particular that by Religious Congregations, a constant effort to nurture children and young people for Christian edification: good Christians as their pastors wanted, but also subject to the law, as the State desired and ready for work, as society wanted. On the other hand, a body could not allow each member to use whatever method he wanted, on pain of crumbling away. The Congregations were therefore forced to construct educational methods, tasks run to a common timetable that their members had to take on in such a way as to be almost interchangeable, without upsetting their clientele. There was, then, a Congregation's approach to education and not simply a Congregation's apostolate, since the education provided by the Congregations had aims partially independent of religious ideals.

Likewise, the members of Congregations really were educationalists since, if the church saw them only as Religious, the State and society regarded them as professionals and, in effect, that is what they were too. We can even say that, paradoxically, they were apostles who invented the profession of the modern primary school teacher and that, because they were non-clerics, they were already lay primary teachers. So, it is pertinent to speak of Christian education or a Congregation's approach to education since, even if the sources of inspiration of the Catholic bodies were theological, their educational action and thought, exercised in a secular world, were not uniquely defined by religious principles. In short, Catholic education and, therefore, a Congregation's approach to education, was no more dependent on theology than libertarian education was dependent on the libertarian doctrines or secular teachings of the philosophies of Kant or Comte.

2. Differentiating education by a Religious

There is a relative lack of interest in Catholic circles on the subject of Catholic education. Congregations in particular are too focused on their origins and their spirituality⁷. Their philosophies of education, apart from a few standout philosophies such as those of the De la Salle Brothers or Jesuits, have not been sufficiently examined. It is true that we have been given a real methodological model with the educational philosophy of the De la Mennais Brothers, but there is much left to do on Catholic education, particularly in the 19th century, the golden age of Congregations. It is still necessary for Congregations to allow themselves a conceptual shift

⁶ Does this literature interpret the deep thinking of the whole of the body?

⁷ This feeling arises on a reading of the Acts of the 1996 Angers Conference on *Christian education, singular and plural* where a number of the talks gave more emphasis to religious history than to the history of education.

which permits them to also consider themselves as teaching societies⁸. The study of 19th century female Congregations with a Superior General has opened a way for the history of Congregations freed from immediate spiritual preoccupations. Treating the Congregations globally and situating them in a context of the emancipation and dynamism of women in the 19th century avoids the pitfalls of isolating the Congregations from each other and ending up only with a juxtaposition of similar histories. Nevertheless, this global qualitative perspective has its limits and we can economise with less ambitious approaches such as that of Sarah Ann Curtis⁹.

3. Studying the Marist Brothers by means of a model

My ambition in this work on Marist education is to set down a particular history within a global model by affirming two principles: first of all, that there really exists fully-fledged Catholic educational philosophies, of which the philosophy of any Congregation is an element; then, that the Congregations are not merely a conglomerate of teaching organisations born because of religious or social needs. They are more than that: they are important elements of a real Christian project born in the 16th century and continuing up to Vatican II. In short, they are bearers of a utopia, one could almost say, of an ideology.

The key work which enables me to explain this affirmation is Louis Châtellier's 1987 *L'Europe des dévots*. In the Introduction, he clearly indicates the object of the work: "Research on modern Catholicism as a social phenomenon" and highlights the study of Marian confraternities, "the associations of men established by the Jesuits in their colleges at the beginning of the 16th century. ... perfectly adapted to society."

"Founded in 1540 and very quickly busy on all fronts, the Society of Jesus did not only consecrate itself to foreign missions, as is all too often believed. Its colleges were, right from the beginning, very active centres of the apostolate from where preachers, catechists and missionaries constantly went out to the different areas of the towns and the neighbouring countryside. They did not hesitate in bringing together adult and young men in associations under the patronage of the Virgin, teaching them to live as good Catholics according to their state and in conformity with the principles of the Council of Trent."

"With the adults, there were young men, side by side with workmen, merchants, the middle classes and, sometimes, nobles and clerics. These *sodalities*, as they were called, received instruction according to their state. They were given habits of piety, rules of life, which sustained them and which they transmitted to their surroundings. In Europe a previously broken network recovered the different countries from 1600 without regard to frontiers. It certainly was not the

⁸ [Translator's Note] Brother André cites here his own 1992 Paper, "Les Frères Maristes et leurs écoles de campagne: projet mystique et administration scolaire".

⁹ Curtis, Sarah Ann (1994) *Educating the Faithful. Catholic primary schooling and the teaching Congregations in the Diocese of Lyon, 1830 - 1905*. Indiana University Press.

whole of Catholic society, but it was the leaven, the advance party, the point-group, whose sworn goal was to follow the words of the Founder of the Society of Jesus, ‘to reform the world’”

And Châtellier goes on to say: “At the moment when the Council of Trent, with the greatest care, separated out the simple faithful from Christians clothed with the priesthood and put the latter strictly under the bishops, particularly in their teaching function, did the initiative of the Jesuits, without necessarily evoking the universal priesthood, not give off a whiff of heterodoxy for certain people? It was, in any case, to give lay people much more extensive functions. A new vision of Church was drawn up which later could appear as revolutionary.”

All the essentials of a Congregation’s life appear to me to be contained in these lines: a universal missionary spirit, an austere religious life, but in the world, a network of fraternity, universal priesthood, a practice, however, unclaimed. It is an issue of a new vision of Church. And Châtellier is correct in speaking of “revolution”.

4. The dévot¹⁰

Thus was born a new type of Catholic: the dévot. His time was measured: no more than six or seven hours of sleep, jump up, dress quickly and then off immediately to morning prayer and then Mass. The working day was enmeshed in pious thoughts and short prayers. It ended with an examination of conscience and night prayer. Confession was weekly, fasting was undertaken on Saturdays in honour of the Virgin. Communion was at least monthly. The “sodality” dominated his imagination: every gesture, every event, took on a symbolic meaning: rain brought thoughts of baptism, the five fingers of the hand signified the five wounds of Jesus Christ. Confession was the occasion for detailed self-examination. The body must similarly be controlled: the sign of the cross, genuflection, processions, pilgrimages, must be carried out in a serious fashion. The body must remain chaste: hence the flight from women, from bad companions, which often turned into a hunting down of impurity.

So, the “sodality” dreaded the world, but it was not for fleeing from it: it was necessary to transform it by pursuing heresy, public immorality, and blasphemy. To take the lead in this offensive it was necessary to join together.

5. The Aas: Priests according to the Council of Trent

These Marian confraternities were often the breeding-ground for secret confraternities comprising around a dozen members, generally theology students, who were experiencing the need to get together to live their lives as young clerics fervently at a time when seminarians were usually external students. These were the famous Aas, *Assemblés des amis* [“Groups of friends”], begun in Italy, but which started in France in 1632 at the College of La Flèche. There

¹⁰[Translator’s Note] The dévots were Catholics who were politically and religiously quite conservative, but very much involved in charitable activities. It was more of a way of life than a specific organisation.

was also a network of seminaries influenced by the Aas which aimed at the reign of piety, good example and the fervour proper to young priests of the Catholic Reform. After the torment of the Revolution, this tradition was restarted, often managed by Sulpician¹¹ directors who knew how to use them for the good of the seminaries. Quite often, former members of the Aas or secret societies became Founders of Congregations, for example Poullard des Places, Mazenod, Coudrin¹².

6. Resistance to the dévot movement

This baroque, Jesuit, Catholicism did not bring unity to France. The Jansenists blamed the Jesuits for “a concept of religion which cheapens the individual conscience.” “On the one hand, Christianity was experienced in a communitarian form where confession, communion, Mass, and Lenten meditations took on the character of collective rites, with prayer being transformed into hymns or rosaries recited in common; on the other hand, it was understood as an interior experience which engaged the individual at its most profound. Was it the same religion? Would Jansenism not be, in the name of Christian tradition, but also of humanism and of reason, an anti-baroque reaction directed against this Roman Catholicism practised by thousands of confraternity-members and which showed itself over the years 1640 - 1650 more and more invasive?”

In any case, the 18th century would be a time of crisis: from 1720 the effective number of confraternity-members fell; the confraternities disappeared or sought to make themselves independent of the Jesuits. The idea of a Jesuit plot took hold: “Basically, the opponents of the Jesuits had clearly seen that a transformation of society was being prepared by these confraternities and that this transformation was already taking place.”

However, in spite of the suppression of the Jesuits in 1773, “Jesuit sodalities, over the period 1750 - 1850, often gave the appearance of new vitality. They were embedded in the countryside, up until then hardly touched, they were resolutely aimed at families and no longer just at single men; little by little they became interested in all aspects of Christian life (from retreats to end of life), they even encroached on the domain proper to Religious to participate, in the 19th century, in social action. [...] It can be asked if they were not one of the forces capable of maintaining life in Catholic communities undergoing several trials; at least that [...] their success constituted one sign among many others of the rootedness of the Christian life in villages and hearts... Catholic society was formed in the bosom of the old Christianity and Marian confraternities played a large role in this formation.” (p 253)

¹¹ [Translator’s Note] “Sulpician”: Priests of the Society of Saint Sulpice, whose special apostolate was the directing of seminaries.

¹² [Translator’s Note] Poullard des Places: Founder of the Congregation of the Holy Spirit, the forerunner of the present day Spiritan Congregation. Mazenod: Founder of the Oblates of Mary Immaculate. Coudrin: Founder of the Congregation of Jesus and Mary (Picpus Fathers).

In the 19th century,[...] confraternities continued their traditional role: concern for propagation of the faith and the defence of the Church. On the other hand, having taken an interest since their origins, in every social level, they were predisposed to take an interest in workers and artisans.

Châtellier reminds us that the success of the Catholic reformation was obtained less through the preaching of the clergy than by the word and example of the faithful. [...] morning prayer, examination of conscience, regular confession, frequent communion became regular practice in families. In contributing to the valuing of the family over the individual while easing social barriers Marian confraternities contributed to the forming of a middle class. To this new society, Marian confraternities had given “the elements of an ideology”: the taste for order but also for social and political action which would make militants of them. Because they were used to functioning at the level of the confraternity, they became sensitised to a European ideal. Through their ideas and choices, the dévots proclaimed a Christian democracy.

7. From the dévots to teaching Congregations

There are three fundamental sources for the inspiration [behind teaching Congregations]: the Jesuits and the Religious Order of reference; the Congregation as an organisation much more demanding than a confraternity; the dévot model, generator of a new way of being a Catholic.

Because the Jesuits were not constrained by monastic obligations (specific habit, enclosure, residence, divine office) they opened a breach in the traditional separation of clergy into secular and regular, which the Holy See quickly ratified. However, the spread of this model did not take place without misfortune. Thus the “English Ladies” of Mary Ward¹³ who wanted to live as “Jesuitesses”, were dissolved by the Holy See in 1631 because, in the early days of the Catholic Reformation, the ecclesiastical authorities wanted to enforce strict enclosure on Religious women. Also, the Ursulines of Angela Merici, founded in Brescia in 1544 before the Council of Trent, were first and foremost, pious laywomen wanting to give themselves to works of mercy. Their Constitutions, approved in 1544, foresaw, under the inspiration of the Jesuits, the leadership of a Superior General. However, under the influence of Charles Borromeo, Archbishop of Milan, they had to forego a centralised structure and become a Congregation before being enclosed at the start of the 17th century. The Company of Mary Our Lady, founded by Jeanne de Lestonnac in 1605 within the ambit of the Jesuits, was recognised by the pope in 1607. Living under the Benedictine Rule and perpetually cloistered, the Sisters were nevertheless dispensed from divine office, but could hold schools outside enclosure. Yet they were forbidden to have a Superior General. The Canonesses of Saint Augustin of the Congregation of Notre Dame, founded by Pierre Fourier in Lorraine, had similar difficulties.

A new form of conventual life arose with the Daughters of Charity, born in 1645: the Sisters were members of a confraternity, but that was placed under the perpetual direction of the

¹³ [Translator’s Note] Known in the English-speaking world as the Congregation of Jesus.

Vincentian Superior General. So, they obtained unity of direction, the absence of enclosure and partial exemption from episcopal jurisdiction. The hard line of Trent was eroded and the reign of Louis XIV would see the creation of at least seventeen female teaching Congregations. From that time on, there existed in the female world a structure between marriage and the cloister: women could consecrate their lives to the works of mercy, notably teaching.

On the men's side, it was on 30th November 1536 in Milan that a wool-carder named Francesco Villanova founded, with the help of the priest, Castellino da Castello, the Confraternity of Christian Doctrine with the aim of catechising street-children on Sundays. The individual confraternities multiplied very quickly and began to conduct school during the week. So, the teaching personnel was divided into two categories: the "Associates" who only did catechism on Sundays and the "Members", the unmarried, widows and widowers who lived in community and took charge of the weekdays. The Constitution *Lubricum vitae genus* of 1568 obliged communities of men to live under a recognised Rule and take solemn vows and so these communities had to be dissolved or constitute themselves as communities of secular priests. The need for masters trained for public schools remained largely unresolved.

The Lyon priest, Charles Démia, tried to resolve this issue in 1688 by publicising his project for a training-school which would welcome clerics in minor orders where employment as an elementary school teacher would act as a sort of "novitiate for the priesthood" and, by teaching the little ones, they would learn how to instruct adults. The school also accepted unmarried laymen who could then move on to the priesthood, if their conduct proved satisfactory. However, this system had the inconvenience of furnishing elementary teachers for only a relatively short time as the clerics and unmarried men saw their "work" only as a stage in an ecclesiastical career. The Saint Charles Seminary came to be like all the others.

It was John-Baptist de la Salle who came to build a durable, albeit partial, model. His early plan foresaw communities of Brothers for the towns. For the countryside, there would be training-schools for pious, capable laymen. A society of priests would undertake the spiritual direction of this organisation at three levels. In fact, John-Baptist de la Salle succeeded in setting up only the community of Brothers, in 1686. All his attempts to create training-schools for the countryside failed, first of all in Reims in 1687 - 1690; a second attempt in Paris failed in 1699 - 1705 and a third in 1708 - 1712. At the same time, the project for the community of priests never saw the light of day. In contrast, the Brothers of Christian Schools¹⁴ developed an innovative method of teaching in the towns, based, from 1706, on the training-manual, "*Conduite des Écoles*". By 1792 there were 800 Religious. In 1725, Pope Benedict XIII had recognised their status as lay Religious teachers, distinct from confraternities and Christian Doctrine groups.

¹⁴ [Translator's Note] The proper name for the De la Salle Brothers.

Another attempt at the creation of an Institute of Brothers succeeded: that of the Tabourin Brothers of the Faubourg Saint Antoine in Paris, founded by a notorious Jansenist, Charles Tabourin. In 1757, the Brothers were involved in around fifteen schools in the Saint Antoine and surrounding areas. They were even swarming around Orléans, Auxerre and Eu. In 1781, around 60 Tabourin Brothers were teaching in 32 schools¹⁵.

In these examples, then, we notice how many of these Congregations slipped from the mediaeval model of the confraternity, with its simple, light structure of devotion or charitable work for pious laymen to take on a more structured twist, engaging people in a real genre of devotional, communitarian and educational life.

From now on, with the Congregations of lay Sisters, the Ursulines, the De la Salle Brothers, the Tabourin Brothers... a real model for modern Catholic teachers existed. The teaching Brother and Sister became professionals, appreciated by society. By their conduct and their method, by the continuity they brought to education, they gave the teaching profession a sense of honour which they rarely had up until that time. In demanding of their members vocation, training and life-engagement the Congregations had invented the modern elementary school teacher whose work was not mercenary or based on the impossibility of doing anything else, but on motivation, competence and a sense of unity. The “black hussars of the Republic” would not be different, their religious motivation aside. However, the small number of “Sisters” and particularly of “Brothers” based in the towns, the indifference of society and State to public education, prevented the model they had forged for substituting for that of the mediaeval tradition based on the employment of people of every condition and competence practising the archaic individual model.

8. The Congregations: a masterpiece of the *dévot* world

The very existence of these Congregations posed for State, Church and society the same problem as that of the Marian confraternities. Did it not confirm that the Church could no longer operate in the binary clerical-lay mode since the clergy - and the halting of the *Démia* experiment of a training-school for teaching clerics had shown this - were incapable of seriously devoting themselves to the public education of children, even if judged of paramount importance?

At the same time, the halt on training-schools, and the small number of training-schools for lay women, such as that run by the *Béates*¹⁶ at Le Puy, seemed to prove that the laity were incapable of furnishing what was necessary for the organisation of a competent and motivated teaching-body. Thus was constituted in the Church an intermediate stage of helpers, neither completely lay since they were separated from the laity by a devout community-life nor completely monks and nuns since they were not constrained by enclosure, office or solemn

¹⁵ [Translator’s Note] The Tabourin Brothers were dissolved at the start of the French Revolution.

¹⁶ The *Béates* were single or widowed laywomen who lived in common, without vows.

vows; nor completely clerical because the men who made up these bodies were not priests. This worried everyone.

Those who had a better understanding of the Brothers and Sisters were the missionary priests: Jesuits, Vincentians etc... who saw in them helpers who were likely to firmly embed their teachings in the people. Also able to understand them were fervent priests formed in the Aas¹⁷, themselves imbued with a communal spirit, as well as lay people with a dévot spirituality who were practising in the world a life which resembled their own, visiting prisons, hospitals, catechising the people. In short the Congregations of lay Sisters and Brothers belonged very naturally to the world of the dévot. Moreover, the term “Brother” or “Sister” would continue in the 19th century to designate a pious lay person dedicated to a work of mercy without the need to be part of a Congregation.

9. Congregations and the “religion of the poor”

Behind the missionaries and in contact with the country-people for a much greater length of time, particularly in the 19th century, were the plebeian Congregation-members: the Sister catechists, elementary teachers, nurses; the Brother elementary teachers, occasionally sacristans, some of whom were Marist Brothers, charged by the Founder with taking care most especially of the roughest country-children. It was under the pontificates of Pius IX and Leo XIII that the system of Congregations reached its peak.

10. The limits of a missionary utopia

However, this all-conquering model from the countryside could also contribute to a rejection of Christianity, with the followers of a more individualistic or less coercive religion repudiating this austere communitarian model. In short, the secular stream had, in the 19th century, inherited the distrust that Jansenist or more traditional Catholics had nourished for the dévot project since its early stages¹⁸. Reinforced by the spirit of the Illuminists¹⁹ these currents of thought reached the 19th century to put a stop to Catholicism using its secular arm. In effect, with the State’s being imbued with Gallicanism²⁰ and the spirit of the Illuminists and wanting to involve itself in education and social assistance, it suspected the Congregations of opposition and of Jesuitism and, at the beginning of the Revolution, would have no scruple in dissolving them.

Careful not to reconstitute any sort of teaching body, the Revolution would be incapable of setting up a coherent school-system. Napoleon himself envisaged his university on the model of

¹⁷ [Translator’s Note] See para 5 above for the meaning of the Aas.

¹⁸ A recent [book on the history of secularism] does not grant any place to the Catholic origins of secularism. This, in my view, is a serious omission.

¹⁹ [Translator’s Note] The Illuminists were groups of Catholics flourishing in Western Europe in the 16th and 17th centuries for whom contemplative prayer was the only way to relate to God. It was the excesses of these groups which led the Vatican to restrict the practice of contemplative prayer to “contemplative” monks and nuns.

²⁰ [Translator’s Note] Gallicanism was the politico-religious policy that would brook no interference from the Vatican in the affairs of the Church in France.

Congregations. Naturally, the world of the Congregations found itself among those opposed to the Revolution and refused to affiliate itself with the Constitutional Church while secretly preparing for a renaissance which burst forth in the first years of the 19th century in a relationship with the State which was initially ambiguous, then eventually hostile, leading to an authoritarian suppression of Congregations in 1903.

Society in the Ancien Régime²¹ had nourished a somewhat favourable attitude to the Brothers and Sisters on account of the services they rendered, but was it ready to go any further? The whole of traditional Catholicism, or even that element imbued with the principles of Trent failed to see what it could inject insofar as many parish priests, however correctly formed, thought of themselves as very able to teach the flocks in their parishes; they could have preferred a mediocre teacher who was available to do all the clerical dirty work to men and women teachers who were too clever and too capable, able to be a little competition for them and less docile. At the same time, would the parish communities understand men and women giving such importance to the education of children to the point of devoting their lives to it, without being forced to through necessity? Thus, members of Congregations, through the high ideals they gave to their vocation and the importance they gave to children, pleaded, in their fashion, for the worthiness of their role and therefore, of children. Before the Revolution they were ahead of their time. After that, they went on to find themselves in tune with a world which massively sought to raise itself up through education.

On the other hand, members of the Congregations found themselves placed in a contradiction that vividly appeared in the 19th century: they constituted a militant lay body at the service of a hierarchical view of the Church and society. Employed to teach the people's children, they gave them, at one and the same time, the means of freedom from their condition and the principles of respect for constituted hierarchies. Revolutionaries by their style of life which invented a body of laity hitherto unknown, they recognised themselves as conservative in their principles, modelling elements of a Catholic ideology founded on order, but also on social and political action. This is, at one and the same time, their limitation and their greatness.

The action of the State, more and more supported by society, rejected this model where the emancipatory aspects were counterbalanced by a fixed²² vision of society and the Church. Paradoxically, 'though, to replace them, the State put in place a teaching body largely inspired by them, primarily in its service, then by being able to impose its own views and susceptible to the thwarting of projects for reform. One can legitimately wonder if the State, while ridding itself of Catholic Congregations, did not install, in its own bosom, others, equally powerful in different ways. So, is the Jesuit myth the dark version of what can perhaps be called a Congregation's ideology with the myth of the black hussar of the republic being - if one can so call it - the light

²¹ [Translator's Note] This term is used to denote the period in 18th century France prior to the Revolution.

²² [Translator's Note] Brother André uses the adjective "fixiste" which is a philosophical term indicating a rejection of evolution and the possibility of change.

version? However, it must be noted that, if the Congregations' project has finally been largely stopped and even broken in Europe and particularly in France, it has known from its origins how to make itself international, carried by its universal missionary ideal. Also, today, the world of the Congregations has largely left Europe to become educational and charitable multinationals on a worldwide scale. Tied to a profound transformation, it has not spoken the last word.

Whatever may happen, for the historian concerned with the breadth of history, studying one Congregation among others is not doing micro-history, but bringing his stone to the history of a major current of thought and action - of which the Congregation being studied is the more or less original reflection - and which, born in the 16th century in the bosom of the Church, has been secularised, first of all to the profit of the State, then in the cultivation of its own autonomy in its breast. National Education²³ is the amnesiac heir of the world of the *dévot* and the Congregation.

²³ [Translator's Note] ie the French public, non-denominational school-system.

PART 2

HOW A TEACHING CONGREGATION IS BORN

A Founder in his Time and Place²⁴

1. A mountain-village

Marcellin Champagnat, Founder of the Marist Brothers, was born on 20th May 1789 in Rozet, a hamlet of Marlhes (Loire)²⁵, an important rural commune in the canton of Saint Genest Malifaux, on the south-eastern frontier of the Département²⁶, at an altitude of more than 900 metres, then with around 2,700 inhabitants, 23 kilometres south of St Etienne. The state of the commune is partially known to us through the Parish Priest, Alliot, who drew up a “Condition of the population of the parish of Marlhes for the year 1790”²⁷. As he notes there the socio-economic status of his parishioners, we know that the population is basically formed from property-owners, “inhabitants”, tenants, domestics, and farm-workers. There were a significant number of garment-workers, ribbon-makers and clog-makers.

It seems that the population of Marlhes was similar to that of Saint-Genest-Malifaux, a neighbouring commune: an area of little fertility, cold, high infant mortality (30% of deaths each year), a significant level of juvenile mortality (14.3% of deaths of children between 1 and 5 years of age; 21.5% of deaths between 1 and 20 years of age, where 60% of those active work the land. However, among these latter, day-labourers moved around quite a lot and were compelled to move away from the area for several months in order to cater for the needs of their families. The artisan-class numbered around 20% of the active population and were of the traditional trades: bakers, shoemakers, clog-makers, weavers, masons. There were around 12 millers. The sawing of wood employed 16 men. There were 43 ribbon-makers; 33 merchants; 11 carters. The rest of the population was essentially made up of domestics, both men and women, employed by the labourers, the middle-classes and the nobles. It goes without saying that very many of those who were active held down several jobs: a trade and agriculture, agriculture and business... Legal documents reveal a modest level of life and, when difficulties arose, the inhabitants were compelled to turn to borrowing. At Marlhes, the parish priest drew up a list of 64 names of poor people and assigned them a number between 1 and 4, probably representing the number of people in their family; this indicates an indigent population of around 165 people.

²⁴ [Translator’s Note] A reminder that this work was originally intended for a non-Marist readership. The French original of Chapter 2 contains information about Marcellin Champagnat’s life and family which is well-known to Marists or is easily-accessible from Marist sources and does not need repeating. I have therefore heavily edited much of the original French material.

²⁵ A quarter of an hour’s walk from the town. The state of the parish, drawn up by the Parish Priest, Alliot, in 1790 shows 65 inhabitants: four property-owners, including Jean-Baptiste Champagnat, four residents, two tenants, five domestics and a farm-worker. Departmental Archives of Le Puy, fonds Convers 18 J 194.

²⁶ Under the Ancien Régime, the parish was part of the diocese of Le Puy.

²⁷ Departmental Archives for Haute Loire, Convers Papers 18 J 194.

The religious life in Saint-Genest-Malifaux seemed to be fervent: there were two confraternities in the village and a community of nursing-Sisters lived there. Succession was worked out by means of the “inheritance rule”, the eldest receiving the inheritance and charged with giving the younger members of the family a “rightful share”. Many of the spouses in Saint-Genest-Malifaux came from Marlhès.

2. A traditional family

The Champagnat family seems to be typical of its environment. The father had an above-average level of education, had beautiful hand-writing and could speak in public. In 1790 the parish priest listed him as a property-owner, but he also worked in agriculture and had a small hydraulic mill. He and his wife were members of the Confraternity of Penitents of the Blessed Sacrament. Two of his sisters were Religious. The Champagnat family appear to be one of these innumerable French families who were faithful Christians, having their children baptised immediately on birth, either catechising them or sending them to the parish priest’s catechism classes, partially literate, the men more than the women. The learning of writing, when it did take place, was delayed.

3. A father who could take advantage of opportunities

The father’s talents and education allowed him to play a political role from the beginning of the Revolution: he was elected Colonel of the National Guard of the Canton of Marlhès; in 1791 he became Secretary-Registrar of the commune and in 1793 was given the responsibility of confiscating the goods of the Lyon “rebels” and, in the same year, for witnessing the “burning” of the feudal titles. Finally, he became a preacher for the Goddess of Reason in the church at Marlhès, which had become a republican temple in 1794. Since the authorities judged him to be too lukewarm, his cousin, Ducros, a rabid follower of Robespierre, was imposed on him. From the beginning of 1793 Jean-Baptiste Champagnat seemed to be on the margins of political life. However, he took up his activities again a little after the Fructidor coup d’état on 4th September 1797 which established a new Terror. On 29th December 1797 he was nominated President of the Municipal Administration for the Canton of Marlhès, a post which he accepted in February 1798. The least that can be said is that he pledged himself to the Revolution even if, like so many others in those troubled times, his political commitment was not without ambiguity.

He also welcomed into his house his sister, Louise, a former Sister of St Joseph, who had been expelled from her convent, and tolerated clandestine Masses in the territory under his jurisdiction. Moreover, the Parish Priest, Alliot, remained in his parish throughout the whole of the Revolution and was not replaced until 1822. It seems that the wife and sister of Jean-Baptiste Champagnat in no way shared his convictions, which makes it likely that Marcellin Chmapgnat inherited from them a profound piety and, from his father, a certain amount of ambition and a taste for manual work, action and business.

4. Towards a new religious and political sensitivity?

It has been shown that the revolutionary forces had often been furnished by those male social gatherings which had been confraternities of penitents plagued by profanity and secularism. We also see there a putting in place of the phenomenon of gendered variation, so typical of 19th century Catholicism, where the man takes on political roles and frees himself from the Church, while the woman displays a strict religious fidelity. So, the Champagnat family realised very quickly that they would have to live with the compromises which were very common in families of the 19th century.

5. Marcellin Champagnat's education

The story of Marcellin's education conforms quite well to what could be found in the countryside at that period of the end of the Revolution, when the Church's school-system had been shaken up by the Revolution. However, these mountainous areas had suffered less since life there was a semi-autocracy. Father Alliot's "Condition of the population of the parish of Marlhes for the year 1790" mentions the existence of a convent of Sisters of St Joseph with a Superior and seven Religious, among whom were Jeanne Champagnat, 66 years old, and Thérèse Champagnat, 37 years old, aunts of Marcellin. It was this latter who found refuge with her brother at the suppression of her convent²⁸. If the girls of the parish had probably suffered as a result of this suppression, Marcellin had benefited, within the setting of the family, from an elementary school teacher. However, it seems that her influence was more on his upbringing than on his education.

Marcellin's biography places his starting school after his First Communion. It seems therefore that school was the last act of an essentially familial and catechetical education and was considered to be the place for the improvement of reading and the learning of writing, after First Communion. The fact that Rozey was a hamlet relatively far from the town largely explains this delayed schooling: one waited until the child had grown up sufficiently to face the dangers and fatigues of the road. So, like his brother and sister, his godfather and godmother, at the time of his First Communion, Marcellin certainly could not write his name, and he probably read badly.

The schoolmaster, Barthélemy Moine practised the individual method [of teaching]: all the pupils lined up one after the other in front of him for their lesson. While waiting, the pupils got up to all sorts of pranks which, more often than not, he ignored and from time to time reprimanded them in a disproportionate manner. This is what happened: a schoolboy took young Marcellin's place and received "a great blow" Indignant and seized with fear, from that time on Marcellin refused to go to school. The family did not insist; a sign that they did not attach much importance to the school: Marcellin would work with his father. It seemed that his destiny would be that of a multitude of country-people: if not quite illiterate, at least "reading only".

²⁸ Her baptismal name was Louise and Thérèse was her religious name. See *Life* Page 27, footnote 12.

6. Social advancement through the Church

This destiny, however, would be modified by the consequences of the Concordat of 1801: appointed Archbishop of Lyon, Cardinal Fesch, the uncle of Napoleon, wanted to create seminaries. Some zealous priests had not waited: in areas taken back from the Rhone and the Loire, such as Verrières, Roche and Saint Jodard, they had created junior seminaries, which functioned with a fairly miserable existence. The problem was finding junior seminarians and the teachers wandered around the countryside during the holidays. In the summer of 1803, a teacher from the seminary at Verrières, probably Father Linossier, visited the Champagnat family with this end in view and Marcellin decided to become a priest²⁹.

Father Linossier certainly knew Jean-Baptiste Champagnat since, as the Constitutional parish priest³⁰ of Jonzieux, he had been elected with him on 17th August 1792, to nominate Deputies for the Convention. A letter of his indicated that he had been campaigning in Italy and Egypt before returning to an ecclesiastical career³¹. Linossier offered Jean-Baptiste an unexpected opportunity for the education of his youngest son, with viable financial conditions. Further, there was conscription: becoming an ecclesiastical student meant being guaranteed, a few years on, that there would be no call to arms for the campaigns of an Empire still at war. At Marlhès, there was a lively tradition of insubordination. And finally, there were three boys on the farm. The last in the family knew that he would have to move out. Going to the seminary was to prepare oneself, whether one became a priest or not, for honourable prospects. The interests of the family met those of the Church.

This decision implied taking up studies again since “he could neither read nor write sufficiently to begin Latin.” So, there were important expenses. Marcellin went off to study with his brother-in-law, Benoît Arnaud, a former seminarian, who ran a “college” in Saint-Sauveur-en-Rue, bringing together a dozen pupils to whom he taught reading, arithmetic, geography, history and Latin. In short, young Marcellin joined one of those “presbytery-schools” which prepared the pupils before the seminaries properly so-called. At the end of the year the result was bad: Benoît Arnaud tried to persuade the young man to give up, but he was stubborn. The death of his father on 13th June 1804, did not change his mind. Perhaps it even made things easier since it left the field open to his two brothers still living, Jean-Barthélemy, born in 1777, so twelve years before him, and Jean-Pierre, born in 1787.

²⁹ The story says that, before speaking to Marcellin, the priest had questioned (his brothers) Jean-Barthélemy and Jean-Pierre. Now, the first one was 26 years old and the second 16. For at least one of the two, the questioning barely made sense. In fact, Marcellin, who at that time was 14 years old, was the only one who could look forward to lengthy studies. It might be wondered then, if the decision to enter the seminary was so sudden or if he had not been weighing it up for some time, with Marcellin’s acquiescence (more than his desire) linking into a family strategy of social advancement while at the same time ridding the land of one of its excess sons, who is, moreover the youngest with the death of his young brother.

³⁰ [Translator’s Note] Fr Linossier had taken the oath demanded of the clergy by the Revolution.

³¹ [Translator’s Note] ie he had served with Napoleon’s armies, either as a soldier, or, perhaps, as a chaplain.

7. The seminary at Verrières

Marcellin only joined the seminary at Verrières in 1805, a delay caused by the death of his father and the debts left by him. Furthermore, he paid his expenses with his own savings. The cost of boarding was not high: 120 francs per year. However, the living-conditions were spartan. Sleeping was done in the attics of two houses or at home and there was no refectory. Free-time was spent collecting wood or working in the fields with the local people. The teaching-body was scarce: the Superior, Pierre Périer was, at the same time, the parish priest; he was assisted by a lay-teacher and a tonsured cleric. In short, this seminary of 80 to 100 Juniors was only an extension of the church-school Pierre Périer had opened in 1803 in Firminy, near Saint-Étienne, and had brought with him when he was appointed to Verrières. From November 1805 to 1813 Marcellin Champagnat was there, taking ten classes, one of which was the beginnings of Logic.

An Inspector's note³² described the seminaries at Verrières and Roche: "placed in the mountains and approached with difficulty". Almost all of the pupils of these two houses paid only a very small part of the charge for boarding, which itself was very modest at only 300 francs. At Verrières only 20 to 22 pupils out of 170 paid the entire boarding-charge. Despite the great poverty, studies were "quite good" at Roche and "very good" at Verrières. The Inspector praised the study-plan of the Director of Studies, Father Linossier, "a teacher of Rhetoric, very knowledgeable and talented" who supervised the teaching of the young ecclesiastics comprising the teaching-body. The plan of studies put great emphasis on Latin from the 8th grade, but History and Geography were insufficient and Mathematics was not taught. Apart from this, the seminary had the same programme of studies as the colleges.

Nevertheless, it must not be thought that the religious atmosphere was idyllic. A report on the seminary, dated 1807 - 1808 (*Origines Maristes 1 p 139*) mentions that the seven teachers "generally speaking, have nothing of the tone and manners which tell of pious and zealous hearts. It appears that several of them rarely go to Communion; there is a complete absence of sufficient agreement between them and the Superior." [At this time] Marcellin seems to have been part of the "Happy Gang" at the seminary, Juniors who were quick to enjoy themselves and were not disinclined to go off to the bar. In short, it was not very far from the life of a student at college.

However, the seminary did not only have a "Happy Gang": it also had the tradition of "Pious Groups" and Marcellin Champagnat's resolutions of 1812 seem to show that he had now joined one of them: he decided from now on to no longer go to the bar, to flee bad company and to catechise the poor as well as the rich. These resolutions, typical for members of pious confraternities, show that, from then on, Marcellin was taking his vocation seriously, something

³² Undated, but after 17th September 1808 and before 15th November 1811.

which had not been evident up until then³³. During the school-year 1812 - 1813, if Marcellin's assessment was good with regard to work and character, very good with regard to conduct, his knowledge was still judged weak.

8. The senior seminary of Saint Irenaeus

On the feast of All Saints 1813, Marcellin Champagnat was part of a group of 84 new senior seminarians who entered the senior seminary of Saint Irenaeus at La Croix Rousse, Lyon. On 6th January 1814, when the Empire was crumbling, he received the four minor orders and the sub-diaconate, which brought him definitively into the ecclesiastical state³⁴. The seminary was about to experience a rough time: that of the First Restoration, which fulfilled the wishes of a large number of the seminarians, of whom Marcellin seems to have been one³⁵. The seminary remained in an agitated state for 100 days: for a long time there was a refusal to sing "*Salvum Fac Imperatorum*"³⁶. However, the Second Restoration quickly disappointed them as Louis XVIII badly corresponded to the image of the Great Monarch who would restore the Church, which many of them had hoped for.

9. The idea of the Society of Mary

During this period of upset, Marcellin's academic results remained quite bad: the students' register listed him as "*Valde mediocriter*" (very average). Nevertheless, his idea of founding teaching Brothers was maturing.

Marcellin linked up with a small, fervent group centred around a somewhat hotheaded and unstable seminarian, Jean Claude Courveille. While a seminarian at Le Puy, he had believed himself to have received, while at prayer in the Le Puy Cathedral on 15th August 1812, an inspiration which he reported thus³⁷: "As in the time of frightening heresy which could have overthrown the whole of Europe, He (God) aroused his servant, Ignatius, to found a society which would carry his name, calling itself the Society of Jesus and those who comprised it Jesuits, to fight again the hell which had been unleashed against the Church of my Divine Son (it is Mary who is speaking), in the same way, it is my wish, and this is the will of my adorable Son, that, in these latter days of impiety and incredulity, there would also be a society consecrated to

³³ Brother Pierre Zind in his *Bx M. Champagnat, son œuvre scolaire* indicates that his first spiritual turn-around was his call to the priesthood in 1803 and his second, these resolutions of 1812. For my part, I barely credit this first turn-around and I do not consider that these 1812 resolutions are necessarily the first. We can say that, between 1807 and 1812, he had a conversion which made him a seminarian in the full sense of that word.

³⁴ [Translator's Note] Up until the liturgical reforms of Vatican II, the four minor orders (Porter, Lector, Exorcist and Acolyte) and the major order of the Sub-diaconate were imposed by the bishop at the same ceremony.

³⁵ On 28th May 1815, Fesch arrived to visit the seminary. A seminarian wrote "Long Live the King" on his coach and the Cardinal unknowingly went through Lyon with this graffiti. In his resolutions, Marcellin mentions prayers "for the return of the king".

³⁶ [Translator's Note] ie "God save the Emperor".

³⁷ *Origines Maristes* 2 doc 718/5

me and carrying my name as the Society of Mary and those comprising it Marists, to battle against hell.”³⁸

Imbued with his plan, Courveille could not carry it out in Le Puy since, being from the Diocese of Lyon, he was reclaimed by the authorities of his diocese of origin. So, he joined Saint Irenaeus in 1814. During the academic year 1815 - 1816, he succeeded in gathering around him, from within a small secret society, about twelve companions, one of whom was Marcellin Champagnat, whose aim was to regenerate the faith, not only in France, but throughout the world, inspired by the missionary work of the Jesuits, by means of a “tree of three branches”: priests, Sisters, third-order.

10. An idea for a personal foundation

Now, if Marcellin joined this society, from this time on he had a personal project: “I have always felt a particular attraction for a foundation of Brothers. I most willingly join you and, if you judge it appropriate, I will take on the responsibility for this element. And he did take on the responsibility. My elementary education, he said, has been lacking; I would be happy to contribute to others getting advantages that I did not have myself (OM2 P718; Note of Father Maîtrepierre, 1853)”³⁹

11. A complicated path for a Congregation

Marcellin’s action, then, would have been included in a complex set-up: first of all, the Jesuit myth⁴⁰, still so vital, which made the Society of Jesus the missionary model to imitate. There was less of a seeking to revive the Society, which the Pope had just re-established in 1814, than to reproduce the model that it comprised: the Jesuit, the wise and zealous priest who went all over the world for the glory of God. This is why, well before the re-establishment of the Jesuits, Napoleon saw to it that, in the strict sense, there would be none of them around. He very clearly understood that the Jesuits would now be less a Religious Order than a model of the apostolate likely to put a stop to a despotism which required each one in his place, and therefore controllable. During this time there was a fairly widespread effort to refound the Society: the Fathers of the Faith were considered to be crypto-Jesuits and were suppressed because of that, Clorivière, a former Jesuit, and Marie-Adelaïde de Cicé founded the Sons and Daughters of the Heart of Mary; Madeleine Sophie Barat had founded the Society of the Sacred Heart. Father

³⁸ This text seems to have been inspired by Rodriguez, *Practice of Christian Perfection* vol 3 Treatise 1 “Of the End and Institution of the Society of Jesus”. “For St Ignatius...seeing that the church...was inflicted with an infinity of heresies, disorders and scandals...was inspired by God to institute our society to be... a kind of flying camp that should be ready at the least alarm; and always be in a condition to fight the enemy...” [English Translation: New York, 1878]

³⁹ OM2 doc 754/1 Notes of Father Bourdin, 1830: “At Lavalla. Branch foreseen for a long time by Father Ch(ampagnat)then confided to him at the senior seminary.”

⁴⁰ It does not operate only in anti-clerical environments. It also has its ardent fans [in the Church].

Nectou's famous prophecy, which said that the Society would be destroyed, but then reborn, ran through France.⁴¹

It was often in the bosom of the Aas, the Marian confraternities, and the secret societies in the seminaries that this missionary spirit was conserved and it underpins the series of new foundations, one of these being the Marists.

To sum up, the spirit of conspiracy, of resistance to despotism, and of regeneration underpins three types of Congregation:

- Secret confraternities of young people, and later Congregations of men, notably in Paris, Lyon and Bordeaux⁴²
- Congregations copied from the Jesuits, but wanting to attach themselves to the old Orders with a contemplative branch and female branches (which the Jesuits refused to have), such as the Picpus Fathers⁴³
- Missionary Societies, such as the Rauzan and Forbin-Janson's Missionaries of France whose spectacular missions will feature in the chronicles of the 1820s
- Politico-religious confraternities such as Bertier de Sauvigny's Knights of the Faith and ecclesiastical networks attached to certain areas of the Ministry of Religious Affairs.

At the start of the century, there were very few differences between these groups. They were often united by ultramontanism⁴⁴, the Jesuit myth, and a mystico-religious royalism founded on the myth of the Great Monarch, often combined with that of Louis XVII⁴⁵. At the end of the Restoration they would be completely subsumed by their adversaries within the same undifferentiated group, "Congregation", suspected of plotting against the powers-that-be and this would cause the fall of the politico-religious branch of the pathway, obliging the others to reorient themselves more clearly towards educational and charitable missionary activity. The 1830 Revolution would sound the death-knell on their inclinations towards the restoration of Christianity. It is true that, over the course of the Restoration these "ultras" would be

⁴¹ André Lanfrey, Marist Notebooks no 9: "The Society of Mary as a Secret Congregation" and no 10 "The Legend of the Jesuit of Le Puy" [Translator's Note] In the original French, Brother André gives the reference for this latter article as Marist Notebooks no 11. However, research on the Institute's website, Library section, shows that it is, in fact, in no 10 of Marist Notebooks.

⁴² [Translator's Note] Brother André refers here to biographies of Father Noailles, Founder of the Association of the Holy Family, and of Father Chaminade, Founder of the Marianists and the Institute of the Daughters of Mary.

⁴³ [Translator's Note] Brother André refers here to biographies of Father Coudrin, Founder of the Picpus Fathers.

⁴⁴ [Translator's Note] Ultramontanism was the French politico-religious policy which acknowledged papal authority over the Church in France. Its opposite was Gallicanism, for which see footnote 20, above.

⁴⁵ [Translator's Note] Louis XVII (1785 - 1795) was the younger son of King Louis XVI. He became heir to the throne on the death of his brother in 1789 and, when his father was executed in 1793, he became king. However, he died of tuberculosis at the age of 10 while a prisoner of the revolutionary forces. Rumours persisted for many years after his death that he was alive and would return to reclaim the throne.

disappointed by Royalty and scalded by the liberal attacks. However, under the Empire and the Restoration they would merit the labels: conspirators, resisters, missionaries.

12. A typology for Congregations of Brothers

For what more particularly concerns the Congregations of Brothers, Pierre Zind, the great specialist in this area, has drawn up a typology⁴⁶. First of all, he distinguished between Brothers destined to directly teach children, “the Little Brothers” and the Brothers destined to train and supervise secular elementary teachers, “the Great Brothers”.

The first category was divided into three parts. Firstly, the “Brothers of Christian Instruction”, such as the De la Mennais Brothers⁴⁷ founded in 1816 and the Brothers of St Gabriel⁴⁸ founded in 1820, who used “solitary Brothers” living in the presbytery and so, under the authority of the parish priest. Not having any private dwelling or any household to support, they cost very little.

The St Joseph Brothers, such as the Brothers of St Joseph of the Diocese of Amiens, founded in 1823, and the Brothers of the Holy Family of Belley (1835) were “lay clerks”: at the same time as exercising the functions of elementary teachers, they were also sacristans, cantors, catechists...just like the elementary teachers of the Ancien Regime.⁴⁹

The Brothers of the region of Lyon (including Marcellin’s) rejected the title “solitary Brothers”, never living in the presbytery and never going in fewer than two. They did not take on the work of clerics.

The expression “Great Brothers” was held by the Mariansts⁵⁰ founded in 1817 in Bordeaux by Joseph Chaminade. They subsequently opened teacher-training colleges for lay elementary teachers in Saint Rémy (Haute-Saône), Courtefontaine (Jura) and Beaupré (Doubs).

To these categories, we need to add the Viatorians of Louis Querbes, the fruit of a project of a confraternity of elementary teachers bringing together celibate Little Brothers and lay elementary teachers, possibly married. However, the project had to be abandoned and the Viatorians became a Congregation of clerics and Brothers.

⁴⁶ [Translator’s Note] Brother Pierre Zind’s work in this area is set out in his *Les nouvelles congrégations de frères enseignants en France de 1800 à 1830*.

⁴⁷ [Translator’s Note] Although, in the English-speaking world, the “Brothers of Christian Instruction” and the “De la Mennais Brothers” are two names for the same Congregation, Brother Pierre is, at this stage, using the “Christian Instruction” label as a general category.

⁴⁸ [Translator’s Note] Also known, in the English-speaking world, as the Montfort Brothers.

⁴⁹ Pierre Zind adds the category of Brothers of Christian Doctrine, such as those of the Diocese of Nancy, but the link appears weak. These Brothers are more like the first two categories.

⁵⁰ A Congregation of priests and Brothers.

We see, then, that, along with the mutual teaching method⁵¹ - the liberal project of the public educational system - which flourished from 1815, ultra-Catholicism sought to adapt in the countryside, the old model of the “lay-clerk” which would give dignity and competence by further clericalising or (and) coming close to the model of the De la Salle Brothers.

Marcellin undoubtedly prioritised the second category, but we will see that it was not without trial and error or adapting to circumstances.

13. A traditional yet novel project

Marcellin undoubtedly was part of the ultra pathway, but did not content himself with founding Brothers since he was one of the principal artisans in the founding of the branch of priests of the Society of Mary which would busy itself with missions and colleges. They would always consider that the branch of the Brothers was just an element of the original project of the tree with three branches which could not sustain itself without being controlled by the priests. In this sense he is very much in the tradition of Jean-Baptiste De la Salle who also envisaged a society of priests able to undertake the spiritual and moral direction of the Brothers. Yet he is also typical of those founders in the 19th century who envisaged ill-defined members of Congregations with multiple branches corresponding to all levels of society.

His idea of the creation of a Congregation of Brothers applying the method of the De la Salles - a method up until that time exclusively city-based - to poor children in the countryside, is certainly not free of a political background since it manifested itself at the moment the government plans for mutual teaching saw the light of day. Moreover, Marcellin was not unaware of the will of the State in affirming its rights over education at the level of the University.

14. A social and religious plan

Nevertheless, his belonging to this world does not explain everything: there was plenty of will to respond to a social and religious need, to furnish a response to the shortage of good schoolmasters in the countryside. In this sense, Marcellin was situated within an older tradition: that of “Teach all nations” and the world of mercy; but he was also within the continuity of the utopia of the regeneration of Christianity through children, an element of *Devotio Moderna*⁵², which made him consider that the world of childhood was strategic. On the other hand, placed, as he was during his childhood, between a revolutionary father and a devout mother, he was well-placed to understand that the struggle around education and teaching was going to become paramount. Wanting to found Brothers who applied the method of the De la Salles in the countryside, meant immediately placing himself within a perspective, both traditional and Christian, in opposition to the mutual method. It was also to be an innovator, by rejecting the

⁵¹ [Translator’s Note] A method used in very large classes where the teacher would teach a small group of senior pupils, who would then go on to teach groups of younger pupils.

⁵² [Translator’s Note] *Devotio Moderna* was a movement founded in northern Europe in the 14th century which emphasised personal renewal through pious practices. It had largely died out by the 18th century.

inefficient and brutal individual method. With Marcellin Champagnat, as with other Founders, there was a mixture of motivation: personal, apostolic, political and educational.

15. A founding event

However, quite a specific event was necessary for Marcellin to put his project into action. Assigned as curate to the village of La Valla in the Pilat Mountains on 12th August 1816, he was therefore in an environment which was very close geographically, socially and religiously to his own home-village above Saint-Chamond and Marcellin did not waste any time. He had scarcely arrived when he got into contact with Jean Marie Granjon, a farm-worker from the hamlet of Luzernod.

He was a servant on a farm and on 26th October 1816 he went to fetch the curate for a sick-call at the hamlet. Marcellin believed he had in him the dispositions for his project. The following day, he brought him a copy of the “*Christian’s Manual*”, a brief summary of doctrine and devotion. Granjon objected that he could not read: “Take it anyway, it will help you learn to read and, if you want, I will give you lessons.” In speaking to a man of around his own age (five years younger), but still young and, particularly unmarried, therefore free, of a very average social class (he was a farm-worker) and living in a hamlet, Marcellin, besides practising the apostolate through good books which was current among zealous priests⁵³, offered Granjon the possibility of social advancement and a role as teacher-catechist in the hamlet. Moreover, in offering to teach him, he was subscribing to the catechetical tradition where the book of piety would be the reading-book.

However, on 28th October, there was a foundational experience which got things moving⁵⁴. The child’s death shortly after he had left the house brought joy and terror to Marcellin: how many children were in the same danger of being lost! He decided there and then to start his foundation: we are at the end of 1816.

16. Unifying an idea around a face

This dramatic meeting between a dying young man and a zealous pastor could only evoke in the majority of pastors the satisfaction of a job well done. Marcellin, however, showed an inclination to make this universal: this young man represented the world of children threatened with death while in a state of sin⁵⁵.

Above all, however, Marcellin found in this young man another self: like him, he had lived in a hamlet, too far from the church to regularly attend catechism-classes and, therefore, school. They

⁵³ In Lyon, the publisher Rusand, an ultra-Royalist, had put in place a very powerful network for distributing religious books. Marcellin Champagnat was in contact with him.

⁵⁴ [Translator’s Note] The date is according to Brother Pierre Zind. In the French text, Brother André goes on to relate the Montagne story.

⁵⁵ [Translator’s Note] At that time it was the commonly-held view in the Church that anyone, adult or child, who died without knowledge of God or the chance of receiving absolution, would have little chance of salvation.

were the same age when a clergyman arrived to persuade him to enter the seminary. Yet, if Marcellin had suffered from ignorance like him, he had been, at least partially, able to move away from that. This young man did not have the same opportunity. The priest who visited him could only give him the bare essentials: the knowledge necessary for salvation. Because this young man lived in the mountainous peripheries, he was therefore abandoned to ignorance, for him the source of symbolic death (the ignorance), physical death (through lack of care) and above all of spiritual death through his ignorance of the truths necessary for salvation and the receiving of the sacraments.

In the face of this young, dying man, Marcellin succeeded in bringing together within himself two profound desires: as a badly-educated child, born in a hamlet and from a village with a brutal and incompetent schoolmaster, he had to escape and he carried within him the experience of extremely punishing and mediocre studies and finally a feeling of an educational block. That is why he very soon wanted Brothers, that-is-to-say, pious laymen, devout, selfless, but also competent. In short, he fashioned his own ideal Congregation-member. As a curate he was spiritually in charge of the territory to which his Superiors had assigned him and he had the satisfaction of having accomplished his task. Yet as a priest-member of a missionary group with universal aims, his glance was directed well beyond this little mountain-territory.

The face of Montagne, then, made the project lose its abstract air: it is the face of a Brother resembling him, but also of all those (children, young people, adults) abandoned in their destitution and ignorance, on the margins of the parishes, on the margins of the world. There, where many would have seen a banal fact or a massive problem⁵⁶ Marcellin was conscious that his wish for the badly-taught child and for the missionary-priest would find its fulfilment, not in the Antipodes, but in his own parish. Because he was responsible for these people and because the people had a face, he had to act immediately, where he was.

Thus he established one of the major traits of his project and its spirituality: to concern itself with the poorest, the most destitute, not only the children, but also the adults, all those on the margins, the orphans, the beggars, those in misery; these are the people he and his Brothers would do their best to help.

17. A particular vision of Church and Society

To this massive problem he had to bring a massive and immediate response: the catechism taught by laymen (the Brothers), without whom, particularly in this period of a dearth of priests, it would not be possible to respond. Marcellin, therefore, situated himself in a fairly original view of the Church since to found Brothers was to implicitly admit that the clergy could not do everything. To the territorial Church, founded on the juxtaposition of parishes and dioceses, he

⁵⁶ At this time, both the civil and ecclesiastical authorities were worried about education. The Law of 1816 had organised public education; those who favoured the mutual-school and the supporters of the De la Salles increased the number of schools significantly.

wanted to add another level: the school. His ecclesiology, which included the need for confraternities as intermediate stages between the curates and parishioners, was typically devout, underpinned by his belonging to a religious current which, through its Jesuit tradition and the working together as a confraternity of his friends in the seminary, had prepared him for this type of reaction.

Marcellin worked as a good priest of modern Christianity because, since the end of the Middle Ages, it was thought that there would be no benefit from receiving the sacraments without a prior knowledge of “the truths necessary for salvation”. Also, the Synodal Statutes⁵⁷ firmly stated that absolution could not be given to those “ignorant of the mysteries of the faith”. Therefore, Marcellin had begun by instructing the dying boy. It might be wondered, ‘tho’, if the extreme ignorance found at the boy’s home was not so much a question of his own lack of knowledge as of adherence to a folk-Catholicism, peasant, still mediaeval and therefore little suited to a clear expression of his beliefs. In fact, behind this conversation between the young curate and the young peasant, lay a clash of two ideas about religion: the one, who considered that belief without the ability for abstract verbal expression was meaningless, the other who thought that sacramental gestures had a sufficient salvific power. Because he himself came from a largely literate environment, but also because he knew the cost of that culture since the seminary had made him a man of doctrine, Champagne could not accept an archaic type of religiosity stuck in gestures. In this sense, he was a good man of the French Enlightenment. A catechetical Enlightenment, certainly, and subject to caution in the eyes of the Liberals, but an Enlightenment nevertheless.

18. The first disciples

So, he wasted no time: he persuaded Granjon to become a teacher and quickly found him a companion, Jean-Baptiste Audras, who was born in 1802 and already literate. On 2nd January, 1817 he installed his two disciples in the village, in a house bought jointly by him and his former seminary-companion whom he regarded as his Superior in the still-secret Society of Mary, Jean-Claude Courveille. Audras’ parents made no objection. Marcellin situated his action within the teaching tradition of the secular clergy: he opened an “educational establishment” a “presbytery-school”. The population could only regard this favourably.

It was a devout life, a life of “Brothers”, that-is-to-say, pious laymen. This type of “spontaneous community”, more frequent among women than men, was not rare. What had first of all been a group of “good Christians” had [by 1818] become a real religious community, with a Superior, a Director (Brother Jean-Marie Granjon) more specifically monastic practices: meditation, Office of the Blessed Virgin Mary, the couple, the practise of silence, a black habit, bells, religious names⁵⁸. The ages of the community were very varied, from 25 to 10.

⁵⁷ [Translator’s Note] ie the regulations governing the priests of the Archdiocese of Lyon.

⁵⁸ The monastic model seems to be extremely significant. The influence of the Trappists, the only religious order to have survived [the Revolution] was very strong.

19. Destiny's banality and originality

So, the “career”, at the dawn of the 19th century, of the Founder of a Congregation, son of a revolutionary, member of a family seeking social advancement, from a partially-literate peasant environment and highly conscious of his educational blocks seems to have a certain amount of interest for us. Indeed, a quite mundane story of a priest, half-baked by the seminary, of a mediocre educational level, but imbued with a powerful mystico-political ideal, who himself wanted to become an educationalist and founder of a teaching society formed of uneducated, or almost uneducated peasants. In taking his disciples from the same environment that he wanted to evangelise, Marcellin assured them of social advancement through and for the Church at the same time as he was contributing to the evolution of a peasant-class that was still little conscious of the need for education.

In fact, this story resembles that of dozens of others. Specialists in education know that the Church of the 19th century, through its seminaries, its “colleges”, its catechism-classes, its Congregations, furnished a massive number of troops for the advancement of knowledge, for which the State later claimed the exclusive credit.

FROM A LOCAL WORK TO A NETWORK OF “TERRITORIES”

1. Not a negligible network of schools

Marcellin Champagnat's project was not accomplished in an educational desert, far from it. The track that he himself followed is witness to this: the elementary school in Marlhès, the Latin school in Saint-Sauveur-en-Rue, the junior seminary at Verrières.

The area around Saint-Étienne was particularly well-provided with schools. The 1807 inquiry grouped educational establishments in three categories: Institutes (public secondary schools, junior seminaries, colleges); boarding-schools belonging to individual schoolmasters with a lower level of studies, but based on Latin; small schools or primary schools for learning reading, writing and the first steps in arithmetic.

2. The University struggling to control this diverse and changing world

The creation of the Imperial University disturbed this embryonic system on three levels: from 1st November 1808 the boarding-schools had to obtain from it “a certificate granting authority to run an establishment” which cost the boarding-school masters 200 francs. Moreover, Institutes and boarding-schools had to pay 1/20th of the fees paid by the pupils. As for the masters of primary schools, they could only be authorised by the University on presentation of a certificate of good conduct and morals presented by the parish priest and a certificate from the mayor attesting that the school is necessary for the commune. The De la Salles were exempt from these steps since they were part of the University. As for Sisters (of St Joseph, St Charles etc) and female teachers,

they were dependent on the Ministry of Religious Affairs and not on the University. Moreover, their function was not exclusively teaching: they brought up children, took care of people, raised money for the poor.

The attempt by the University to control education and draw resources away from it ran up against the difficulty of not knowing exactly what the situation was and the bad will of numerous teachers who did not declare their activities. There were large numbers of clandestine schools. Thus, the inquiry of 1807 picked up 58 elementary teachers. In 1810, only 42 had officially declared themselves; in 1811, 48 were authorised. Marllhes had an elementary teacher in 1807 and 1810, but none in 1811. At La Valla, an elementary teacher was located in 1807, but none after that. For the boarding-schools, it was the same phenomenon: the masters, summoned to comply with the laws and have themselves authorised, hastened to “stop teaching Latin and hid their true nature by passing themselves off as primary schools”. However, these boarding-schools were recognised as useful since the parents could make a start on the education of their sons for little cost, without being separated from them. It is true that the De la Salles, who had a novitiate in Lyon since 1804, quickly opened several establishments in Saint-Étienne, Saint-Chamond, Rive-de-Gier, Saint-Galmier, and Saint-Bonnet-le-Château which achieved great success in 1810. However, few communes could welcome them since their teaching was free but the fee charged to the communes was heavy: 500 -600 francs per Brother and premises had to be offered. Finally, the De la Salles did not teach Latin. For the girls, the Sisters of St Joseph were reborn under the direction of Mother Fontbonne: in 1812 they had about forty communities in the Loire, particularly in the South. In 1812 there was a community of six Sisters in La Valla and four in Marllhes.

However, these schools were only the visible tip of an educational body too difficult to discern which functioned as best it could: there were numerous foundations and closures. In fact it was more a question of “ways of education” than of schools. The Rector described them thus: “Your Excellency will undoubtedly be struck by such a large number of communes in the Department of the Loire which lack legally authorised elementary teachers. It must not be thought, however, that the young people have been completely deprived of the means of instruction. There is not one tenth of these communes in which cannot be found one or two female teachers, especially responsible for teaching children of their own sex; they also take care of young boys, teaching them reading and writing as much as they are able, and they particularly teach them the truths of religion.”⁵⁹

Thus “Sisters”, “Poor Daughters”, “Béates”, female teachers and male peripatetic teachers from Savoy or the Piedmont region, priests, form a motley group able to take on, for good or ill, the

⁵⁹ Letter from the Rector to the Minister, 18th January 1821. Belated evidence, but valuable, a fortiori, for the era of the Empire.

teaching of basic literacy or sometimes a bit more when the parish priest or some other priest gives lessons in Latin.

A report of the Academy Inspector, Guillard on 15th May 1820 for the canton of Saint-Genest-Malifaux states that there are only two communes without a certificated teacher... The children from the commune of Jonzieux go off to other communes or are taught by “men from Dauphiné”⁶⁰. At Tarentaise the parish priest has 30 Latin-scholars and the curate 30 pupils at elementary-level. The canton, then, benefits from a quantitatively almost-complete educational network.

3. The memory of the underground Church

However, one cannot speak of the educational-network without calling to mind the underground Church organised during the Revolution by the Vicar General, Linsolas into 25 missions made up of territories administered by a clandestine head-of-mission, assisted by a number of priests. In each commune, a lay village-head directed the faithful. The missionaries appointed catechists proposed by him and these were divided into three classes: the “residents” who taught religion to the children and organised the arrival of the missionary, the “peripatetic” catechists who accompanied the missionary, taking responsibility for his security and carrying his mail, and the “advance-guard” catechists who made enquiries in the communes where the mission had still to be set up.

Marlhes might have been helped by the strong Saint-Étienne mission, with 31 priests⁶¹ and La Valla by that of Saint-Chamond. The system of teaching certainly left its traces since the nuns had taken refuge in the mountain-villages and had taught catechism there. For example, at Saint-Genest-Malifaux, Father Rousset-Gualin visited the parish every fortnight. Four Sisters of St Joseph who worked for their living helped him by preparing children for their First Communion. So, people became used to a system which was not only independent of the State, but mistrustful of it. This weighed heavily when the University wanted to impose its presence and its mutual-teaching method. On the other hand, we can assume that the teaching was not merely oral, but that the catechism basically served to teach reading, at the very least.

In 1800, when the Prefect declared that, in the Loire, “the country-areas were deprived of education before the Revolution”, that “few teachers offered their services” because of insufficient payments, that the people were indifferent to education, and especially that “a marked leaning towards superstition in all the country-areas kept going by the presence of rebellious priests contributed to the dearth of elementary schools”,⁶² he was displaying his own

⁶⁰ [Translator’s Note] Dauphiné was a Province in the south-east of France. Part of it included an area which is now part of the metropolitan city of Lyon.

⁶¹ Although it is possible that the parish continued to be administered by the Diocese of Puy.

⁶² [Translator’s Note] The Prefect was an official of the revolutionary government, so when he speaks of “rebellious priests” he means priests who are against the Revolution.

prejudices and the view of the State rather than reality. Nevertheless, he was clear on one point: the role of the underground Church in the rejection of the republican school because “Linsolas forbade the filling of official posts and sending children to schools where they would be taught the republican catechism by a militant revolutionary.”

In 1796 Lisolas himself went to make a pastoral visit to Roannais and Forez. His report estimated that, of the 100,000 souls under inspection, there were only 7,000 outside the Church: “3,000 who were indifferent, but would not have denounced the missionaries; some might even have hidden them, and 4,000 real revolutionaries for whom hate is tempered by fear of the return of religion.” So it was the ecclesiastical authorities who held the territories and who knew better than the civil administrators what the educational situation was. However, it is true that the Church and State did not have the same conception of education: what for one was superstition was knowledge for the other.

Another sign of the dynamism of this educational network was, during the final stage of the revolutionary period, the foundation of “clerical schools” from which arose a number of seminaries. In 1801 in St-Chamond a “town school without boarding” was being run by three non-practising priests. The parish priest of Chagnon, near St-Chamond was running, in the same year, “a small boarding-school” with four boarders and 10 - 15 day-boys. In 1802, the former Carthusian monastery of Sainte Croix at Pavezin had 29 boarders. It was run by three priests and a layman and they taught Latin and French, some history and geography, writing, arithmetic and book-keeping.

The majority of these private schools run by ecclesiastics were part of an informal network of “presbytery-schools” which, in addition to financially supporting their founders, made mid-level schools available to families in the surrounding areas and fed the junior seminaries after having polished up the future ecclesiastical students. When he went to Saint-Sauveur-en-Rue before entering Verrières, Marcellin was making use of one of the elements of this network of “Latin-schools”, “colleges”, “educational establishments” often run by ecclesiastics or former seminarians. Many junior seminaries originated in “presbytery-schools” due to the initiative of a more capable priest, or (and) with the support of the archdiocese, who succeeded in establishing a secondary course.⁶³

4, The school situation in La Valla

This activity of the underground Church did not preclude the maintenance of a network of the Ancien Regime. So, “in arriving at La Valla in August 1816, Father Champagnat found an elementary-school teacher, Jean-Baptiste Galley who had been born in the parish in 1774 and was teaching in the hamlet of Sardier, thanks to a 3rd class certificate, delivered on 12th December 1816.” He was teaching by the individual method. However, he was married and

⁶³ To obtain resources in money or kind, but also seminarians, the priests went around the countryside.

looking for more money, so he was not going to stay on: in 181 he installed himself in Saint-Julien-en-Jarez, where the commune gave him accommodation and guaranteed him 300 francs over and above the school fees of the pupils.

This clearly illustrates the difficulties which education in the hamlets and country-parishes came up against: even when the schoolmasters were not peripatetic, the mediocrity of their position led them to abandon everything when they found something better-paying. In founding Brothers, Marcellin created a people of stability: unmarried, and so having few material needs - Religious, therefore unambitious and obedient to a Superior - who could take on an important mission for a lengthy period of time. Working with the simultaneous method, they could be very useful.

Apparently the village did not have a schoolmaster at the time of the founding of the Brothers. The 1807 inquiry indicated that there was one, but no declaration was made in 1810 and no authorisation in 1811. Father Jourjon, the Parish Priest of St-Victor-Malescours (Haute Loire) near Marlhès, suggested, for the opening of the school-year in 1818, a former De la Salle Brother, Claude Maisonneuve, who knew the simultaneous method. Unfortunately, Maisonneuve did not have a certificate, since the De la Salles did not need them when they were teaching. The school which he founded could not be authorised for the commune and Jean Montmartin, a married man and a native of St-Genest-Malifaux (born in 1794) with a 2nd class certificate was appointed as elementary-school teacher with a salary fixed at 100 francs and the fees of 40 pupils in winter and 25 in summer.

5. A sort of teacher-training college

This Maisonneuve was nevertheless able to be extremely valuable to Marcellin Champagnat since he was able to initiate the first Brothers into the simultaneous method. The private school at La Valla therefore functioned as a teacher-training college, with a school attached: the teacher lived in community with the Brothers.⁶⁴ His school was in the Brothers' house. They helped him by working as classroom assistants or monitors. Outside of class-time, he trained them in the various elements of teaching. However, this experiment lasted only a year. The teacher's "too worldly and irregular behaviour" caused him to be sent away. Brother Jean-Marie (Granjon) took over from him.

In the second year, the schools seemed to be very prosperous: many children came from the hamlets and slept in the village at the house of one of the inhabitants, in accordance with the tradition of weekly-boarding. It is possible that it was in the course of this year of 1819 that Marcellin moved from the presbytery as the Brothers still needed to be trained and even supervised. From the first year, a dozen poor children were taught for nothing, and there were even abandoned children or orphans that he had to feed and clothe by obtaining resources

⁶⁴ There is still the frame of thinking which designates the "Brother" as a pious layman, possibly living in community.

through begging. Because of his success, a second class was opened and this allowed him to separate those learning to read from those learning to write. However, this private school put Jean Montmartin's public school in the shade and he, with the support of his friend Rebod, the Parish Priest, complained that he was being thrown to the dogs. As a result, Marcellin promised the Parish Priest that he would not accept any pupil coming from the public school.

6. School-war in the village

This apparently trivial fact, however, merits attention as it points up two ideas of school, and therefore, of the teacher. The twofold teacher-parish priest category threw out the traditional idea of the teacher-minor cleric, part-secretary in the town hall and sacristan, integrated into the life of the commune and the parish, until his faults found him out.⁶⁵ With the Brothers, the teacher was set apart, completely devoted to his charitable work and, through his lifestyle, showed up his parish priest. The fact that the Brothers' private school won out over the lay teacher's public school added a major element to the discord between the two. An educational market established in villages with members of Congregations, even if insufficiently trained, but banded together and motivated, would eventually eliminate the traditional teacher. There was not yet the well-known quarrel between the lay-teacher, trained at the teacher-training college and protected by the State, and the Religious-teacher, protected by the Church. On the contrary, these two new types of teacher would contribute to the elimination of the traditional teacher. We had here an interior struggle of a Christian society: in a highly symbolic way, the Parish Priest faced up to his Curate. The former was defending traditional Christianity, the traditional parish. His view of the Church was more or less that of a public service which for better or worse guaranteed religious and social services without seeking to change anything. His Curate had a missionary view, with reference to a prestigious past and a project for the renewal of Christianity. Thus, in the village the 17th century debate around the *dévots* was re-enacted. This is why, over the course of the 19th century, teaching Congregations of men never produced unanimity, not just in society, but even in the clergy. Many parish priests would continue to prefer their commune-teacher, even if a layman, to Brothers who were not sufficiently docile, too distanced from the customs of the parish, and were their competitors in the teaching of catechism. Perhaps some imaginative historians could look at the history of this debate.

7. Teaching even on the peripheries

However, the village-school was not Marcellin's only aim: it took in the whole parish-territory. When the Brothers felt themselves capable of taking charge of a school, they suggested that to him, probably after having been consulted since they worked autonomously and he led them towards wisdom and his own objective: "I want you to devote the main effects of your zeal to the most ignorant and abandoned children. I also suggest that you go and teach in the hamlets of the parish."

⁶⁵ Pierre Zind says that the Parish Priest and the teacher together had massive drinking-sessions.

So, the Brothers went each day to teach in a few surrounding hamlets. On Sundays, they were sent in pairs to catechise the people of the countryside. Marcellin went himself to discreetly inspect them. However, the hamlet of Le Bessat (or Bessac), the most populous and the furthest away at around 1200 metres in altitude, posed problems: to get there a two-hour walk was necessary. According to the Prefect of the Loire it was “a tribe” living there, “mired for three centuries in ignorance in a sort of truly deplorable stupidity”. For the Archbishop of Lyon it was, “more than 500 individuals, abandoned since time immemorial, too far from the main town and neighbouring parishes to receive religious assistance and living in utter degradation where they have been left completely alone in the neighbourhood of Mont Pila (sic) and lack religious instruction.”

It was Brother Laurent (Jean-Claude Audras) who took on the mission of catechising this abandoned populace. Every Thursday he went into La Valla to get supplies of potatoes, cheese and bread. Boarding with one of the residents, he had his own food. Every morning and evening he went through the village armed with a bell, just as the confrères of Christian Doctrine had been doing in Italy since the 16th century. “When the children had gathered around him, he taught them prayers and catechism, and also reading.” On Sundays he brought together the inhabitants in the chapel and led them in prayer and the singing of hymns and then taught them catechism.

In his lifestyle, Brother Laurent was getting astonishingly close to the traditional elementary teachers: without a base, living sparingly and teaching only reading. Yet he was not some poor devil earning his crust. If he taught only reading, this was because it was indispensable as a good lead-up to the catechism whereas as writing was of little use in this isolated corner as the custom was not to teach it until after reading had been learned. In the end, through the dignity of his life, he gained a respect that very few schoolmasters acquired at this time. “Everyone took their hat off to him.” Through his detachment, his devoutness, Brother Laurent brought to life the type of Brother Marcellin dreamed of: men able to go to those nobody bothered about to bring Christianity to them, and so to humanise them, through their word and example. We might wonder, therefore, whether Brother Laurent did not adapt for men the educational system of the Béates of nearby Velay, who provided in the hamlets some teaching and a few basic religious practices.

So, Marcellin quickly implemented what his meeting with the young, dying Montagne had inspired in him, to the satisfaction, it seemed, of the majority of people in the parish area: the care of every soul in his charge, particularly the most abandoned.

However, because he had a global view, this success in a minuscule area was only the prototype for an attempt on a worldwide scale. The constraints of a more expansive development would clearly modify his idea.

8. From hamlets to villages

The success at La Valla brought about requests for foundations in an area where “good” teachers were rare. At the end of 1818 two Brothers opened the school in Marlhes; the Founder had not been able to refuse his former parish priest, who wanted to replace his old schoolmaster, aged 62. The mayor of the neighbouring commune, having seen the good results from that school, requested and obtained two Brothers. On All Saints, 1820, the school at Saint-Sauveur-en-Rue was opened, replacing that of the Founder’s own brother-in-law, Benoît Arnaud, whose pupil he had been before going to the seminary. Finally, Bourg-Argental, situated some kilometres away, also obtained Brothers, and was opened on 2nd January 1822. In addition to having slightly more people than the afore-mentioned parishes, it was a village.

In accepting such a foundation, Marcellin was conscious of getting further away from his original idea to such an extent that he formulated his own theory of the apostolate: ensuring “the Christian education of children of small country-parishes” did not prevent a wider vision “since the charity of Jesus Christ [...] extended to every person and the children from towns also cost him all of his blood”. The request from Bourg-Argental was therefore read as a providential sign. Moreover, it satisfied the Founder’s global view and obliged him to more-defined religious sociology: “Religious education in populous parishes and in the towns must be stronger because the spiritual needs are greater there and primary teaching is more advanced.”

So, catechism and religious practices became “first-rank” and the Brothers applied themselves “to take much more care with the Christian education of children since these children are the most neglected and their parents take less care of them”.

So Marcellin did not set the good countryside against the bad town but saw in them two different worlds: the first is the world of the desolate, of those of no account, in sum, those who are not, in the proper sense of the term “civilised”, and need to move beyond their ignorance and coarseness. The second is that of culture disassociated from faith. In the countryside the parents are ignorant, in the towns they are negligent. This is why Marcellin was vividly conscious of the gap between the intentions of the parents and those of the Brothers: “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 seed-bed of saints.” (*Life* Page 112)

It remained for him to accept that, with a workforce of around ten members, spreading out on the level of “local area” meant giving up on spreading around the remote peripheries. Brother Laurent had no imitators. In November 1821 the Founder sent him to Tarentaise to supervise the Latin scholars of Father Préher’s “college”. However, he returned every Sunday to Le Bessat to

take the people for catechism. In choosing the village over the hamlet, Marcellin was modifying his original idea. The Marist Brothers would not be the masculine equivalent of the Béates.

Almost all of Marcellin's disciples had come from La Valla and once all the available young men had been "hired" there were no further candidates. On the other hand, the parish priests benefitting from the Brothers' schools only saw, in the Brothers, teachers, "their" teacher". The low social standing of Marcellin, a young curate, did not allow the idea that he could be a founder any accreditation with the parish priests. Father Alliot, the Parish Priest of Marlhes, his own Parish Priest and beneficiary of his work, dissuaded young men from entering with him. He preferred to send them to the De la Salles. Marcellin's work, like so many others, risked being a straw in the wind. In short, there was a contradiction between recruitment and works on the level of the "local area". However, the visibility of Marcellin's Brothers would draw the attention of two powerful stakeholders who were in dispute about education: the Church and the University.

BETWEEN CHURCH, STATE AND SOCIETY

1. The rules of the State

With the establishment of the Napoleonic University in 1806 - 1808, education was picked up by the State. The Restoration promulgated the Law of 29th February 1816 and Article 14 declared that, "*every commune is obliged to provide for children living there to receive elementary education and that the poor children receive it without cost.*" No sanction was attached and the order had only moral force. To gain the post of elementary teacher, the Law obliged a candidate to present to the Rector two certificates of good conduct, one from the parish priest, the other from the mayor. He was then examined by an Education Inspector. He obtained a teaching certificate in line with the results: 3rd class if he knew how to read, write and count; 2nd class if he knew orthography, calligraphy, the four mathematical operations and the simultaneous method. The 1st class certificate drew on his knowledge of the principles of grammar and arithmetic, the ability to give lessons in geography, surveying "and other useful knowledge", plain chant, linear drawing, and trades. Between 1817 and 1821 this certificate was delivered by the cantonal parish priest, president of the commission supervising elementary education in the area. In each commune the school was officially supervised by the mayor and the parish priest and it was on presentation by one of these two that the certificate was awarded.

In fact the Brothers of La Valla taught in the early years without certificates: they therefore constituted clandestine schools or were confused with the De la Salle Brothers who needed only a letter of obedience from their Superior⁶⁶. The first certificate obtained by one of Marcellin's

⁶⁶ The blanket term "Brothers of Christian Doctrine" allowed elementary teachers from different Institutes to be lumped together into the same personnel category.

Brothers was that of Brother Laurent, at that time a teacher in Le Bessat. The cantonal parish priest sent him a lengthy addition-calculation to do. The Brother calculated the total and a certificate was sent off to him. Brother Louis (J.B. Audra) got his 3rd class certificate in 1822 at Bourg-Argental. Brother Jean-Claude Aubert returned to La Valla in 1822, taught at Saint Sauveur, was examined on 13th June 1823 by a rectoral commission on the precepts of religion, reading, writing, and arithmetic and obtained a 2nd class certificate.

The 1816 Law made provision for the foundation of religious teaching associations under the cover of “Charitable Associations” after royal authorisation. Their novitiates could be supported either by the Départements or by the public education authorities. Also the novitiates of Congregations could act as teacher-training establishments. Thanks to these concessions 14 Congregations of Brothers were able to obtain authorisation. Marcellin did not make use of this possibility. When he made an attempt in 1825 it was too late. Why did he neglect this? Perhaps it was because he did not trust the University; this was a very widespread feeling among the clergy. However, we will see further on the real reason for his attitude.

In fact his opening of schools was based on Article 18 of the Law, which authorised the founders of private schools to present teachers, and Article 19, which authorised them to reserve to themselves the financial administration of these schools. The novitiate in La Valla during 1816 - 1819 fell into this category. However, the other schools which had been opened - Marlhès, Saint-Sauveur, Bourg-Argental - seemed to be public schools.

The Law of 18th March (the Gouvion-Saint Cyr Law) on recruitment to the army provided for seven years of military service for those who drew a “lucky” number in the draw. Seminarians, students of teacher-training colleges and staff of the Public Education system who had taken on a ten-year commitment, were dispensed but had to work for ten years in teaching. Thus, with a certificate, a ten-year commitment and teaching in a public elementary school, one could be dispensed from military service. The De la Salle Brothers had to give their consent to this in order to obtain the certificate. However, the certificate was delivered to the Superior, without examination, and was only valid as long as the Brother remained a member of the Association⁶⁷. Thus the De la Salles and other authorised Congregations which benefited from this arrangement with the Government in 1819 had dispensations from military service, not only for their teaching members directly, but also for those who served Public Education indirectly, such as Masters of Novices, cooks ... The Brothers of La Valla lived under the common law: the uncertificated submitted themselves to the draw and the certificated subscribed to a ten-year commitment. It was a source of constant worry for the Founder⁶⁸.

⁶⁷ Many of the candidates in the De la Salle novitiate were 17 - 19 years of age, probably avoiding the draw. De la Salle Archives of Caluire. Register of the Taking of the Habit, 1806 - 1889.

⁶⁸ In 1834 he had a dream of half-soldier/half-Brother Brothers destroying L'Hermitage.

2. University inspection

The action of the University would become clear through its inspectors, who had a triple task in their inspections: to hunt down the clandestine Latin schools, which obtained a dispensation on payment to the University of 1/20th of the boarding-fees and 1/20th of the fees for teaching Latin and Greek to the day-boys; to make enquiries about University properties, the leftovers of national property which had not found a buyer; to inspect public elementary teachers.

In view of this triple task, Academy Inspector Guillard launched himself on an expedition into the Pilat Mountains. He discovered the Brothers of Saint-Sauveu-en-Rue and Bourg-Argental and stated that they were dependent on the curate of La Valla; that “they were quite similar to the real Brothers of Christian Doctrine in their teaching and discipline”; that they “lived extremely frugally and never drank wine”. After having scolded Father Préher who ran a clandestine Latin school for 40 pupils, 35 of whom were Latin scholars whom he recruited during the holidays⁶⁹, Guillard went to La Valla where he believed he would find another Latin school⁷⁰. There he met the Parish Priest who thought that the curate “was far too zealous in wanting to set himself up as Superior of a Congregation”, but he stated that there were no Latin scholars, “just 12 - 15 young peasants⁷¹ whom he trained in the method of the Brothers to spread them out into the parishes”.

So, it was a clandestine elementary school of a special type, which did not go down well in the University’s scheme of things. In fact, Guillard had clearly seen what it was: a Congregation’s novitiate. Well-intentioned, he invited Father Champagnat to put things in order with the two responsible authorities: the University (of which - he informed the curate⁷² - the De la Salles were part) and the ecclesiastical authorities. Marcellin seemed to be hesitant: “he was waiting to go for legal authorisation when the tree, which he had only just planted (4 or 5 years previously), had taken root.”

So, the goodwill of the University was gained for this type of establishment. In a letter to Bishop Freyssinous, Grand Master of the University, of 4th October 1822, Father D’Regel, the Rector, indicated his intention to authorise “an Institute” of Brothers, which is almost certainly that of the Marist Brothers: “I am going to work in concert with the Vicars General who manage this vast diocese”. But - and this explains Marcellin’s hesitation about going for authorisation - the most influential Vicar General, Bochart, does not want this Congregation because it is part of the Society of Mary which overshadows its efforts on foundations”.

3. The threats from the Archdiocese

Born in 1759 in Poncin (Ain), Claude-Marie Bochart did his ecclesiastical studies in Lyon, then in Paris. It was there in 1777 that he linked up with some friends “with the religious view of

⁶⁹ It was a process similar to that by which Marcellin had been recruited for Verrières.

⁷⁰ In his 1820 Report, he noted that, at La Valla, “the curate runs a college with several masters.”

⁷¹ A group had just arrived from Haute Loire.

⁷² However, Father Champagnat was pretending to be naive.

forming a holy association which could make up in some way for the loss to the Church through the destruction of the Society of Jesus". It was very probably a secret association copied from the Aas. Ordained priest in 1783, Bochard gained his Licence in Theology in 1785. He then became Vicar General of the Diocese of Séez. During the Revolution, he took refuge in Switzerland, then, in 1795, he returned to his family. Parish Priest in Bourg after the Concordat⁷³, he became Vicar General of Lyon in 1807. On 2nd June 1814, so just at the start of the Restoration, he was inspired to found a Society of the Fathers of the Cross of Jesus, on the model of the Jesuits, who had been restored by the Pope that same year. To find disciples, he circulated in the seminary the idea of a society called "Pious Thought". The following year, the first Marists, under the direction of Courveille, formed their own society, more or less fitting in with his. Up to 1819 the two societies were allied. Then, however, the Marists, tired of waiting for the implementation of their vows⁷⁴, allied themselves with Bochard's opponents, who considered that, because Cardinal Fesch had been banned since 1817 from exercising his episcopal functions, the authority of his Vicars General was void. Between 1819 and 1824 there was a fierce struggle between the "Feschists" and the Ultramontanes, led by Besson, the Parish Priest of Saint Nizier⁷⁵. This resulted in the appointment in 1823 of Archbishop De Pins as Apostolic Administrator, and so to the sacking of Bochard.

While waiting, Bochard wanted to put some order into the expansion of Congregations, which were springing up all over. Alone of those authorised as a society of priests were his Missionaries of the Cross of Jesus. Two Congregations of Brothers were approved: the De la Salles and the Brothers of the Cross of Jesus, a Congregation into which Bochard had wanted to gather all new foundations, one of these being the Brothers of La Valla. The education of girls was confided to the Sisters of St Charles and the Sisters of St Joseph.

Between 1821 and 1823 Marcellin was faced with threats⁷⁶ from the Vicar General on the advice of the Parish Priest of La Valla, as well as those from Father Dervieux, President of the cantonal Committee of Public Education, who had the power to have his school closed. However, Bochard's position had already hardened and Marcellin had powerful friends, such as Father Gardette, Superior of the major seminary. Bochard's antagonism would ensure for Marcellin the favour of the provisional Administrator from 1824. In short, the University, largely in the hands of the clergy, had been more favourable to Marcellin than the diocesan authorities.

4. An enterprise recognised by society

⁷³ [Translator's Note] The Concordat was an agreement reached in 1801 between Napoleon and Pope Pius VII to define the status of the Church in France after the Revolution.

⁷⁴ They had envisaged meeting in Le Puy, but then needed the permission of Bochard to leave the diocese.

⁷⁵ André Lanfrey (1997): "*Additional Matter to Origines Maristes*", Marist Notebooks no 11 p 5 - 33.

⁷⁶ An Interdict and closure of the novitiate.

How had society itself reacted to his foundation? The author of the Life of the Founder tells us that, up until 1822, the Institute was unknown⁷⁷. As there was insufficient space to accommodate everyone, the house had to be enlarged. And as there was no money, Marcellin, trained by his father in every trade, took on the job himself and used the Brothers as assistants. These two events⁷⁸ enabled the population and the ecclesiastics to understand that the enterprise was not local and here-today-gone-tomorrow but had to be taken seriously. That did not prevent “seculars of rare piety and ecclesiastics of great virtue” from criticising Marcellin. Also, however, the dynamism of the work attracted vocations, so much so that, from 1824, Father Champagnat enjoyed the favour of the archdiocese. The area for recruitment tended to correspond to that of the existing works and the founding of schools could begin again: in 1823, Saint-Symphorien (Rhône), Boulieu and Vanosc (Ardèche); in 1824, Chavaney and Charlieu (Loire) were founded.

So, the Congregation continued to commit itself towards the south, not hesitating to enter another diocese (and another Academy-area). The foundation at Charlieu was the heritage of a foundation by Father Courveille, Marcellin’s confrère. The planting of schools was due to two major causes: a step by step expansion in a single area, but also a relational network of people likely to support foundations further away.

Thus, Marcellin’s project, the expression of a missionary group with a universal vision and of a personality who had been very clearly affected by a need, at one and the same time, social and religious, and had encountered on a regional level, after the inevitable upsets, the favour of the three powers responsible for managing the new educational creation: University, Church and Society, appreciative of the fact that numerous, worthy, stable, austere and capable elementary teachers were being trained. Nevertheless, Marcellin had more success with the State than with the other two: his Congregation was not recognised⁷⁹. Because of this, his situation remained precarious. Under the Restoration, the University lacked the authority to impose permanent conditions; up until 1828 this was in the hands of the clergy. The approval of Society and the Church were more essential.

5. From La Valla to L’Hermitage: the support of the Apostolic Administrator

On 3rd March 1824, Archbishop De Pins received Father Champagnat, blessed his enterprise and permitted him to give his Brothers a religious habit and even to have them take vows. He invited him to construct a larger house and promised his help to bring this about. On 12th May, Marcellin obtained the agreement of the Archdiocesan Council for Father Courveille, whom he considered as his Superior, to take on the direction of the Brothers at La Valla. On the following

⁷⁷ [Translator’s Note] 1822 was the year when the 8 Postulants arrived in La Valla. Brother André recounts the story here. He notes that the young man who brought them had taken the habit as a De la Salle novice on two separate occasions.

⁷⁸ [Translator’s Note] ie the arrival of the 8 postulants and the enlarging of the house.

⁷⁹ Two attempts under the Restoration seem to have been defeated because Archbishop De Pins, who was very favourable to Congregations, had trouble with strong opposition from the diocesan clergy who did not want new Congregations.

day, the two bought property near Saint-Chamond, in a narrow valley, to construct an extensive Mother-House. On 19th July, the Archdiocese authorised the printing of a prospectus which would allow the Congregation to become better-known. By October, the foundations of the house, which would accommodate 150 people, were completed. In November, Father Champagnat was freed from his duties as curate. On 15th January 1825 the Statutes of the Congregation were sent to Archbishop De Pins for him to have the Institute legally authorised. The La Valla community moved into the new Mother-House in May 1825. A third priest, Father Terrailon, a member of the nascent Society of Mary, was appointed there, in spite of his own wishes. Everything seemed to be in place for the rapid growth of the work, thanks to the support of the Apostolic Administrator of Lyon. Archbishop De Pins favoured enterprises which looked as if they would lead to a reconquering of education by the Church.

6. Teacher-training college/novitiate or novitiate/teacher-training college?

However, the unforeseen happened: Marcellin and Courveille seemed intent on sharing the work between them. The former would look after the temporal side, the latter would take on the spiritual direction. When the Brothers were invited to elect a Superior, they chose Marcellin, contrary to expectations. So, each of the two men had to carry out tasks for which they felt themselves little-suited and Terrailon was not happy to find himself there. Marcellin and Courveille had different views on how novices should be formed. Courveille wanted a strict selection of postulants and a demanding religious and intellectual formation. Marcellin, on the other hand, took whoever came and formed his disciples “on the job” through manual work and a little study. Problems accumulated: illness for Marcellin worries about creditors, Father Courveille’s severity, leading to departures, rebellion and discouragement among the Brothers, and an inspection from the Archdiocese. Finally, Father Courveille, not knowing how to make himself acceptable and being of dubious morals, departed in June 1826 and Father Terrailon was taken on as a preacher in October. Marcellin found himself the only priest, with more than 80 disciples based in L’Hermitage and in a dozen or so schools, which he had to inspect regularly. He was saved by the Archdiocese: Archbishop De Pins came to visit the house on 13th June 1827 and authorised a number of young deacons and priests who had indicated their intention of joining the Society of Mary to come and support Father Champagnat.

In October 1828 he had to face a revolt of the Brothers, who did not want two changes affecting their clothing: the move from a buttoned soutane to one stitched up the front, like the De la Salles; linen stocking rather than knitted, so able to be made industrially⁸⁰. The old Brothers also rejected a more modern method of reading, known as the Port Royal method⁸¹. The showdown over, correctly assisted and supported by the Archdiocese, and receiving numerous disciples, Marcellin Champagnat was a successful Founder. There was just one shadow, but a big one: he was still not authorised by the Government, since a second attempt had failed in 1828. A third

⁸⁰ In this way, a uniformity of habit could be reached while completely distinguishing it from an ecclesiastical costume.

⁸¹ [Translator’s Note] This method was to do with a different way of pronouncing consonants.

attempt in 1830 would fail because of the July Revolution. Attempts in 1832, 35, 36 and 38 failed because the Government, due to the Law of 1833, considered that it could only agree to authorisation through a law and not by simple decree. However, another reason seemed to be in play: concern to limit enterprises of private education.

7. From pious lay villager to Teaching Brother

In around ten years, Marcellin, starting from nothing, had succeeded in building up a Congregation, initially of local interest, but in 1822 - 24 taking on a diocesan dimension thanks to an opportune change in the team in charge of the diocese. However, the Congregation had gone through a change: in establishing a uniform, complete down to the last detail, and a more modern method of teaching, Marcellin brought his Brothers closer to the De la Salles through their specialising in teaching and their being signed up to a religious discipline and a tighter methodology. Thus, the Brother, something of a Jack of all trades in the early years, close to the people, not hesitating to look after the sick, to come to the help of the poor, to catechise the hamlets, to forbid dancing⁸², disappeared in favour of a more precise, more modern definition of “the Brother”. Circumstances and ecclesiastical authorities had imposed this real change. On the other hand, the Brothers themselves had voted for Marcellin as Superior, something he himself had not foreseen, at a stroke eliminating his companions and making him a Founder.

ADMINISTRATIVE ORGANISATION

Building an extensive novitiate signalled a recruitment drive that was no longer local, but regional. The 1824 Prospectus was checked by the Archdiocese, thus making it a patron of the work, but made no mention of the University; this allowed the Little Brothers of Mary, the official name of the La Valla Brothers⁸³, to make themselves known.

1. An early project of a society of education

The Prospectus presented them as complementary to the De la Salles: the communes of the countryside were not able to obtain them because of a lack of resources and the Little Brothers of Mary offered more advantageous conditions, the Brothers being able to go by threes, and, in this case, they asked for $\frac{2}{3}$ of what the De la Salles asked for, that is 1200 francs; they could also go in twos and, in this case, they asked for 800 francs. The communes were at liberty, contrary to the De la Salle custom where free schools were wanted, to levy school fees. The Brothers did not

⁸² [Translator’s Note] For the attitude of Marcellin and the early Brothers to dancing, see Brother André’s Paper, “Champagnat, Dancing and Young People” available on the Institute website.

⁸³ Other names were used: Marist Brothers, Brothers of Mary. The local people called them the “Blue Brothers” since they had worn a blue smock for several years. The name “Little Brothers of Mary” seems to have been imposed only slowly. In addition, it is possible that Father Courveille envisaged an order of Marist Brothers comprising priests and Brothers. The priests would have been Marist Brothers (as the Trappists are known as the Trappist Brothers and the Franciscans as the Friars[ie Brothers] Minor). The Brothers would have been the Little Brothers of Mary. At Aiguebelle, Courveille was known as the Superior General of the Marist Brothers.

ask for clothing or travelling expenses, but a suitable furnished house, a garden “and another recreational space for the children”. They taught catechism, reading, writing, arithmetic, the principles of French grammar, plain chant, Church History, according to the De la Salle method. Contrary to the organisation at their origins, there was no question of sending Brothers on their own, like Brother Laurent in Le Bessat.

Trainee teachers were received between the ages of 15 and 30 “provided they could read, write passably, and they were furnished with a certificate of good conduct”. The novitiate lasted two years. They had to bring a set of clothing, including a suit, for starting out in religion. They paid 400 francs for the two-year novitiate. Those who had an inheritance available, brought it and the house promised to return it in case of withdrawal while deducting the expenses for their stay.

Thus, L’Hermitage appeared to be, at one and the same time, a training college for elementary teachers and a novitiate forming Religious. The teaching function was not separate from the religious tradition. In this period, moreover, many teacher training colleges were run according to the same system. That is why there would be nothing unusual at the end of the Restoration in seeing L’Hermitage as a teacher training college.

2. A programme rather than reality

In fact this Prospectus described a programme rather than reality: it is possible that the article demanding that applicants read and write passably was inspired by Father Courveille, who wanted better-trained Brothers. Marcellin, himself, took anyone. A good part of the formation passed in manual works (garden, ribbon-making, kitchens, various workshops, clearing the slopes of the valley), in line with the Founder’s belief that work, notably manual work, is both a means of discerning true vocations and an ascetic practice. Each one would be employed according to his needs and his abilities. In addition, L’Hermitage was a refuge for old men and orphans. Many children only went to school during the winter and so the school-Brothers had to return to the Mother-House and they had to be kept occupied. The school-Brothers returned to L’Hermitage for two months each year during the school holidays in September/October. For them it was a time for retreat, for ongoing formation, for submitting accounts, and possible departure for a new post.

The Prospectus revealed only one aspect of a house, part religious-house (very much) and part teacher-training college (a little), which alone was described in the Prospectus, part agricultural enterprise, part orphanage, part house of retirement (for Brothers and old men) and part industrial concern⁸⁴. He walked a tightrope in his financial management. In 1831 the Assistant to the Mayor of St-Étienne declared that, according to the returns from the house, the upkeep was guaranteed by “the fees from the novices, the produce from the garden which they cultivated

⁸⁴ L’Hermitage was subjected to politically-motivated inquiries during the 1830 troubles (it was seen as a suspicious monastery capable of hosting conspiracies). However, economic reasons came into play. It was the period when workmen were invading convent-workshops which were competing with them.

themselves and which yielded most of what they needed for their frugal life, since they almost completely abstain from meat, and finally, by the work of several Brothers who devote some hours each day to the manufacture of cloths and sheets.” The gifts of charitable people⁸⁵ needed to be added to these resources, and also of civil authorities to which the 1824 Prospectus had appealed.

In 1828, Marcellin described the organisation of the house to the Vicar General. Father Séon, a young priest, was responsible for the spiritual life of the house, “for our ribbon-making”, for services in the parishes round about. Mr Bourdin, still only a deacon, “responsible for the novices’ classes in writing, arithmetic, singing, catechism, the library of the various establishments, and for the small chapel.” Marcellin, in addition to the general management, was busy with the foundation, the inspection of schools and the management of their personnel. He was unhappy that he could not devote sufficient time to the temporal affairs of the house and was looking for a priest-bursar⁸⁶.

3. A firm base of Brothers themselves

After 1830 the system improved slowly. Firstly, Marcellin understood that he could not count on priests to manage the Brothers⁸⁷. So he chose Brothers as his direct collaborators: in 1835 he complained about being obliged to travel without a break to visit 29 establishments, but he conceded: “I have, it is true, Brothers who assist me in the different roles: a good Master of Novices, a Brother able to take the Brothers’ class, one for the Novices’ class, and a bursar.”

However, he did ask the Archdiocese for a priest able to replace him during his absences (Letter no 56) that he so far had not obtained. Correspondence for the years 1838 - 1840 shows us how the administration was functioning at that time: a chaplain, Father Matricon, a Marist Father, assisted by another priest, like him a Marist Father, but no great shakes, Father Besson. It was Brother François who was the Founder’s right-hand man (Letter 194): “he runs the house in my absence as if I were present”. The totality of the work seems to have been managed by a committee which met every Sunday: the Founder, Brother François and “the usual Brothers” (Letter 169) who were probably Brothers Stanislas, Jean-Baptiste (Furet) and Jean-Marie (Letter 177). Marcellin also employed the services of Brother Inspectors. Thus, Brother Cassien (Louis Chomat)⁸⁸ was employed as an inspector in 1838 (Letters 169, 172, 174). Little by little the management of the work was declericalised, while the Congregation administered itself more rigorously. The evolution of the Congregation was paralleled with that of the University.

⁸⁵ The Assistant suspected that the Brothers were being financed by Propagation of the Faith.

⁸⁶ Marcellin seems to have taken some time to give the posts of responsibility to Brothers. This was done after 1830, because he understood that there would no longer be priests to manage L’Hermitage, apart from himself.

⁸⁷ They had founded a community of Marist Fathers, independent of L’Hermitage, at Valbenoite.

⁸⁸ [In the early life of Brother Cassien], we have a good example of what the word “Brother” meant in the traditional society [of the time]: pious laymen who saw, in the Congregations, not competitors, but imitators.

4. More and more requirements for admission?

In 1835, the requirements for the admission of recruits seem to have been clarified (see Letter 55): they “must give good reason to hope that during their novitiate they will acquire the virtues required for the religious state, as well as the talents needed for the type of work for which each one is destined.” On entering, each one must bring at least a quarter of the fee “plus twenty-five⁸⁹ francs for books, paper, etc., which are supplied by the society. We give them the habit only when they have paid for their novitiate and acquired the required wardrobe.” “If someone cannot pay anything, but we feel sure of his vocation, we make him promise that if he ever leaves the society of his own volition, or if he is sent away because of misconduct, he will repay the society out of his future earnings.” The candidate also had to provide, in addition to his baptismal and birth certificates, the answers to a long questionnaire on his family, his state of health and his religious life. In particular, “Does he perhaps think he will have to work less in religious life than in the world?” “Has he already belonged to some other community? In that case, he could be admitted only for very serious reasons.” It is significant that he was not questioned on his level of education. It is primarily, therefore, a question of admittance to Religious Life.

However, the legislation on teaching, particularly the famous Guizot Law of 1833, which imposed on each commune the obligation of having its own school for boys, would have imposed greater rigour on the intellectual aspect of recruitment: already having a place in the teaching-market, the Congregations had to take advantage of this by adapting to the proposed teaching model. The Marist Brothers, whose work primarily responded to the needs of society, knew how to adapt to the new situation brought about by the State’s action, but, it seemed , without any abrupt change.

5. An initial general overview

In 1828 the Founder drew up an initial report on his work for the civil authorities of the Loire, as in the following table:

Place	Personnel	Various
L'Hermitage : Mother-House	3 clerics 60 Brothers; 16 novices	
Lavalla : “quite an extensive house”	2 Brothers; 115 children	Free School, thanks to the parish priest
Saint-Sauveur : “quite a fine house and a pretty garden”	3 Brothers in winter; 2 in summer; 120 pupils	« Reading is free as it is the only thing required to be a good Christina and a good citizen ⁹⁰ »
Tarentaise : “lacks a lot of what is necessary”	2 Brothers in winter; 55 children	
Bourg-Argental: “a sizeable,	3 Brothers; 130 children	

⁸⁹ Brother André’s original text actually says “20 francs”. However, the French text of the Letter does say “25 francs”.

⁹⁰ Significant words clearly interpreting the primitive ideal.

well-ventilated house, quite well-furnished, a small yard, with a pretty garden”		
Chavanay	2 Brothers; 90 children	“Fee-paying, after having been free ⁹¹ ”
St-Paul-en-Jarret: classes too small and very unhealthy.	3 Brothers; 120 children	
Valbenoîte: classes too small	3 Brothers; 140 children	“Fee-paying for the rich, free for the poor.”
Charlieu	3 Brothers; 120 children	
Boulieu	2 Brothers; 120 children	
St-Symphorien le Château	2 Brothers; 90 children	
Mornant	3 Brothers; 130 children	
Neuville l'archevêque	3 Brothers; 100 children	
St-Symphorien d'Ozon	2 Brothers; 90 children	
Ampuis	3 Brothers; 150 children	
14 schools	90 Brothers of whom 36 are teaching. 1600 pupils; 16 novices.	

This table contains several inaccuracies. The number of 1,600 pupils appears to be a maximum, approximating that of the registered pupils. The Founder drafted this report with a view to getting subsidies and so his interest was in choosing the highest number. It is obvious that, in summer, and even in winter, there would not have been so many present. Then, in the schools of three Brothers, one of them did not teach full-time, but was in charge of the temporal affairs. At best, he would have been a monitor. It is possible that, in schools of two Brothers, only one would teach full-time. It is important to note, then, that only around a third of the Brothers taught; the others were responsible for formation and material affairs.

6. Slow growth

In his petition to the King in 1834 seeking legal authorisation (Letter 34), Marcellin stated that he had 72 Brothers working in the communes and around 40 novices. The following year, writing to Archbishop De Pins, Marcellin stated, “Our house is visibly growing [...] we are at present around two hundred. Twenty-nine establishments. Four thousand children attending our schools.” The same year, in his petition to the Queen to obtain the famous authorisation, he stated that he had 140 subjects “of whom 80 are employed as elementary teachers in a good number of communes. In 1837 (Letter 83⁹²), addressed to the Superiors of the Foreign Missions Society, he stated, “We have 171 brothers in our society at present, and about twenty novices. We have 34 establishments [...]” In the same year, writing to Salvandy, the Minister of Education, he stated that there were 130 subjects employed in teaching “while 90 are preparing to walk in the

⁹¹ In 1834 the mayor imposed fees that were too small and there were too many poor children paying nothing. Marcellin considered setting up a private school.

⁹² In the original French, Brother André has Letter 84 as the citation. However, it is in fact Letter 83.

footsteps of the pioneers”. These numbers appear to be exaggerated because a detailed statement of the Society, contemporaneous with this letter, indicated that there were 83 Brothers working. It is true that the number of Brothers was not mentioned for three schools and that the first three foundations (La Valla, Marlhès and Saint-Sauveur) are not mentioned. Even accepting an average of three Brothers for each of these schools, the total number of Brothers working in schools barely reaches one hundred. Finally, in 1840, while writing to the new Archbishop of Lyon, Cardinal de Bonald, Marcellin states that his Institute comprises around 300 Brothers and 50 establishments. At the time of his death on 6th June 1840 he had formed 421 professed or novices, of whom 92 had left and 49 died. There remained around 280 Brothers. He had founded 53 establishments. 48 of these were still in existence and 180 Brothers were working in them. The number of children taught has been estimated at 7,000.

When these numbers are compared with those of 1828 and 1834 a real change in their nature becomes apparent: in 1828 40% of the Brothers were in the schools; in 1834 57%; in 1840 62%. It had clearly become a teaching Congregation. This was the result of a growing demand, of a better selection of entrants, and of a more serious formation, of which texts bear the trace: this will be shown further on.

7. Standardised premises

The foundation of schools, often, at the beginning, in insalubrious locations, was, from 1837, subject to detailed requirements. In a letter to the Parish Priest of Sury-le-Comtal, the Founder demanded that the classes be separated by partitions and glass-panelled doors, in accordance with the De la Salles’ *The Conduct of Christian Schools* (Letters 161 and 267). On 21st January, a short time before his death, Marcellin described the plans of the ideal school to Father Gire, Parish Priest of Saint-Privat d’Allier (Letter 315): “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 or two feet high, at a convenient height for the brothers to 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. 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 connected to the others as we have seen above. In this case, it would be good if the Brother Director, who ordinarily teaches the first class, could be placed between the two others. The dining room, as well as the cellar, should be proportionate in size to the highest number of boarders. 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 conveniences should be placed where the brothers can see them from their classrooms.

I have not given you the detailed measurements of the various rooms; I leave that to your prudence and that of the benefactors. It is essential, in the construction of a house of education, not to scrimp, and even to go beyond the strictly necessary.”

8. The normal process of foundation

Once the school was ready, Brothers were sent. Letter 290 to the Parish Priest of Craponne sur Arzon (Haute Loire) describes for us the process of installation of the Brothers in 1839: “The Brother Director of your establishment is leaving for Craponne today, to discuss with you the making of the furniture. He will send us the list of everything you would like to have purchased in St-Etienne, both books and kitchen equipment. We will take care of making the purchases and the brothers who will be his assistants will bring everything with them.

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.”

9. Marcellin’s ideal school

So, for the Founder, the typical school was a public school directed by a qualified Brother with a small boarding section attached. It had two or three classes (130 day-boys and 20 to 30 boarders) with three or four Brothers working, two of whom would be unqualified assistants⁹³. The Brothers had their salary paid by the commune and the boarding section gave them a not-negligible extra as well as the opportunity for teaching children from the hamlets and parishes in the local area. It was a way of continuing to take care of the margins of society. Numerous letters to parish priests emphasise this preoccupation about only getting involved in completely endowed, or even free, schools, because the collecting of school fees by the Brothers is a source of embarrassment. These customary requirements did no harm to the Congregation because it was now well-placed in the education-market: Inspector Dupuy, inspecting the St Étienne area in 1833, declared, “In the Pilat mountains there must be men of limitless devotion getting sufficient resources from the State, the communes, and public charity. These men are the Brothers of Mary. These teachers will be received as a boon; others will be challenged if sent, and they will not be accepted.”

During the years 1830 - 1840, the problem for the Congregation was to defend itself from the onrush of requests because there was never a sufficient number of Brothers, particularly qualified Brothers, to respond to them.

⁹³ [Translator’s Note] The government had conditions under which it tolerated the fact that only the Head Teacher might be qualified in schools run by Congregations.

10. The enterprise on the eve of the Founder's death⁹⁴

On the eve of the Founder's death the Marist business of education comprised about fifty branches spread over 8 Departements, employing 157 Brothers. Nine Brothers had left for the missions in Polynesia with the Marist missionaries. The Congregation is already regional, and even international. The names and titles of benefactors and the financial arrangements which enabled these foundations are highly instructive: we find the tradition of foundations undertaken by aristocrats, the wealthy middle classes, and parish priests. However, it is noticeable that this tradition was brought up-to-date with the schools of Terrenoire and La Voulte, which belonged to a mining and metallurgy company. The appearance of the effects of the Guizot Law can also be clearly seen. This imposed on communes the duty of opening schools and the payment of a minimum salary of 200 francs to the commune's elementary-school teacher. However, the communes were not keen on parting with money: few of them paid the legal minimum. This is why, on very many occasions, the financial arrangement continued to rely on the twofold salary and school fees or on the threefold foundation grant, salary, school fees. A free place was only available in "endowed" establishments: about ten in total.

Also, the Congregation's strategy was pointing in several directions: the work of schools in the communes, almost $\frac{2}{3}$ of the establishments, but also the setting up of private schools where the founders were sufficiently well-off to offer good conditions (such as Anse, Terrenoire, La Voulte). Orphanages and hostels were no longer neglected. However, there was also the presence of boarding schools, which are not always easy to find as the statistics do not mention them specifically. To detect them, it is enough, in the initial estimating, to understand that the Congregation uses one Brother for every 50 day-boys. A school of two Brothers therefore had between 70 and 120 pupils; of three Brothers, between 100 and 150; of four Brothers, around 200. In principle, a community of three Brothers meant two classes and a novice-cook; four Brothers meant three classes. When there is a team of Brothers disproportionate to the number of pupils, it can reasonably be assumed that there was one Brother responsible for a boarding section⁹⁵. This post was not paid for by the commune, but by the boarding-fees. This system eased things financially for the establishment and the Congregation. Often, however, even with a reduced team of Brothers, Directors had a tendency to add on a small boarding section of a few pupils, for an additional charge. As for the private schools, if they did not have a benefactor who was sufficiently well-off, the boarding section was the main source of revenue. It seems that the Founder's early project, which foresaw boarding as a way of reaching out to the destitute hamlets, was warped by economic constraints.⁹⁶

⁹⁴ [Translator's Note] Brother André opens this section with a table, taking up roughly three pages, in which are listed, with details of the foundation, all the Brothers' schools in France in the years 1837 - 1839. As this may not be of immediate interest to a non-French readership, I have omitted it.

⁹⁵ It is, however, true that he could be in charge of adult education.

⁹⁶ [Translator's Note] Brother André goes on to list, with details, the five Brothers' boarding schools in France.

To the list [of boarding schools] must be added the places with permanent accommodation such as: the Saint-Étienne hostel and the orphanages in Lyon and, finally, an establishment with a very particular status: Belley - where the Brothers did not teach, but served as domestics to the Marist Fathers, in spite of Marcellin's reservations.

11. Novitiate, boarding-school, teacher-training college

The boarding-school of La Grange-Payre was also in a peculiar situation since Marcellin informed the Brothers in a Circular of 15th August 1837 that this place formed an establishment “ for Postulants who had not reached the age of 13”⁹⁷. The Brothers were invited to send well-disposed subjects, capable of paying a fee of 100 écus. So, it was not a normal boarding-school, but a pre-novitiate. One of Marcellin's letters gives details of this type of establishment. It was common at that time for founders to have, in the same house, a boarding-school and a novitiate of Brothers. Father Douillet at La Côte Saint André had tried that and Bishop Devie wanted to do the same thing at Saint-Didier-sur-Chalaronne. The initial experiment had failed and Marcellin dissuaded Bishop Devie from trying it, citing his own experience: “ we started off at the Hermitage by accepting some outside students and some boarders. 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.” (Letter 305)

L'Hermitage seems to have functioned this way, “in principle”, from before 1830, as a school where day-boys, weekly-boarders and full-boarders were found⁹⁸.

So, it is not surprising that, in 1829, the General Council of the Loire⁹⁹, urged by the Minister to create a Departmental teacher-training college, suggested that the novitiate of L'Hermitage could serve as a model-school for the Loire. However, the project collapsed in the face of opposition from the rector of the Academy of Lyon and the 1830 Revolution closed down the discussion. Nevertheless, the existence of boarders and this project, to which Marcellin would have willingly signed up, show that he was always ready to accommodate.

The establishment of the boarding school at La Grange Payre should perhaps be situated as the continuation of this tradition of welcoming young people at a time when the Congregation was not yet firmly oriented to a single model of an elementary-school teacher: the teaching Brother. By clearly distinguishing the Brothers from laymen, the Congregation clarified its formation. At the same time, however, it was a twofold defeat: the authorities refused to consider it suitable to

⁹⁷ [Translator's Note] The standard English translation has age 15, but this is obviously a misprint as the original French has “treize ans” - ie 13.

⁹⁸ Marist Brothers's Archives. Accounts Book of L'Hermitage de Notre Dame for produce and receivables for the year 1826: numerous mention of sums received as fees for day-boys, for weekly-boarders (1 to 5 francs per month) and full-boarders 60 francs per term).

⁹⁹ [Translator's Note] This is a civil body, not the Marist General Council.

train lay teachers and the contact between Brothers and laymen became too problematic. From this time on, the novitiate, the boarding school, the teacher-training college would become clearly distinct entities.

12. Ideas for expansion

Because Marcellin was seen, after 1830, as an expert in foundations, he received offers of the creation of novitiates from correspondents who still thought of the Brother in the traditional sense: pious laymen. Even in 1851, a parish priest of the diocese of Digne was asking for an “unmarried Brother” who would become an elementary teacher, secretary to the mayor, cantor, sacristan, bellringer and gravedigger. Whatever the case, Vicars General requested two foundations of novitiates: one in the diocese of Albi, the other in the diocese of Belley. In 1838 the Fonder seriously considered a novitiate in the South of France. During the same year there were several requests for “Mother-Houses” in different parts of France. He considered a preparatory novitiate at Viriville, similar to that of La Grange Payre. Just before his death, he founded a novitiate at Vauban and his death prevented the opening of three others. It is clear that these plans might be related to the extensive creation of Departmental teacher-training colleges for boys during these years, either to compete with them or to attempt something similar to the set-up in La Loire: to have a Congregational novitiate accepted as a teacher-training college.

These more specific requests, which were aimed not only at schools, but also at building diocesan and Departmental connections were additional to an impressive number of requests for private schools: 85 in 1839. By the time of his death, Marcellin had succeeded in creating a base for real and potential expansion which his disciples after him could build up without going too far.

We can add that Marcellin had brought, by trial and error, some clarification to educational institutions: at the start of his work, novitiate, teacher-training college and boarding school were seen as more or less equivalent; at his death, they were seen as distinct and even incompatible. He was led by circumstances, but also by his own choices in formation, to clarify the type of Brother he wanted to form: not a religious layman, but a lay Religious. The years 1828 - 36 seem to have been decisive for this. It was then normal for the Congregation to go beyond the equation boarding school = novitiate = teacher-training college, to two structures with different aims: for future Brothers, pre-novitiate then novitiate; for laymen, the boarding schools. There was no longer a question of teacher-training colleges: the State had taken on the monopoly for itself.

We are left with the impression that, in the ten-year period 1830 - 40, Marcellin had succeeded, along with many other Founders, in imposing on society and the Church a more modern version of the rural teacher. However, at the same time, he was only successful in partially occupying that territory as the state had its own project: the teacher-training college. As for society and the Church, they barely understood a scheme so different from tradition, even if they were delighted

to profit from it. The administrative structure put in place by Marcellin was sufficiently in advance of its time to allow for further expansion, but the support on which it could count was insufficient and little conscious of the challenges, while the State's opposition to its clear objectives was already strong.

13. Universalism and prudence

Marcellin was probably fairly aware of what was happening because the repeated blocks on his obtaining authorisation of his Institute had alerted him. However, there were two traits of his personality which certainly had a bearing on his remaining optimistic: his universalism and his prudence. Several of his letters contain the phrase "All the dioceses in the world enter into our view" or equivalent expressions. He sent Brothers to Oceania and considered sending some to America. At the same time, he took care to expand prudently. To one parish priest in France who asked for Brothers, the reason for turning down the request was: "It's too far away". Except for Polynesia where he was enticed to give Brothers because he was a member of the Society of Mary, Marcellin would only risk his work outside of the south-east of France in the Pas-de-Calais because he was obliged to do so by a senior official of the Ministry of Education, while he was waiting for the legal authorisation. Also, his mysticism made him look at events on a world-scale and his realism prevented him from taking on an unbridled expansion of his work. A peerless administrator is revealed by these two complementary qualities.

14. A remarkable success but a problematic future

If one wants to move away from the religious context and look at the foundation of the Marist Brothers as an initiative in the education of the people, it would be useful, I believe, to underline the success of this peasant-son who never quite recovered from his failure at school but who left, at his death, an organisation of around 300 members able to take over country-schools for a population still too little equipped with the means of education. However, the time of private initiative was coming to an end. After 1830 there were hardly any more Congregations of Brothers founded. When Marcellin began his enterprise in 1817 the time was eminently favourable for them: the Ministry of Education did not yet control the situation. When Marcellin died, the Guizot Law had definitively made the State the organiser of public education, agreeing to integrate the Congregations into its plans, but on its terms. Moreover, the accelerated creation of teacher-training colleges dictated by the State would provide a body of elementary teachers, trained, motivated and lay. In this way, the State took to itself the Congregational model of formation (moreover, the training colleges would later take on a way of life which would approach that of Congregational novitiates), but it succeeded where Religious Founders (and notably Marcellin) had failed: training laymen and not a hybrid body between laity and clergy. Little by little society recognised itself in this body, which was closer to it in its way of life and its idea for social advancement. The ecclesiastical authorities - of which a large number of members did not understand the usefulness of Congregations - would have been very much included in this formula had not the State and part of society manifested, particularly after 1880,

an inexorable lay aggressiveness. The Congregations were not completely innocent since they had treated their lay competitors with very little consideration, relegating them to marginal posts and the most overcrowded schools. They did not know how to reconcile themselves with their lay colleagues as, while being lay themselves, they offered a model of an educator more and more distanced from society. Protected now by the State, the lay teachers repaid them with interest for all the setbacks inflicted on them. This prevented them from capitalising on the sympathy and competence which would have allowed them to resist a move towards nationalisation which did not stint on arbitrary methods or scornful propaganda in order to eliminate them. Even if the Congregations had been irreproachable, they would nevertheless have been attacked sooner or later because they represented, in the face of the ascent towards centralisation, the ability for local and regional powers to respond to their own needs. Their activity could not be understood by the triumphant republicanism of the end of the 19th century, imbued as it was with the State ideology of secularism. As intransigent Catholics springing up from a provincial initiative, the Congregations had hardly any chance of being spared because they embodied two principles considered to be reactionary. It was between 1828 and 1840 that the Congregations were tied into the contradiction between themselves, the State and part of society.

15. Models of social organisation encouraging reflection

Speaking in business terms, Congregations were model private businesses knowing how to respond to the demands of education while the State system was a forerunner of nationalised businesses, powerful because they could be organised systematically over the whole national territory, but burdensome because it made use of a teaching body which quickly solidified, and problematic for society because it sought to establish its monopoly in fact, if not in law. If the monopoly was not absolute in France, that was thanks to the Congregations. We can add that, if the national State had triumphed on French soil, the Congregations would have very quickly gained an international awareness, which would have made them multinationals for teaching and education.

Looking at this through the angle of the great “paradises” of the 19th century, it might be that pride of place is given to the various socialisms, but this would be to neglect the Catholic “paradise” of the new Christianity of which the Religious Congregations were the faithful. It was in the name of a specific world-view that Marcellin and the multitude of Founders of Congregations had undertaken their activity. They wanted a new Christianity with new relationships and a new society. Little, however, was said about a new economy. All harnessed to the same task, members of Congregations practised communism through their vow of poverty. As the major creators of new systems, they thought that the education of children was the key to a new world. This “paradise” was sufficiently realistic for the State and an element of society to be worried about it. It was finally broken, but, in spite of appearances, more because of internal weaknesses than for external reasons since this world of the Congregations carried within it a

fundamental contradiction: it wanted to raise humanity's awareness of service to an authority outside itself. This contradiction is repeated elsewhere in the great "paradises" which all dealt with relations between the individual and the community, between conscience and authority. They can be criticised for this, but only by being integrated into the world of the "paradise".

As we said in Chapter 1, the story of Marcellin and the Marist Brothers is not on the margins of History, but is situated at the heart of the problems of the 19th century and in a lengthy tale which goes from the 16th century to our days. Now that decentralisation, internationalisation, deregulation of markets, open and multi-faceted secularism are the order of the day, it is only right to re-evaluate the role of the Congregations.

THE DEVELOPMENT OF FORMATION

The 1837 Rule took up and adapted the customs of the Congregation. Its statutes on the admission of postulants and the foundation of schools present some differences relative to the 1824 Prospectus¹⁰⁰. During the lapse of time separating the Prospectus from the Rule, the experience and development of the University regulations set in train significant changes in formation, without overturning it completely.

1. The school-Brother's day

For the subject which more particularly interests us here, the Rule presents the content of the day of the Brothers in school. After rising at four o'clock and prayers, "at five thirty there is writing or the devising of samples of good writing, if needed. At six thirty on Mondays, Tuesday and Wednesdays the Brothers study grammar or prepare dictations. On Fridays and Saturdays this half hour was used for arithmetic or the reading of manuscripts¹⁰¹. If needed, the half-hour of free time before the Evening Prayer could be given over to the study of these subjects." These exercises are presided over by the Brother Director, who must educate those who are with him (Chapter 2, Article 8). He can change these articles to adapt to the needs. The pupils arrive between seven thirty and eight. The Brother uses this time to "willingly" occupy himself "with the needs of the class". In the evening, between six and seven o'clock, the Brothers study catechism.

2. The village school as an internship

The school of two or three Brothers functioned, then, as a centre of formation where an hour and a half to two hours could be devoted every day to learning the various secular subjects, plus an hour for catechism. This programme concerned in particular the Brother Cook, who was just out of the novitiate and barely literate. The Brother Director had to give him a timetable "and he will

¹⁰⁰[Translator's Note] Brother André sets out a table showing these differences. As the various statutes have already been discussed in previous Chapters, I have omitted the table.

¹⁰¹ This was the final stage in the learning of reading.

manage his time in whatever way he can by spending a large part of it in class.” So the young cook continued his novitiate, but on the job: manual work remained a priority, but it was cut by study and some teacher-training since he worked as a monitor in the little class during part of the day.

It is clear, then, that the training programme for Brothers corresponded to the higher stages of the primary classes, notably in the reading of manuscripts. The more specialised subjects, such as linear drawing, history, geography... were clearly not mentioned since the Brothers coming from the novitiate seem, for the most part, not to have finished the primary stage. They were, however, sufficiently advanced to work as monitors. We can presume, therefore, that the time in the novitiate was used to get them to an acceptable level of reading, necessary for the reading of the Office, the Mass, the Gospel, and books of popular piety. Writing appeared less advanced, since it was made an exercise. In short, the Brother Director, who, in principle took the class of writers¹⁰², had two types of pupil: the children and the assistant Brothers, who seem not to have known much more than the children in the little class.

3. A novitiate furnishing the basics of reading and writing

This timetable is confirmation of a system of formation which was put in place, with some hesitation, from 1825. It should be remembered that the 1824 Prospectus demanded that postulants should know how to read and write passably and that Father Courveille reproached Marcellin about not putting sufficient emphasis on the education of his novices. Father Mazelier, Superior of the Congregation of Brothers of St-Paul-Trois-Châteaux also noted in 1835, “Your novitiate-timetable is almost the same as ours, except that [with us] manual work is not so long.” In his description of the timetable at L’Hermitage in 1840, Brother Avit implicitly says the same thing: “After making their beds, the postulants and novices went to manual work until eleven thirty. They had learned the method of prayer or the Gospel between the Little Hours and breakfast [from 6:30 to 7:00]. In the afternoon, Rosary at 1:00, manual work until 5:00, singing-class from 5:00 to 5:30, then Office and catechism-study.”

A list of personnel of L’Hermitage in 1838 even seems to show a regression from teaching in relation to 1828. There is no longer a priest teaching. The Master of Novices forms “more by his example than by his lessons” and his assistant, Brother Étienne, “often amuses his disciples with his naivety, his scruples, his indecisiveness in his catechism-lessons.” It is true that some Brothers gave talks and lessons in etiquette.¹⁰³ Brother Sylvestre, who took the habit in 1831 at the age of 12 ½, described the novitiate in his time: “As for the personnel, it was composed of around twenty old Brothers, employed in various workshops or elsewhere, and about ten young Brothers or novices, who, for two hours each day, were given lessons in reading, spelling,

¹⁰² [Translator’s Note] The “class of writers” was the top class of the primary stage, where the pupils learned how to write.

¹⁰³ A manuscript on etiquette, very much inspired by the work of Jean-Baptiste De la Salle, is still in the General Archives.

arithmetic, and especially in catechism and writing in big letters.” He continues by speaking about his novitiate-companion, Brother Louis-Marie, the future Superior General, a favourite, since he had almost finished his seminary-studies and who, because he was born in 1810, was clearly older. In spite of his knowledge, he had to spend the bulk of his time in the garden, then the tailory, (making soutanes). He even had to do his exercises of writing in big letters beside two mischievous young Brothers who kept shoving his elbow to make him distort his letters.

The novitiate, then, guaranteed sufficient formation for its members to be able to read and reach some level of writing which would make them fit for monitoring. The rest had to be done in school.

Thus the time in the novitiate was occupied in manual work and studies were thrown in at the beginning and end of the day. It was not a hybrid system joining a teacher-training college and novitiate as in 1828, but pure novitiate, getting very close to those peasant-monks who were, in that same period, the Trappists. Other indications of their influence exist, notably around customs concerning food.

4. Formation adapted to the original environment

A novitiate oriented towards studies might appear strange, but account must be taken of the fact that the formula advocated by Father Courveille before 1827, more oriented to a better selection of postulants and more serious studies, had failed. The Champagnat system, based on extensive recruitment and an almost exclusively ascetical formation carried the day. So, children and adolescents were recruited, but also older people, about whom little is known except that they often came from very modest environments and were barely able to pay for their novitiate in its entirety. Beyond furnishing the house with the means for ensuring their subsistence, this time of intense work and little reward clarified whether the aspirants had the right intentions, the taste for work, were pious and docile. They were also, for the most part, country-boys, used to a hard life; too abrupt a change of lifestyle would be too difficult for most of them. Moreover, these children and young people might have been tempted to become Religious to avoid working on the land. Marcellin knew how to use the qualities and faults of an essentially rural environment to himself train teachers. On the other hand, he intended to establish Christian educators rather than teachers and for that he had to have characters who were steeped in the tradition since, for him, example was paramount. In fact Marcellin constructed his formation like an apprenticeship rather than on an intellectual level. This programme was, at one and the same time, traditional and innovative; traditional because it used the system of apprenticeship, innovative because it covered stages in line with a very practical method of repetition today.

5. The need for sufficiently-educated personnel

However, the Rule of 1837 also reflects an ambitious teaching-plan, to which the Guizot Law bound the Institute: reading, writing, the basics of French grammar, arithmetic and the system of

legal weights and measures, the elements of geometry, linear drawing, singing, elementary history and geography. Not every school could carry out this plan since many children left even before learning to write. Nevertheless, Article 19 of the Rule's Chapter 6 takes this into account: "Geometry, linear drawing and book-keeping will be taught in places where there are eight pupils paying 8 francs per month. In this case, the Mother-House will provide one more Brother. A class of this type is supposed to open in the chief places of the district." (central schools controlling primary schools around them)

On the other hand, the Guizot Law made the teaching certificate more difficult and more indispensable. Since the Institute lacked qualified teachers, it used what it could, but it was sometimes necessary to refuse foundations because the lack of qualifications brought protests from the inspectors and mayors¹⁰⁴. In 1839 "several of the foundations were still deprived (of qualified teachers)". The other factor was that, since the Institute was not recognised, the certificate was necessary for avoiding military service. There, again, it was necessary to be expedient: the Brothers threatened with military service were sent to Drôme and employed by Father Mazelier, Superior of the Brothers of Saint Paul-Trois-Châteaux, who enjoyed official authorisation.

For all these reasons, there was a need for educated Brothers. From time to time, the Institute had available former seminarians who, for reasons of health or fear of the priesthood, had chosen a more modest life¹⁰⁵. These exceptional bargains were quickly employed in key posts. Letter 108, however, indicates some disadvantage: "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 that we teach, and find themselves obliged to return to the fundamentals, especially for penmanship."

Elementary teaching was, for the Founder, a specific profession, requiring a particular technical training.

6. Continuous training

In addition to the schools which, themselves, formed young Brothers, Marcellin used the two months' holiday in September - October to round up his flock into the Mother-House and form them. In 1830, Brother Avit summarised how this stage of the on-the-job training worked: "Since the community came down to L'Hermitage (May 1825) the holidays had been, and continued to be for two months, as before. Father Champagnat used these to make the Brothers learn the subjects of the primary programme and to develop in them the wisest ways of getting good

¹⁰⁴ [Translator's Note] Marcellin, however, was often embarrassed by the praises heaped on Brothers' schools by inspectors and mayors in comparison to schools with qualified staff.

¹⁰⁵ This was the case for Pierre-Alexis Labrosse, the future Superior General, who entered in 1831. Brother Étienne, Director of Chavanay, knew Latin: he replied in this language to a parish priest who had made some disparaging remarks in Latin while visiting his class.

discipline in their classes. [...] To start them off in the primary subjects, the cleverest among them had to give lessons, and he himself gave lessons. He required them to show the ten pages of writing that they had to do during the year. Even the teachers of the top classes had to show two pages of writing from each of their pupils, one page from the beginning of the year, the other from the end. In this way, he wanted to be sure of the progress they had obtained. He established committees of which he himself was part, and each Brother or postulant had to submit to their examination.¹⁰⁶”

Brother Avit adds further on: “For the rest, he pushed the Brothers with all his power to study the subjects comprising the primary programme. He even made the lay teachers of drawing and book-keeping come to L’Hermitage for quite a long time. Over and above the numerous compositions, he had established the Sunday test, during which each Brother was obliged to repeat the lessons of the week and respond to questions asked about the explanations he had been given. Often enough, he presided at this exercise himself.”

7. A particular kind of school

It is certain that these attempts at further training had nothing to do with the novitiate and they were probably the consequence of the Guizot Law which, moreover, had the disadvantage for only allowing for a month’s holiday, in October. It seems that, from 1836, the Brothers stayed in L’Hermitage only for ten or twelve days: for the eight-day retreat and to have time to submit their accounts and replenish their clothing. It is true that the Brothers still had to bring their ten pages of writing, but there was no more time for training.

The system seems to have been modified. We can confirm that, around 1836, a sort of scholasticate functioned, in which Brothers who had their certificate or were exempt from military service taught.

The attitude of the Founder, who, on the one hand furnished the means for the training of the intellect and, on the other, insisted on their benign relativity, brought to light a permanent difficulty: the Brothers were not only Religious, they were also professionals who had to respond to the demands of society and the State. He dreaded the professional side’s detracting from the spiritual motivation. Caught between his ideals and necessity, he could sometimes appear contradictory.

8. Districts and conferences

This particular kind of school did not completely resolve the problem of continuous training. The Founder seems to have moved towards decentralisation, which was becoming necessary with the increase in his work. The 1837 Rule organised schools into districts of several schools, inspected

¹⁰⁶ A table of nine columns, dating from 1828 and carrying the names of 56 Brothers and nine postulants, evaluated them in piety, catechism, character, submission, regularity, knowledge, arithmetic, and writing. It was thought by Brother Avit to represent the results of this examination .

by a Brother “Senior Director”. It was at the level of these Districts that a Circular of 10th January 1840 (Letter 313) instituted District Conferences.

The preamble is a real manifesto of reconciling professional obligations with the spiritual calling: “to succeed in the teaching of religion and to satisfy the demands of a world which is nearly always blind about the education of children, we will not neglect the other branches of instruction necessary for a Brother of Mary. Writing, grammar, arithmetic, history, geography, and even, if needed, drawing, geometry, and bookkeeping, will also be the object of our studies and the subject matter of our conferences. We will use them as an innocent bait to attract the children and then teach them to love God, to save themselves. Above all, we will be good catechists, but we will also try to become competent teachers.”

Underneath the traditional discourse which considered secular subjects as mere bait, his conscience broke through the dissociation between the role of the catechist and the task of a teacher. The Institute’s ambition was to keep them united in the person of the Brother. It prevented the order of priorities from starting to turn over: the Brother Catechist from the La Valla times was in the process of turning himself into a teacher-catechist. The conference programme is eloquent on this point:

- 1. Catechism: the proofs of religion
- 2. Grammar: the noun
- 3. Arithmetic: the metric system
- 4. French Composition: The Usefulness of Conferences
- 5. Grammatical Analysis: two phrases
- 6. An Arithmetic Problem

The catechism is undoubtedly the main topic, but only $\frac{1}{6}$ of the programme.

Two designated Brothers had to give a lesson on each of the topics. The others had to write down their answers, which would be corrected. The best of these would be sent to the Mother-House. The conference had to last for three hours.

The system of formation/training¹⁰⁷ in the Congregation seems to have gone through several successive phases: first of all, at La Valla formation/training based on apprenticeship, carried out through pious practices, reading, writing, the simultaneous method, first of all in the novitiate then completed in the schools through practice and study. So, the Brothers made their religious novitiate and their educational apprenticeship in two stages. The return to the novitiate for the holidays enabled the raising of the level of the group through lessons and conferences and to

¹⁰⁷ [Translator’s Note] In French, one word covers both “formation” as in “formation of novices” and “training” as in “teacher-training”. It was sometimes difficult to know which sense Brother André intended. Sometimes, as in this paragraph, both senses were intended at the same time.

verify the work carried out in the schools. The 1833 Law modified the system: from then on, the stricter requirements of the teaching certificate and the need to teach numerous subjects meant adding a stage to the formation/training. Already-experienced Brothers went to train in a particular school which also served as a reserve for unforeseen circumstances: illnesses, deaths etc. Finally, continuous formation/training was decentralised.

In fact, there was no break between the phases: it was always a question of a mixed system of formation/training where the practice and study of teaching techniques and subjects were combined as far as possible on a base of manual work which was indispensable for survival in a profession where the least possible amount of money had to be spent. The requirements of the teaching certificate and the very many subjects to be taught plus the care needed to respond to a greater demand for knowledge on the part of society meant that the Brothers had to become professionals, something that was not without worry for the Founder.

PART 3

A COHERENT SYSTEM OF TEACHING

The Teachers Who Inspired Marcellin

Having established the principal stages in the birth of the Congregation of Marist Brothers, it is appropriate now to put the chronological framework into perspective before looking at this foundation in its systemic aspect. We have underlined the fact that Marcellin was not only a man of action, but that he drew his inspiration from a tradition from which he selected certain aspects to build up a real educational system. We are now going on to look at those who inspired him and consider their influence.

1. The Jesuits

The Life of Father Champagnat states (*Life* Page 508): “Sometimes, instead of the talk on the Rules, he had some chapters read from Rodriguez or from Saint-Jure, in which these authors treat of Rules.”

These two Jesuits were authors of two major ascetical classics of the religious world. Rodriguez, a Spanish Jesuit born in 1526, published, in 1615, his *Practice of Christian Perfection*. Saint Jure was a French Jesuit (1588 - 1657) author of *The Knowledge and Love of the Son of God*, which was published for the first time in 1633 and went through many subsequent editions. It was partially inspired by Rodriguez.

Their influence is crystal-clear in the “Treatise on Education”¹⁰⁸ which focused on Marist educational philosophy prior to 1853. We can see there that more than sixty passages in the manuscript have been copied from Rodriguez. The influence of Saint Jure, important as it is, is less strong. The Treatise, which seems to be a transcription - with some modifications and additions - of Marcellin’s instructions, was inspired, for the outline of its first part, on the First Treatise of the Third Part of Rodriguez, entitled “On the end for which the Society of Jesus was constituted, and some means which can serve for this end, and which apply to all Religious in general”.

This title places before the Founders of missionary Congregations the Society as a real model to imitate. Rodriguez addresses a theory of apostolic action which must ceaselessly be balanced between two poles: the seeking of personal perfection and the salvation of one’s neighbour. Also, Chapter 6 reminds us that “we must not fall into the other extreme (the first being neglecting one’s perfection on the pretext of helping the advancement of one’s neighbour) which is withdrawing ourselves entirely from dealings with our neighbour on the pretext of applying

¹⁰⁸ Reproduced later under the title: *Apostolate of a Marist Brother*.

ourselves to our salvation.” He proposed three ways of “benefitting souls” : holiness of life, prayer, and zeal for our neighbour. The first part of the Marist Brothers’ treatise took up this plan in three points and copied numerous passages, giving priority, however, to zeal.

However, it was particularly the First Chapter (“What is the purpose of the institution of the Society of Jesus?”) which profoundly influenced Marcellin.

The first lines of the Treatise take up, almost word for word, those of Rodriguez:

“Pay close attention to yourself and to your teaching; continue in these things, for in doing this you will save both yourself and your hearers” (1Timothy 4:16)¹⁰⁹

Rodriguez goes on to underline this: “Saint Ignatius, seeing, on the one hand, that the Church had been provided with several Religious Orders who were constantly going about worship and their spiritual advancement, and, on the other hand, that it was afflicted with an infinity of heresies, disorders and scandals,[...] was inspired by God to institute our Society to be, what he himself called, a type of flying camp, always ready at the slightest signal [...] and, to enable this, he wanted us to be subject neither to singing in choir nor other spiritual practices which might distract us from the service of souls.”

After having shown that the Desert Fathers knew about leaving their retreat when heresy threatened the Church, he concluded: “Now it is precisely for this purpose that, by a special act of his Providence, that God has sustained our Society in such deplorable times and when the Church has need of our help.”

We find a similar idea on the first page of the Treatise on Education: “In this century, the majority of parents are in no condition to give their children religious instruction and upbringing [...] from which it follows that an infinite number of young people will remain in ignorance of the truths of the Christian faith and they will rot in vice if God does not, in his ineffable mercy, have pity on them and does not provide pious masters to take care of them and bring them up in a Christian manner.”

In the face of “philosophers and agnostics” who “strive to seize youth to inculcate in them their deadly teachings” God has provided Christian schools as a barrier against the devastating torrent.”

Just as the Jesuits saw themselves having been given a providential mission in the 17th century, Marcellin saw the Marist Brothers as being responsible for a new apostolic task: Christian education. We note, however, that his approach appears to be more pessimistic, more defensive:

¹⁰⁹ [Translator’s Note] English translation is that of the New Revised Standard Version of the Bible.

the Jesuits had chosen for their activity the image of a “flying camp”; the Marists held on to that of the “barrier”.

However, this providential mission did not devolve solely on the Marist Brothers. The whole Society of Mary was a new Society of Jesus. Father Courveille, its Founder, recalled in 1852 his revelation at Le Puy in this way: “As in the time of dreadful heresy which overturned the whole of Europe he raised up his servant Ignatius to form a society which carried his name as the Society of Jesus [...] in the same way I want (it is Mary who is speaking) in these last times of impiety and incredulity, a society consecrated to me and named the Society of Mary.”¹¹⁰

Comparison between the Rodriguez text and that of Courveille shows profound agreement: “such deplorable times” became “these last times of impiety and incredulity”¹¹¹. Marcellin himself took this pessimistic phrase up on several occasions.

We are witnessing a resurrection of the Jesuit myth¹¹² in a somewhat different context since it was no longer heresy that threatened, but agnosticism and impiety. That is why, in the following chapters we see a twist from Rodriguez to the treatise on education: whereas the former was used to justify an attitude which reconciled care for the interior life with the apostolate, the treatise insisted on the fact that one could not be an authentic elementary school teacher without giving priority to Christian education. In the 17th century the Jesuits had to justify their wanting to be simultaneously Religious and apostolic; in the 19th century the Marists wanted to defend themselves from being lay teachers. As above, we move from a dynamic perspective - wanting to create a new form of Religious Life - to a defensive perspective - not wanting to give into the innovation of teaching disconnected from religion.

There was, however, an important difference between Rodriguez and the Marists. Chapter 3 of Rodriguez effectively underlined this: “That this work (saving souls through apostolic activity) concerns the whole Society in general and those who are not priests cannot avoid being part of it.” since, although they are not able to preach, hear confessions or teach, the Jesuit Brothers also contribute to the salvation of souls through their temporal tasks, their prayers, their exhortations to lay people. Moreover, by not preaching, they avoid the temptation of pride and in not directing souls, they are free of much responsibility. As Rodriguez said: those who look after the luggage also contribute to the victory. It might have been expected to see this reproduced in the Marist Brothers who formed part of a Society of Mary, directed by priests. However, it came to nothing. On the contrary, Chapter 3 of the Treatise went back to Rodriguez in attributing to an Institute of

¹¹⁰ *Origines Maristes* Vol 2 doc 718 p 581.

¹¹¹ The allusion to “last times” shows that Marist thought, in its beginnings, had an apocalyptic side which did not come from Rodriguez.

¹¹² André Lanfrey: *Marist Notebooks* no 10. “The Legend of the Jesuit of Le Puy” p 1 - 16.

Brothers what had originally been the preserve of an Order of priests. Marcellin certainly found in the conclusion of this chapter the concept of ministry.¹¹³

<p>Rodriguez 3rd Part, Treatise 1, Ch 2 “From this, we must draw three consequences for our spiritual advancement. The first is a great love for, and a great attachment to, our ministry since it is so exalted, so agreeable to God and so useful to our neighbour. The second is to see ourselves called to such a sublime ministry, we who are of little consequence, to our extreme confusion and seeing this at the same time as we have so much trouble in rendering a good account of ourselves, we cannot permit ourselves to be responsible for the salvation and perfection of others. [...] the third consequence [...] is an extreme application to our spiritual advancement.”</p>	<p>Treatise on Education Ch 3 “From all that we have said in this chapter and the preceding one, we must draw out three fruits. 1. A great love for our vocation and a great attachment to our ministry and for our employment as a catechist since it is so exalted, so agreeable to God, so honourable for ourselves and so useful to our neighbour. 2. Great humility in seeing ourselves called to such a holy vocation and to such a sublime ministry as we are so imperfect, having neither knowledge nor virtue. 3. Great application to our spiritual advancement.”</p>
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Thus, the Brothers laid claim to a vocation and a “ministry” which made them, not simple auxiliaries, but participants in the priesthood. In doing so, Marcellin, while situating himself within the Jesuit tradition, oriented it towards a project in which lay people were autonomous, even if they recognised the presence over them of direction from priests. The Society of Mary, a new providential society, was in no way a copy of the Society of Jesus.¹¹⁴ So Rodriguez was systematically adapted to a lay Congregation.

It was the same with Saint Jure, who, in Book 3, Chapter 14, no 28, developed his “Advice to preachers”, recommending to them a good life, prayer, zeal, and knowledge. The Treatise took up these ideas - and with large extracts from Saint Jure - when it treated of holiness of life (Chapter 12), prayer (Chapter 13), humility (Chapter 15), and the catechism (Part 2, Chapters 19 and 21), but for Brother teachers and catechists.

So, we are able to say today that the type of Brother Marcellin wanted was inspired directly by the Jesuit model, but with a modification of the concept of “Brother”. He is not a pious servant for the preachers, the teachers, the confessors, but through his ministry as a catechist, he is akin to them. Marcellin ensured his disciples a real ecclesiastical step-up. Yet in doing so, he detached his Brothers from the laity, thus posing an ecclesiological problem, since the Church had no clear

¹¹³ This idea is also in Jean-Baptiste De la Salle.

¹¹⁴ [Translator’s Note] See the disagreement between Marcellin and Father Colin about the role of the Marist Brothers within the Society of Mary.

status to offer them. On the other hand, he posed a social problem in tying the teaching function to a hybrid state between clergy and laity and subordinating it to the catechetical ministry. Marcellin, then, was one of the actors in the promotion of the laity at the start of the 19th century, but within the framework of a Congregation. This model was typical in the Restoration: at once progressive and retrograde.

2. Cardinal de La Luzerne

César-Guillaume de La Luzerne (1738 - 1821), Bishop of Langres under the Ancien Regime, was another great inspiration to Marcellin's thinking on education, although he would scarcely pass as an author on education. It is true that, when he was appointed Bishop of Langres in 1770, he developed a network of Christian schools. A "Letter on the first opening of schools by the De la Salle Brothers at Langres" states that "the poor classes seem to have been neglected". Also, he deplored seeing "such an interesting age [...] abandoned, wandering in the middle of your streets like a flock without a shepherd, staining its naive graces with brutal vulgarity." So, "to lead them (young people) in the ways (of Divine Providence) send them pious and enlightened elementary teachers who are trained through long experience in the important and difficult art of education." He then paid homage to the De la Salles: "All of our towns give witness to your perceptive approaches, your experience, your zeal." He also decided that "all the regulations and customs practised in the De la Salle schools will be observed in this town's schools."

Elected to the States-General¹¹⁵ in 1789, he resigned at the end of the year as he was one of the principal opponents of the Civil Constitution of the Clergy¹¹⁶. In March 1791 he emigrated to Austria, where his family had an estate. From there he continued to administer his diocese while maintaining an intransigent position with regard to the Oath¹¹⁷. If he agreed to give up his diocese in 1802 on orders from the Pope, it was not without reservation, which made him appear to be a Gallican¹¹⁸. He did not return to France until the fall of the Empire in 1814. Between 1802 and 1814 he lived in Trieste and then in Venice, writing a number of works, thanks to which he became known as one of the best apologists of the century. The restored monarchy rewarded his fidelity by appointing him a Peer of France and Minister of State, but he was unable to occupy his diocese again as the Concordat of 1817¹¹⁹ was not ratified. His insights, his fidelity to the Church and the monarchy made him one of the leading moral authorities of the French Church. He died in 1821. Before his death, he had time to take the side of the De la Salles in the controversy over the mutual method in two outstanding works.

¹¹⁵ [Translator's Note] The States-General was, before the Revolution, the legislative and consultative assembly of France. It met only when called by the king.

¹¹⁶ [Translator's Note] The Civil Constitution of the Clergy was a law passed in 1790 which subordinated the Church to the French Government. It also finalised the banning of monastic Orders and the taking of Religious Vows.

¹¹⁷ [Translator's Note] All clergy were required to swear an oath of loyalty to the Revolutionary Government. Failure to do so meant banishment from the parish and persecution by the revolutionary forces.

¹¹⁸ [Translator's Note] For an explanation of the term "Gallicanism" see Footnote 20 above.

¹¹⁹ [Translator's Note] The Concordat was an agreement signed by France and the Holy See which would have led to the restoration of the Church in France, but the French Government failed to ratify it.

The first, *On Christian Schools* of 1818, accused the supporters of the mutual method: “People who desire the complete abandonment of all religious instruction hope that the Brothers’ refusal to accept diplomas will be a way of destroying their Congregation.

Others, who are friends of religion, but persuaded in good faith that mutual education is preferable to that delivered by the Brothers, hope that the fear of rejecting individual diplomas will commit the Brothers to abandoning their old method and from now on teach in accordance with the new one.”

He then went on to develop a lengthy plea in favour of the Brothers: they were more than capable of giving moral and religious education because they were “penetrated by piety and zeal”; this was more doubtful with mutual teachers. Religious exercises were certainly practised in several mutual schools, but did the masters give a good example? What about teaching: while the Brothers’ method had proved its worth, the mutual method was still very recent. Its great merit in the eyes of its supporters: “is that this way teaches the children more quickly; it is said that this is particularly essential in the countryside where the people’s children are, from very early on, subjected to country-tasks and cannot devote long years to study.”

Apart from La Luzerne’s belief that teaching must be solid before being rapid, he asked whether experience alone could distinguish between the two methods. His fame brought the whole of France into the discussion. Violent controversy followed in the press. La Luzerne tried to calm the spirits by publishing his *Second Work on Christian Schools* which added little to the first and did not prevent the discussion from turning into an educational war.

La Luzerne was therefore one of the champions of simultaneous teaching between 1815 and 1820. Marcellin shared his doubts on the suitability of the mutual method for the teaching of religion. In particular, this goes to the heart of the debate: what method is the most suitable to deliver quality teaching to the rural masses? In betting that the simultaneous method, until then practised in the towns, was also suitable for the countryside, he contributed to the delivery to the supporters of the mutual method of their strongest challenge.

La Luzerne, however, was not content with intervening in discussions about teaching. He also wrote educational textbooks. In 1810 he published in Venice his *Considerations on Various Points of Christian Morality* which carried instructions such as “On the Duties of Fathers and Mothers” and “On the Duties of Young People”. The work would be republished in 1816, 1829, and 1838. His *Considerations on the Ecclesiastical State* had appeared in Langres in 1809 and was reprinted in 1827. Large extracts of these three works appeared in the *Treatise on Education*.

In fact, in his treatment of the duties of parents and children, La Luzerne was not thinking at all about education of the people, but on the contrary, family- and aristocratic- upbringing which he based on three areas: education of the body, of the spirit and of the heart. Clearly, for him, the third was the essential one, which he linked to moral and religious education: “The two other areas must look on this third area of upbringing as their aim; it must be the base on which the two others lean.” This upbringing would be founded on exhortation and instruction. Children would not be given reasons for the lessons they receive. “The chief lesson is example” accompanied by vigilance and by “paternal correction”. This moral and religious upbringing would begin early on: the lack of belief of “this deplorable century” which “leaves religious education until adolescence” must not be listened to. Leaving religious education until adolescence was a position La Luzerne spent a long time refuting. Primarily, he was suspicious of some perverse motive: young people would have been very easy to corrupt. On the other hand, the objection that children did not have the ability to understand religious ideas no longer held: simple ideas on the knowledge of God, “a general notion of the principal mysteries, knowledge of the principles of morality, are they then, beneath the scope of children?” On the contrary, “childhood is the most favourable time to be made aware of, to adopt, cherish and practise the holy rules.” As there is no argument with the fact that many well-brought up children have been corrupted: “How many of those who were brought up without religion have been converted?” Philosophers objected that education created invincible prejudice: but if that was true, how was Christianity able to establish itself? And “Every day, we will see people abjuring their errors.”

When a child has grown up, should he continue with private education or choose public education in a college? If the parents are not able for this, or do not have the time, they should at least choose an establishment where the masters are penetrated with the fear of God and will take care to maintain the child’s innocence.

This requirement is, moreover, not just for privileged environments: “A very great number of fathers are not capable of giving, by themselves, the moral and religious instruction they received. The lack of ability to clearly express themselves, the mechanical occupations which take up their time, render them absolutely incapable for this function which, to be profitable, must be filled.” It is therefore necessary to move on to school and preaching.

In his discourse “On the Duties of Young People” La Luzerne once again insists “on the necessity of not moving the service of God onto another age” since “God wants to be served by young people”. It is youth which determines the whole of life. Young people are then exhorted to copy the great models of piety for the young. Yet it is not a question of the Jesuit saints such as St Aloysius Gonzaga, St Stanislaus Kostka, St John Berchmans. All La Luzerne’s models are biblical: Job, Solomon, David, Josiah, the son of David, Timothy, Paul’s disciple, Joseph, the

saviour of Egypt, Daniel. They were to copy the conduct of these great models, in particular, their filial piety¹²⁰.

The *Treatise on Education* was inspired by the *Considerations on the Ecclesiastical State*, which was a veritable theory about the priest according to the French School of spirituality¹²¹ and the first three parts spoke of ecclesiastical dignity, vocation and holiness. However, the *Treatise* was inspired particularly by the 8th and 9th parts which dealt with “Ecclesiastical knowledge” and “Instructing the people”. There, La Luzerne vilified ignorant priests “scourge of the Church”. One of these passages directly inspired the first chapter of the *Treatise*.

<p>La Luzerne, “On ecclesiastical knowledge” “If heresy made such rapid progress in the 16th century, infecting a large part of Europe, its deplorable success was due to the ignorance of the clergy. The dam holding it back was found to be weak and powerless and the terrible flood spread its destruction on all sides without any obstacle.”</p>	<p>Treatise Ch.1. “An infinite number of young people will remain in ignorance of the truths of the Christian faith and steeped in vice if God {...] does not support them with pious masters [...]</p> <p>Christian schools have been established to paralyse the efforts of the wicked and to set up a dam against the devastating torrent of their deadly teaching,”...</p>
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The image of the dam and the flood was taken up, but in a different way: the dam gave way in the 16th century because the workers were steeped in ignorance; in the 19th century the situation was different: the workers were no longer ignorant: it was the young people who were. The Church had the opportunity, at this time, to erect a durable dam. The structure, however, had changed: in the 16th century it had been the priests who constituted the dam; in the 19th century the Brothers claimed it was the Christian schools, and therefore, themselves. This was a significant shift: the Brothers saw themselves as the elite of the Church, just as much as the priests. They placed too much value on the school, something La Luzerne was careful not to do! The Marist Brothers were already in the post-revolutionary world; La Luzerne retained a form of Ancien Regime thinking.

We see there a profound break between two Catholicisms: Marcellin’s, more Jesuit and counter-revolutionary, conscious that the Revolution had created a new deal, comparable to that of the 16th century, and that the clergy were not adequate as a response to the challenge. La Luzerne’s was more ecclesiastical, more “French School”, more Gallican, thinking that the

¹²⁰ The omission of the great Jesuit figures is a point in favour of La Luzerne’s Gallican leanings.

¹²¹ [Translator’s Note] The French School of spirituality is the name given to a loose grouping of spiritual writers of the late 16th/early 17th century who met in Paris. Many of them were Founders of Religious Congregations. The influence of this School on Marcellin came down via the Sulpicians, whose Founder was a member of the group.

educated priest was sufficient to re-establish Christianity by traditional means: preaching and catechism by the parish priest. The priest had to teach because Jesus Christ handed this duty on to his apostles: “The ministry of the Catholic Church is a sacred channel through which the pure source of divine teaching flows without interruption, without alteration across the sequence of the centuries and it will water and fertilise all regions of the universe.”

However, La Luzerne perceived two types of flock: people “of mature age” and children. For the first, he would undertake preaching, without confining himself to the pious, without preferring rich over poor, without watering down the message for the powerful. He would guard himself against “pompous, flowery language” which pandered to vanity. In the countryside, “the instruction (of the parish priest) must be simple, like those to whom he speaks, suited to their capacity, trimmed to their ability.” To preachers who thought that their efforts were in vain, he recommended, “It is in working the sterile land assiduously that one succeeds in making it fertile.”, a point Marcellin would take up again in Chapter 16 of the Treatise to combat discouragement among the Brothers. La Luzerne devoted two columns to the instruction of children. He drew up a robust spirituality for the priest catechising children: the parish priest who baptised them has to exercise a profound spiritual paternity, breaking the bread of the word for them just as their earthly father gives them bread for the body.”Oh! How they misunderstand the grandeur of their ministry, these proud priests who disdain, as unworthy of their talents, the instruction of children and who abandon it as a menial task to lesser ministers.”

It is necessary to devote oneself to these “young plants” who, “raised and trained in piety”, will become “a holy people”. Otherwise, “steeped in profound and deadly ignorance, the children all have at most a slight idea of the God they are told to adore. They do not know him, his perfection, his mysteries, his sacraments, his commandments, that could teach them about the coarseness of their parents who are often as poorly educated as they are.”

Also, neglecting the education of children is a most serious evil. “You pastors who neglect this area of your function, what evils accumulate to these children, to society and to you!”

La Luzerne did not want to enter into practical details, but he formulated a few principles: the pastor must “make himself understood by his clarity”; “gain respect by his gravity”; “make himself cherished by his civility”. His instruction will therefore be “simple, but without being base; worthy and noble, but without being inflated and pedantic”; sweet without being weak...”It is not solely the words of the catechism that they must be taught; it is especially the things that they contain.” [...] “The divine law must be inscribed [...] in their hearts.”

This theory of the primordial role of the instruction of children is Marcellin’s and he certainly read it and put it into practice. Practically all of La Luzerne’s ideas found one place or another in his teaching. It is moreover a classic pastoral discourse. We are sure that La Luzerne had been read by the Founder and his first disciples and that there is a clear link.

However, this link, as with the Jesuits, does not come across as a simple copy. The theory of the parish priest-catechist became that of the Brother-catechist. Just as Marcellin transposed the Jesuit doctrine to the Marist Brothers, on this occasion, he transferred the doctrine of the parish priest to the Brother. Parish priests could have been offended, but the majority of them, as good Tridentine clergy anxious about the instruction of all their people would see it as a providential boon that laymen were taking responsibility for a part of their ministry which appeared to be more delicate or less honourable. In short, La Luzerne's discourse was symptomatic of a clergy who were conscious of the challenges but did not know too much about taking them on with children. By creating competent auxiliaries Marcellin responded to their expectations. Yet in doing so, he confirmed that the priestly ministry was not capable, even in the countryside, of responding to all religious needs. Beside the priest is the profile of the Brothers, submissive to him, certainly, but not only to him since he had a Superior, a Rule, an educational method. A certain type of Catholic action was installing itself in the village, but to the detriment of the sub-clerical sacristan, the cantor, the elementary school teacher, the parish priest's odd-job-man.

3. Faillon, the Sulpician¹²²

In 1831, this professor of the Seminary of St Irenaeus in Lyon, whom Marcellin might have known, published anonymously a *History of the Catechisms of Saint Sulpice*. His introductory words really caught the tone of the period: "The ignorance of religion and the corruption of morals are the natural causes of the extinction of faith among the people. The generation which was brought up forty years ago, deprived, from its cradle, of the help of Religion is living almost as a stranger to Christianity. That today it comprises the largest part of society and forms the upcoming generation makes it difficult not to be afraid at the thought of our future. [...] In considering the progress of education and the diminution of faith, it is tempting to ask, along with Fénelon, if 'the flame of the Gospel, which must go round the universe, has not finished its course for us'"

"It really is in vain that the pastors are announcing the word of God; they are not understood. The evil of our century is ignorance of the Christian truths: to overcome this, we must 'take people back to the first lessons of childhood, which they do not know; the shame of becoming a child again will always place an obstacle in front of the care of pastors' (Massillon)"

These words, which were at once an advance warning because they appeared to anticipate the warning of a dechristianisation, and traditional since they had already been spoken by Fénelon and Massillon¹²³, were taken up again by Marcellin and his disciples, not in resignation, but to confirm the urgency and size of the task to be undertaken.

¹²² [Translator's Note] See Footnote 11 above, for the meaning of "Sulpician".

¹²³ [Translator's Note] François Fénelon (1651 - 1715), Archbishop of Cambrai. Jean-Baptiste Massillon (1663 - 1742), Bishop of Clermont. Both were famous for their spiritual writings.

Following on from his words, Faillon showed how, in the 17th century, faced with a similarly disastrous situation, the Church had gone through a spectacular resurgence by means of the religious education of children, thanks to the initiatives of so many people, among them, the teaching Congregations. Marcellin had probably read this text himself and the Marist Brothers made it a true historical model into which they inserted their Founder since they copied the words into the Introduction to his *Life*.

In doing so, they altered Faillon's perspectives since he wanted less to exalt the Religious Congregations than the numerous catechists from all walks of life and particularly the catechists from the Parish of Saint Sulpice, from where the *History* arose and whose methods dated back to the 17th century.

The following year, 1832, Faillon published *The Saint Sulpice Method for the Organisation of Catechisms*. He began by setting out the ideal portrait of the catechist, whose zeal must be wise and enlightened, not to favour anyone in particular, to be constant, strong, kind - all these qualities will be taken up again by the Founder and his disciples in the *Treatise on Education*. Cited there are large extracts of Gerson¹²⁴ and stories of his dealings with children in the 14th century. He then set out how the catechism had three stages: the question, the teaching, the opinions. Marcellin himself practised this method, which he probably learned in the seminary. The numerous citations of Faillon in the *Treatise* show that it had been a powerful aid in codifying this practice: Chapter 21 of the *Treatise* in particular is mainly a copy of Faillon, who asks that explanations be brief and clear.

4. The De la Salle Brothers

We will deal at length in Chapters 9 and 11 with the influence of Jean-Baptiste De la Salle's *The Conduct of Christian Schools* which, among the texts which influenced Marcellin, played only a relatively modest role. The *Treatise on Education* was nevertheless influenced by the *Meditations for a Time of Retreat*, published in 1730, with a new edition in 1816. This work, aimed at "all those who work in the education of young people" suited the Marist Brothers perfectly. Jean-Baptiste De la Salle firmly stated that Christian education was a ministry of prime importance, traced back to Jesus Christ, that parents were incapable of educating their children, and that the teaching of the catechism and Christian morality was the basis for this teaching vocation, ideas which were common among the Marists and commonplaces in devout educational thinking.

However, this sure influence of John-Baptiste De la Salle was very much less than that of Brother Agathon's *Twelve Virtues of a Good Master*, written in 1785 and published in Rome in

¹²⁴ [Translator's Note] Jean Charlier de Gerson (1363 - 1429), Chancellor of the University of Paris. A famous theologian.

1797. Taking its inspiration largely from Rollin's¹²⁵ *Treatise on Studies* and, in a minor way, from the Jesuits' *Ratio Studiorum*¹²⁶, it successively develops: grave demeanour, silence, humility, prudence, wisdom, patience, restraint, gentleness (developed very much in sub-chapters: how to make oneself loved, forming the heart, the spirit, education in judgement; being firm without harshness or indulgence, avoiding familiarity; rarely needing to correct...), zeal, vigilance, piety, generosity. Lengthy passages from each of these chapters were taken into the Marist Brothers' *Treatise*. We know that this influence is original because the Retreat Notebook of Brother François mentions this work in 1824. *The Conduct of Christian Schools* and the *Twelve Virtues of a Good Master* are the two essential pieces of the relationship between the De la Salle Brothers and Marist education.

5. Two spiritual and pastoral models brought up-to-date: the Jesuits and the French School of Spirituality.

To understand Marist education, care must be taken not to mix up the contexts in which it is located. First of all, on the historical level, it is clear that the Marists unhesitatingly place themselves with their great ancestors of the 17th century: on the missionary and Congregational level, the Jesuits, on the priestly level, the priests and bishops of the Counter Reformation; on the catechetical level, the Saint Sulpice method begun by Father Olier¹²⁷; on the educational level, Jean-Baptiste De la Salle's *The Conduct*. Authors such as La Luzerne, Faillon or Brother Agathon who located themselves within this perspective while trying to take into account the new times, were welcomed. Apart from this, references were also made to older authors such as Rodriguez, whose works were available in abundance in Catholic bookshops.

If the 17th century was a veritable mythical epoch, the Marist Brothers and their Founder were fully aware, right from the start, that times were changing: the Revolution had once again demolished the edifice. So it was necessary to begin again, by adapting ways of working which had been focused on the 17th century. From that time on - and this is where the profound innovation occurs - the country-school within each parish had to be the place of systematic christianisation of children carried out by a specialised body of Christians inspired by the 17th century advances in terms of mission, pastoral care, catechism and education¹²⁸. In taking from missionaries and pastors - all of whom were priests - their principles of action, the Brothers affirmed the idea that laymen could share the same ministry in a "slot" in which, when all is said and done, they were superior: the education of children. In the 17th century, the De la Salles had shown the way for towns. Marcellin wanted to show the way for the countryside. It was

¹²⁵ [Translator's Note] Charles Rollin, 1661 - 1741, an educator whose Jansenist views caused him to be deprived of the Rectorship of the University of Paris.

¹²⁶ [Translator's Note] The fundamental document on formation within the Society of Jesus.

¹²⁷ [Translator's Note] Jean-Jacques Olier was the Founder of the Society of Saint Sulpice.

¹²⁸ Also to be added: in terms of monastic life. The first Marists knew the works of de Rancé, the reformer of the Trappists. Marin's *Lives of the Eastern Desert Fathers* was one of their classics. The religious names of the first Brothers were often taken from that book: Arsène, Cassien, Dorothée... However, it was more because of spirituality than education.

particularly urgent since the old adversary of the 17th century, Protestantism, allied to agnostics, were trying out a new offensive in the field of education of the people through the mutual method.

In Marcellin's mind was a real Christian utopia based on the Tridentine tradition which combined elements of the Counter-Reformation with others, more innovative, such as promotion of the laity by means of Congregations, a sketch of which the Ancien Regime had only been able to outline. The Marist Brothers were profoundly involved with "the religion of the poor", as I recalled at the beginning of this work

MARCELLIN'S EDUCATIONAL THOUGHT

In speaking of Marcellin's principal inspirations, we have already shown how he adapted them to a new situation. This chapter will seek to discover more precisely his educational innovation.

1. Subtle social and political thought

Letter no 4, written to one of the Vicars General of Lyon in May 1827, gives us a key to Marcellin's spiritual, social and political thinking. "I still firmly believe", he says, "that God wants this work, in this age when unbelief is making such frightful progress." In Letter no 6, addressed to Archbishop De Pins on the same date, he speaks of "these perverse times" and affirms once more that God wants this work at this "perverse time". Letter no 3 to Father Gardette, again in May 1827, he adds, "I see more clearly than ever the truth of what the royal prophet¹²⁹ said, 'If the Lord does not build the house, they labour in vain, etc' "

There were, therefore, three firm beliefs: the world of the 19th century was perverse¹³⁰; his foundation is a "work of God" to fight against this; but it is God who directs it. The first two are typical of the extreme politico-religious mentality which particularly characterised the ecclesiastical environment of the times. However, the third one initiated a notable development: since the Restoration by the Most Christian King and the angelic Pope had not taken place, Marcellin renounced too political a view: the work will be accomplished, not as he thinks, but as God wants. For good or ill, he accepted the world as it was, firmly decided to continue fighting, but with a uniquely spiritual vision. From now on, the *Nisi Dominus...* would be one of his key sayings¹³¹.

¹²⁹ [Translator's Note] The "royal prophet" was the Old Testament King David. In Marcellin's time, it was thought that David had himself written most of the psalms.

¹³⁰ Father Courveille had already stated that Our Lady had told him to found a Society "in these last times of impiety and lack of belief. See also Letter no 11 where the idea of God's work is accompanied by that of "Mary's work" and takes up the theme of "this age of incredulity".

¹³¹ *Life*: "He commented innumerable times on the first two verses of the psalm "Unless the Lord build the house" and his reflections on them would fill volumes." (Page 312)

He had many reasons to question his work since his fellow-priests had abandoned him and he found himself alone, with eighty Brothers to look after and form. The general circumstances had clearly shown that the great right-wing project of regeneration had failed: mission had come up against fierce opposition, the coronation of Charles X in 1825 had set the two Frances against each other. Soon, the Prime Minister, Martignac, would attempt a liberal opening-up before the new Prime Minister, Polignac led the Revolution of 1830. Happily for Marcellin, there would be no shock to his own development: between 1830 and 1833 his work would be subject to many attacks, but his prudence and astuteness allowed him to get through them without major damage.

That does not mean that Marcellin had fundamentally changed his views: writing from Paris in 1838 he noted, “I went once to the Chamber of Deputies¹³² and I have no longing to go back again¹³³” Replying to a letter from the parish priest of Prés-Saint-Gervais in Paris who was undoubtedly describing for him the spiritual misery of his parishioners, Marcellin said, “the evil is not so frightening in our lands”, but he deplored not being able “to keep the contagion from becoming almost general” because of the lack of personnel.¹³⁴ It is true that other letters have a more optimistic tone: in 1838 he praised the piety of the Parisians (Letter 183): “Here in Paris there is a solid core of good Christians. How I wish that our country folk, who think themselves good Christians, could see how respectful these people are in church”. Letter 194: “I made all my visits and ran all my errands in cassock without anyone insulting me; no one even called me a Jesuit...” [...] “People in the capital are far more religious than one might think.” [...] “Religion will not die out in France just yet, it has too many resources”.

It seems, then, that the young priest of extreme views around 1815, who saw the world in black and white, without quite being able to distinguish the political from the religious, had developed a more nuanced thinking, with a basis of pessimism. It is significant, in any case, that Marcellin, like certain other Founders, had not abandoned the counter-revolutionary diatribes. On the contrary, the texts are almost silent on that event, which was still too close.¹³⁵ There could be two reasons for that: the Founder’s own father, but particularly, this idea, traditional in Catholic environments, that the Revolution was only the consequence of a much earlier rupture: the Reformation which, in developing freedom of thought, had ruined the principle of authority, and from this flowed unbelief and the ruin of society. Marcellin’s whole educational system is founded on the restoration of the principle of authority: we have already seen that with the formation of the Brothers; we will see it with the children.

2. Educational thought contained in the letters

It is not very easy to discern Marcellin’s profound thinking because the sources we have available on this topic are subject to caution. The General Archives contain manuscripts with

¹³² [Translator’s Note] The lower House of the French Parliament.

¹³³ Letter to Brother François, 24th February 1838.

¹³⁴ Letter 339, 3rd May 1840.

¹³⁵ [Translator’s Note] ie. the French Revolution.

numerous educational texts, but the authors are more or less clearly identified. This is particularly the case with a “treatise on education” of almost 500 handwritten pages where the Founder’s thinking is subject to additions by his successors. Happily, this “treatise” was used by Brother Jean-Baptiste Furet to write his *Life*. So, we can rely on these documents, with certain reservations, to describe Marcellin’s ideas on education. On the other hand, independently of these sources which require delicate handling, his letters and several other documents allow us the means of comparison.

Thus, letters 14, 19 and 24 addressed to Brother Barthélemy in 1830 - 31 offer us an initial definitive view of his teaching. The first letter, of 21st January 1830, is already very instructive: “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”

Letter 19 (3rd January 1831) takes up the same ideas: the task of the Brothers is... “precious [...] in the eyes of God. Great saints and great men were happy to have a task which Jesus and Mary value so highly. [...]

You have in your hands the price of the blood of Jesus Christ. After God, your many children will owe their salvation to you. Their whole life will be the echo of what you will have taught them. 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; that there is no peace for the wicked. That only God can make them happy, that it was for him alone that they were created. How much good you can do, dear friend!”

Letter 24 (1st November 1831) has the same tone: “Never stop telling your children that they are the friends of the saints in heaven, of the Blessed Virgin, and especially of Jesus Christ; that he wants their young hearts, that he loves them jealously, [...]

How sad it is, children, that we do not know him well, especially those of you who don’t like to learn your catechism.”

Two other letters to other Brothers have the same tone, although somewhat less warm. To Brothers Antoine and Gonzague, on 14th February 1831, (Letter 20) the Founder writes: “My dear friends, do your utmost to run your school well. Never forget how much good you can do;

remember how interested the Savior of the world was in teaching children, how he ordered his disciples to let the children come near his divine person. Tell your children that they should be very happy to be as dear to Jesus Christ as they are. Yes, this God of goodness loves them to the point of delighting to be with them; they have only to open their hearts and Jesus and Mary will fill them.”

He recommends to Brother Alphonse on 3rd November 1833 (Letter 31): “Give all the children who will be entrusted to you a good formation in all the Christian virtues. Pray for them, for with God’s help they will be able to overcome all the difficulties they may encounter during life. Obedience above all is the virtue they should practise”.

In this way the Founder developed a spiritual vision of education: children are dear to Jesus Christ, who has saved them with his blood and has let them come to him. The educator, therefore, is another Christ who, through his example, but also by his authority and knowledge of the catechism, supports their virtue, a token of happiness and salvation. In short, the classic vision of a Christian teacher, but a vision full of tenderness, free of any rigourism, concerned to bring children into a fundamentally christological and marian religious life. This is a far cry from a formalist perspective requiring only the child’s apprenticeship to the letter of the catechism. It is also a far cry from the instrumental conception of the elementary teacher, a simple helper of the clergy: the Brother is a life-coach.

This vision can certainly be considered to be reductive, because everything has the stamp of the religious spirit. However, it must be noted that, if the vision demands of the child obedience and imitation, it needs effective teaching, teaching for an apprenticeship to happiness through the happy knowledge of the catechism. Lay teachers would contest the religious aim of education, but they would keep the same teaching for happiness through knowledge, no longer of the Catholic religion, but of the secular world. This is why, caught up in the same educational utopia, the majority of educators, both Religious and lay, considered that to open a school was to close a prison. This is also why the concept of the teacher/life-coach, common to the ideals of the Revolution and an ideal of the Congregations which had been drawing up the concrete model of it since the 17th century, little by little relegated to the dungeons the village schoolmaster who was integrated into a society judged morally and culturally mediocre.

3. The catechism above all

Marcellin’s religious aim made him grant primordial importance to the catechism. The first evidence of this preoccupation dates from 1812: in the junior seminary at Verrières he resolved “to teach catechism to the poor as well as the rich”. During the seminary holidays he taught children and adults. The memory of one of his lessons was conserved: by means of an apple he demonstrated the earth and explained to children that people lived on its surface like minuscule insects, that, at the antipodes, people lived unhappily like beasts and missionaries left their own

countries to go and teach them catechism. At the end, he shared out the apple, giving a piece to each child.¹³⁶

This anecdote, where one sees cosmology at the service of the catechism, gives us a good idea of the way in which the Founder saw the teaching of secular subjects, which indirectly had to be at the service of the catechism. The Founder's *Life* has retained two of these lessons for us. Visiting a school, he found the children having a history lesson on the reign of Clovis¹³⁷. Standing in front of the children he showed them that the lesson taught three things: "the force and power of prayer", that "prayer was useful for everything", and that prayer obtained victory over the enemies of salvation. On another occasion he gave a lesson to the Brothers on the capitals and chief towns of Asia. On reaching Jerusalem, he took advantage of this to slip into a religious lesson: this town, which has changed its leader seventeen times and still finds itself in the hands of enemies of the faith has kept Christ's sepulchre intact, thus illustrating the words of Scripture, "Rule in the midst of your foes" (Psalm 110).

The title of Chapter 20 of the *Life* of the Founder is, "His zeal for the glory of God and the salvation of souls". The chapter is in fact a long exposition of Marcellin the catechist: he stops in the streets to question children on their knowledge; he spends hours catechising the young shepherds and children in the fields; on his way to Paris, probably by coach, he would only give a sou¹³⁸ to a begging child if he promises to learn his catechism and a few weeks later he gave him another one because he had learned it.¹³⁹

This obsession could well have been related to his experience at La Valla as a young priest [with the Montagne boy]. Yet there was a corollary to this preoccupation: that is the idea that parents were neglecting this task. The example which most completely explains his thinking on this is from a time when he was talking to some young Brothers who thought that too much time was being devoted to the catechism and not enough to secular subjects (this indicates a gap between him and the succeeding generation). They had objected that the De la Salles (the obligatory reference-point) only did the catechism once per day. He replied: "It is quite likely that if the Venerable de la Salle were founding his Institute in our time, he would have his Brothers teach catechism twice a day. Indeed, when he founded the Christian Brothers more than a hundred and fifty years ago, the parents of the time were eminently religious. They themselves educated their children, and all the Brothers had to do in their schools was to put the finishing touches on the instructions received in the family. To-day, unfortunately, the situation is different: parents, in the main, neither know nor practise their religion; they are completely engrossed in temporal matters and make no effort to educate their children; they rely entirely on you to take care of this task." (*Life* Page 526)

¹³⁶ This lesson determined the vocation of the young Epalle, who later became a missionary bishop in Oceania.

¹³⁷ [Translator's Note] Clovis (466 - 511) united all the various tribes in France under one ruler.

¹³⁸ [Translator's Note] The smallest-value coin of French currency.

¹³⁹ [Translator's Note] Brother André goes on to quote other stories from Chapter 20 of the *Life*.

What Marcellin did not say (but almost certainly knew) was that Jean-Baptiste De la Salle thought the same as he did. It was, moreover, a commonplace in the pastoral literature since Gerson in the 14th century. Clerics and teachers constantly deplored the indifference of parents. However, Marcellin had two additional reasons for deploring this: firstly the general one that the Revolution had disturbed the transmission of the faith over a generation; perhaps there was also a personal reason: his republican father. While being enmeshed in the traditional clerical pessimism, Marcellin displayed a renewed intransigence over the catechism because of his own experience as a priest, and perhaps also as a child.

4. A fundamental text from 1824: belligerent education

The Brothers had to look at, not so much teaching children, as bringing them up, rearing them. His thinking seemed to be well-developed on this point since 1824. Brother Jean-Baptiste Furet relates (*Life* Page 150) that during the summer-months of the construction of L'Hermitage "he thoroughly instructed them on the religious vocation, on the end of the Institute and on zeal for the christian education of children". He gave them a small document, lost today, but of which we nevertheless have the substance.

The Brothers had to:

1. Teach catechism morning and evening
2. Take the young children to confession every three months and carefully prepare them for First Communion
3. Make them understand the need for prayer to give them a love and taste for it
4. Speak to them frequently about Our Lady
5. Inspire them with devotion to their guardian angels, heir patron saints, the souls in purgatory
6. Get them to sing hymns every day and teach them plain-chant
7. Teach them how to sanctify their actions
8. Exercise great vigilance over the children
9. Frequently recommend to them respect for the ministers of Jesus Christ, obedience to the monarch and to magistrates
10. Inspire them with a taste for and love of, work
11. Train them in modesty and civility
12. Finally, the Brothers must be models of piety, of virtue for the children, in such a way as to bring them to God more by example than by word.

It can be seen that this programme is instructional. Plain-chant aside (again!) everything can be carried out by parents who are good Christians.

Chapter 1 of the *Treatise on Education*, completed in 1852, but much of which comes from the Founder, takes up the programme again with such a number of common points that one could

think it was the original text. Considering “The aim of the Brothers”, it constitutes the best summary of Marcellin’s thinking.

After an initial paragraph which reminds us that the aim of the Brothers is their sanctification and that of the children, the second paragraph develops the theme of the incapacity of parents, from which the above text seems to take its inspiration: “In this century, parents are not able to give their children a religious upbringing and instruction, perhaps because they are too busy with the things of the world, perhaps because they do not know their religion sufficiently well, perhaps especially because they are, for the most part irreligious and consequently indifferent to the salvation of their children; from this it follows that an infinite number of young people will remain in ignorance of the truths of the Christian faith and will wallow in vice if God, in his ineffable mercy does not take pity on them and does not raise up pious masters to take care of them and bring them up in a Christian manner.”

“We are now at a time when people are thirsty for knowledge, where education is spreading to the smallest hamlets. Philosophers and agnostics, inspired by the spirit of darkness, use this need to learn and people strive to inoculate into the hearts of children pernicious principles; they strive to capture young people, to inculcate their deadly doctrine to demoralise them and losing them by taking away their faith and morals. They want children to learn everything, to take on all knowledge, except that of religion. Christian schools have been set up to paralyse the efforts of these evil people and to construct a barrier against the devastating torrent of their deadly doctrine by giving children a strong and solid Christian education along with a secular education.”

The highly polemical tone of these two paragraphs, notably, that the parents are, by a vast majority, irreligious, seems to suggest an early date. Moreover, the affirmation of a battle against “the philosophers and agnostics” leads us to think that we are in the time of the Restoration, at a time when the vocabulary of the 18th century had not yet lost its relevance. Finally, the accusation of a movement to weaken the morals of young people clearly signifies the mutual teaching method, judged by the extremist camp¹⁴⁰ to be irreligious. We seem to be face-to-face with Marcellin’s words at the time he was undertaking the construction of L’Hermitage.

The aim of the Brothers is made explicit in six articles, condensing those from the 1824 document. Articles 1 - 7 are summarised in a relatively short article:

1. “To instruct them in the truths of the Christian faith, the commandments of God, on the dispositions necessary to receive the sacraments properly, on the necessity of the method of prayer” Then there is the question of:

¹⁴⁰ [Translator’s Note] A reminder that, in the context of post-Revolution times, “extremists” were conservative Catholics who supported the monarchy.

2. “Preserving their innocence and making them avoid sin by keeping them at school for most of the day and by this means making them avoid laziness, bad companions and all the occasions for misbehaving and offending God if they were by themselves.”
3. “Train them in virtue”
4. “Making them love religion and showing them that it alone is capable of making people happy and bringing happiness even in this life, training, habituating and making them attached to its practices from childhood”
 “Teaching them their duties towards their parents, the pastors of the Church, the Head of State¹⁴¹, magistrates and society and to spare nothing in making the children submissive and respectful, to be good Christians and virtuous citizens.”
 “To inspire them with love of work, giving them habits of order, of cleanliness, to make them love their condition, give them the means to better it, make it happy and honourable and to sanctify it”

These articles, adapted from a fundamental text of 1824 have been judged so important by Marcellin’s disciples that they figure in the Rule of 1852 and the *Schools’ Guide*¹⁴² of 1853, of which we will speak more fully later, but the polemical preambles, which no longer suited the circumstances, have been suppressed. The *Life* carries a trace of them in softened terms: we saw an example with the theme of the incapacity of parents.

The remainder of the chapter in the *Treatise*, through its polemical tone and certain vocabulary typical of the origins of the Congregation betrays the same intransigent spirit. So: “Elementary teaching is only a means of giving this Christian education more perfectly: a Brother who gives his children only a secular education does not fulfil the aim of his vocation [...] From which it follows:

1. That a Brother who contents himself with giving his children a secular education, in no way fulfils the aim of his vocation
2. That he will offend God and, from the beginning, will miss out on the most important duties of a teacher
3. That he will betray the hopes of benefactors of the schools and of those who appointed him and he will abuse the confidence of the parents
4. That he will afflict the Church by not accomplishing the mission confided to him, he will insult the Founder of his Order and prejudice the Order¹⁴³

¹⁴¹ Replacing the “monarch” of the 1824 document with “Head of State” shows that this document was compiled under the Second Republic.

¹⁴² [Translator’s Note] Some English translations of this work are entitled *The Teacher’s Guide*. Several editions have been published over the years. This Paper is concerned with the initial, French edition.

¹⁴³ This allusion to the Founder and the Order enables quite a precise dating, since, in 1824, Marcellin did not consider himself a Founder: he acknowledged Father Courveille as Founder. On the other hand, the Order is the Society of Mary, still in process of being born. See Father Courveille’s letter to Aiguebelle where he also speaks of the Order and Brother François’ Retreat Notebook where he also uses the word “Order”(1822, page 1). Moreover,

5. That he will degrade himself, bring dishonour on himself by ceasing to be an apostle and a co-operator with the pastors of the Church, being no more than a school-master and a propagator of vanities and lies
6. That he will be cruel to his pupils and, in regard to them, commit a type of murder by depriving them of religious instruction, which is the life of the soul.”

We have, therefore, the certainty that, at its origins, Marcellin saw his educational enterprise as a battle. This enterprise was later modified according to the scheme we described above and his disciples softened the harshness of his words. It is possible, moreover, that, after 1828, he himself had a more nuanced tone for reasons which were fundamental, but also opportune.

5. The *Life* of Marcellin as a summary of his teaching

When drawing up his *Life* in 1856, Brother Jean-Baptiste Furet drew on Marcellin’s teaching, much of which had been preserved either orally or in notes taken on the spot. The *Treatise on Education* seems to have served to conserve this thinking and as a means for his successors to perfect it. A large part of it was used again in the *Life*, but softened, edited, occasionally cited word-for-word, sometimes enriched with new contributions, such as those of Bishop Dupanloup. So, Chapters 16 - 23 of the Second Part of the *Life* are a real treatise on the education of the Brothers and children. Certainly, Brother Jean-Baptiste has given these ideas and actions a systematic and timeless edge but we have already seen how much time all of that action and thinking has taken to develop. We say that he described the Congregation from the end of the 1830s - 40s at the time when the system had reached its maturity. As he wrote in 1852, at a time of strong growth when new members did not know the Founder, he was editing what Brother Avit would call “a body of doctrine” fit for unifying the Institute around somewhat idealised origins.¹⁴⁴

Marcellin’s objective was summarised in a general goal: to form good Christians and virtuous citizens. To realise this goal, the child, corrupted by his “original degradation” must have his heart formed, that-is-to-say inculcated with love of virtue and horror of sin, with piety and obedience. This long and difficult work can only be done if the child stays on at school. That is why the Brothers demand an enclosed yard for recreation. Religion and discipline are therefore fundamental elements of this education: one is the soul of education, the other the body. To acquire the former, catechism is to be taught twice a day, prayers and plain-chant allow the parish priests the benefit of trained singers and the children enjoy this. The children are to be taken to Mass and on Sundays meet together afterwards. Secular lessons must be edifying. First Communion is to be carefully prepared for. Particular preference is to be given to poor, deprived children and they will benefit from the same teaching as others. The suspending of difficult children must be extremely rare. Finally, the children of the First Class are to be treated with

this allusion to the “Founder” shows that it was Marcellin and not Courveille who had drawn up or spoken this message.

¹⁴⁴ [Translator’s Note] Brother André goes on to list the titles of Chapters 16 - 23.

particular care because they are images of Christ, but also because it is most important to educate them: reading is enough to make a Christian; upbringing and education does it most easily and their success conditions what follows. Moreover, many children leave school before going into the senior class.

Discipline is essential: it is by this that the esteem of the public and of children is gained. It is this which, by making citizens submit to laws, preserves the Church, society, the family and the child from “the great wound of our age”: insubordination. It favours work, and so, virtue. But it must be paternal, imposed with gentleness. Punishments are to be outlawed. Authority will thus be moral and vigilant, like that of a good father of a family. The Brothers must unceasingly be around the children; they must not absent themselves from the classroom, they will play with the children during recreation and supervise them in the dormitory...In short: “A Brother must be a guardian angel to the children”.

As for primary education, it is not just a concession to society, since “we live in an age where people are thirsty for knowledge”. In order not to leave the way free for “secular masters and mercenaries, the children must be taught “all the subjects which are part of elementary education”. Thanks to this “bait”, the children can be catechised. Moreover, the acquisition of secular subjects has its good side: “it (elementary education) also has the advantage of keeping the child occupied, in holding him in class for long periods and, by the same token, preserving him from laziness and keeping him away from bad companions. Finally, “the subjects he acquires serve to develop his intellectual faculties and stand him in good stead to receive the principles of religion and put them into practice.”

The means of good progress in class must not be neglected: the Brothers will encourage emulation in the pupils, notably through a written general composition and the practice of monitoring in the First Class. The efficiency of masters initiated by the Founder himself, with regard to teaching materials, and practising the simultaneous method of the De la Salles, which became the simultaneous-mutual method will be verified by visits from the District Senior Directors and Visitors (1852 Rule). Apprenticeship in reading is carried out by means of the “*Principles of Reading*” composed by the Founder with the assistance of the principal Brothers.¹⁴⁵

6. According to Marcellin, the educator exercises a priesthood

He does not exercise “a common trade” but a “religious ministry¹⁴⁶ and a real apostolate”. His function makes him an imitator and co-operator of Jesus Christ; it opens for him the way of Salvation and gives birth to the prosperity of the establishments. Because the Brother loves and imitates Jesus Christ, he acquires all the virtues of a good teacher: humility, gentleness, leniency,

¹⁴⁵ [Translator’s Note] Brother André notes that it was in this book that the government’s new method of pronouncing the letters of the French alphabet was introduced.

¹⁴⁶ This term was used by Jean-Baptiste De la Salle.

patience , prudence, generosity, firmness, zeal, honesty (civility). He will therefore be able to show the children good example, capability and paternal feelings.

However, these qualities must not only serve within the framework of his school. Since he is consecrated for children, the Brother must “limit his zeal to the single aim of his vocation”: no working with the sick, nor secretarial work for the mayor, no management of farm-schools, no temporal management of seminary or sacristy, and, a fortiori, no Latin lessons. On the contrary, “they should remain hidden in the interior of their houses, and only relations with seculars which are strictly necessary”. “Good must be done quietly , without ostentation, avoiding anything showy that can be remarked on or could draw the public’s attention.”¹⁴⁷ To enable this hidden life, the school is exclusively devoted to education: no indiscreet neighbours, no Justices of the Peace¹⁴⁸. For recreation, the Brothers make use of a garden. If they go out, it must be at least in twos. By means of these precautions, it can be hoped that they will keep “the spirit of their state”, which will make them model educators, loving the children with a disinterested love, without familiarity, especially the poorest and most deprived whom they will be able to educate for a very low charge, thanks to their extremely austere lives¹⁴⁹.

7. His ideas of the formation of adolescents and adults

The majority of novices that Marcellin had to form were adolescents. He had ideas and a reflective practice for them. As the rough-hewn novices were then sent to schools to do the cooking - and got involved in all sorts of clumsiness and pranks, Marcellin solemnly addressed the unhappy Directors: “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. That age is the most critical period of life; it is the time when the passions begin to make themselves felt and wage a cruel war against man, which finishes only with his death. During that time, the soul, tugged at on one side by the attraction of sensual pleasures, weighed down on the other by the burden of its woes and worn out by pressure of the struggles it has to endure, loses all relish for piety; the holiest realities make no impression on it and the most stirring truths hardly rouse it from its lethargy and put a brake on its evil inclinations.

That is an age which takes its toll on all men and when even those who are naturally good and pious scarcely feel the consolations of grace and piety.” (*Life* Page 463)

The Brother Directors were then invited to sympathise with the troubles of the young Brothers and “under no circumstances round on them or mistreat them”. On the contrary, they must be firm: make them pray, keep them very busy, encourage them, make them obey the Rule.

¹⁴⁷ See the chapter on humility in the *Treatise on Education*. “Humility must be the virtue cherished by the Brothers of Mary.” ... “the Brothers must have a particular fondness for the hidden life, for humble tasks, and for everything that could decrease them in people’s eyes.” ... “By the spirit of their vocation they are called to live as far as possible unknown in the world,”

¹⁴⁸ Schools had many uses, notably it was where Justices of the Peace sat to rule on minor disputes.

¹⁴⁹ The “solid virtues” are “humility, poverty, mortification”.

This is what Marcellin seems to have done with his novices, whom he supported with indulgence and a sense of humour: often he contented himself with remarks such as: “That’s not a very fine way for a Brother to set a good example” or “How long are you going to carry on like a child?” (P 461) He had a principle: the first fault he pardoned, at the second, he warned the culprit, “You owe me”, at the third, he was paid.

However, if he showed great patience with the faults due to youth, Marcellin was inexorable with faults due to “a superficial character, to a false spirit, or when they were of a nature which scandalised the Brothers”. Those who remained too attached to their parents, who had “worldly manners” such as fastidious cleanliness, those who publicly committed immoral faults, were thrown out without pity. Sometimes, faults, which to us appear minor, were severely sanctioned: a sacristan who had a drink from the chalice, novices who jumped across the St John’s fires, were sent away.¹⁵⁰ In short, when he saw that novices had decided to compromise with the world outside, he considered that they had nothing to do with him.

8. Marcellin as part of the *dévoté*¹⁵¹ educational tradition

It seems to us that Marcellin is interesting less for his originality than for his improvement and modernisation of the educational tradition of the *dévotés*. Since the 17th century, this system of educational thinking and action seems to have been categorised thus:

1. An augustinian view of the child, corrupted by original sin, but brought to life again through baptism. This unfinished, ambiguous little being (a mass of flesh, Jean-Baptiste De la Salle called it) must be formed physically, morally, spiritually, by his natural educators: parents and clergy, so that its regeneration takes over from its inborn corruption.
2. A more optimistic, humanist view of the child, which considers it trainable and that knowledge will add to its being. Another aspect of humanist thought: the concern for a civilised society allows for a peaceful political and social life.
3. A *dévoté* view of the Church and society which stresses the urgency of the battle against ignorance, the cause of heresy, of evil habits and so, of trouble. Care is also needed to produce Christians with the necessary knowledge for salvation and so able to confess their faith in order to be assured of Salvation.
4. The question of the clergy and society’s not being able to seriously take on this mission, notably with the mass of the people. There is a deficiency in parents who, not taking on their basic function of education, render the ministerial priesthood useless; a deficiency in clergy who neglect children; a deficiency in school-masters who teach for money, having no innovative educational project.
5. It is necessary, therefore, to proceed with the creation of a body of Christians who will stand in - to a certain degree - for parents and pastors to educate, on a large scale, children through the catechism, civics, and Christian practices. This social and charitable function requires souls who are deeply conscious of the importance of their mission and so want a different society, a different Church. The mission they foresee demands, not just a temporary commitment, but their whole life. This is why they will be unmarried,

¹⁵⁰ [Translator’s Note] The story of the novices and the St John’s fires is told in Brother André’s Paper: *Champagnat, Dancing and Young People* available on the Institute website.

¹⁵¹ [Translator’s Note] For an explanation of the term “*dévoté*” see Footnote 10 above.

giving an example of a most demanding religious life, not in a convent which would forbid their apostolate, but in contact with the world. Also, constantly threatened by a collapse in their fervour (they too are sons of Adam) and drawn by the temptations of the world, these elite beings need to come together in a body to live, to obtain help for themselves, to be effective and to ensure that their work lasts.

So, because childhood was seen in a new light, as a strategic territory for the future, and because of an awareness of the fragility of society and Christianity, because of Protestant competition, the environment of the dévotes introduced a body of Christians imbued with the idea of vocation which would push them into consecrating themselves to a task which, in the eyes of society, was off-putting and contemptible: children.

Because the children had to be busy, not just on a Sunday, but, more so, for the whole week, it was not possible to remain content with oral teaching. Reading was a particularly powerful way of spreading the catechetical and dévot ideal since children could read their catechism and pious books which the printing-press multiplied, thus spreading sound doctrine in their families and in the whole of society. The social ideal, grafting itself onto the Christian ideal, entailed extending the programme: writing and arithmetic, technical apprenticeships demanding specialist material and professional competence came to be added to the simpler, culturally purposeful apprenticeship that was reading. Thus, the desire for education allied itself to the dévot ideal and would slowly be expanded before the Revolution, becoming a tsunami after 1830.

However, all these apprenticeships, the desire to hold onto children for a long time in order to make them Christians, to give them some discipline, to take them away from the streets, demanded competence, an educational technique, for which Jean-Baptiste De la Salle furnished the most satisfying programme.

Thus was created this model of the Christian and teacher: the Brother, conscious of being chosen and therefore ready to consecrate himself to his vocation; trained in the novitiate for a carefully planned teaching technique; member of a body which assures him affective, spiritual and material security.

9. Marcellin makes a success of a flimsy programme

With his ideal of raising “good Christians and virtuous citizens”, Marcellin would scarcely be distinguished in this field had he not created his work at a time when it was challenged, if not for its organisation, then for its aims. The chasm between the objectives of society and those of the Church, already visible under the Ancien Regime, became yawning in the 19th century. Where did this example of rigidity from the Marcellin of the Restoration, who wanted to return to an essentially educational and catechetical work, arise from? It was through accommodation to society’s objectives while maintaining strong catechetical pressure on his disciples that he would perpetuate his foundation. In this system, up to the eve of the Revolution, the State’s role was highly inconspicuous. But then it imposed itself. We see clearly that Marcellin first of all stiffened his opposition to the intrusion, then later sought accommodation. Thus, by integrating the aspirations of society with his catechetical project, and by accepting, not without some hesitation, the oversight of the State, Marcellin adapted the old model with some flexibility. By devoting himself to the countryside and small towns, he even contributed to its rounding-off.

Having said that, it is perhaps in his personal history that Marcellin is the most interesting because in his lifetime he went through the entire story described below: born in a hamlet, he knew the quasi-medieval model of transmission of oral and written culture and suffered from its deficiencies; as a young man he had the punishing sensation of a taste for self-education, which was to be one of the great aspirations of the 19th century; as priest and Founder, he tried to reconcile his adherence to the *dévo*t tradition with a social aspiration which he very clearly understood, since he had it himself. A man of the past through his sticking with a traditional system, Marcellin is also a 19th century man because of his aspirations. The fact remains that, when he died in 1840, this model, for which he had done so much to perpetuate, was in difficulty: the State no longer wanted the University to compete with it. Attached to the University, the Congregations saved time in the need for education that the civil power could not hope to assume on its own. However, it was another twenty years before the Congregations slipped into the gaps in an educational progress that the public power wanted to reserve to itself.

EDUCATIONAL PRACTICE IN MARCELLIN'S TIME

1. *The Conduct of Christian Schools: the first teaching guide*

We have seen that, from the origins of his project, Marcellin planned to adopt the celebrated De la Salle method, called “the simultaneous method”. This method, published in Jean-Baptiste De la Salle’s lifetime, was printed twice before the Revolution: in 1720 (a year after Jean-Baptiste De la Salle’s death) and in 1742. At the beginning of the 19th century, it went through three editions, in 1811, 1819 and 1823, which were very similar to the editions of the 18th century. It was therefore the first edition, from Lyon, that the first Brothers had studied, while following for several months the teacher Maisonneuve’s practical lessons as classroom assistants. Their contact with the De la Salle method was brief and it must be supposed that they were then inspired more by what they had been rigorously practising. Inspector Guillard, who visited Bourg-Argental in 1822, noted: “There is some little imitation of the real Brothers of Christian Doctrine¹⁵² in their teaching and discipline.” At Saint-Saveur-en-Rue he again noted, “This house has been refurbished and furnished in the manner of the Brothers of Christian Doctrine.” Finally, visiting La Valla, Guillard noted that the curate had collected a group of “12 to 15 young peasants whom he was training in the method of the Brothers.”

We have a few more indications of the practical methods. Brother Avit mentions that, in 1840, “In the establishments, the children were taken to Mass every day from school in twos. Whoever was walking at the head of the file carried a bunch of rosaries threaded onto a stick which he carried around his neck. When they arrived at the Church, he passed out a rosary to each of his classmates and then collected them at the end of Mass.” This practice echoes a custom from Chapter 8 of the Second Part of *The Conduct*.

Finally, the 1837 Rule’s “Instruction on the account of conscience” has the following questions. “Do you take your class modestly and with zeal? Do you follow *The Conduct* exactly?”

¹⁵² [Translator’s Note] The State tended to call *all* Religious Brothers “Brothers of Christian Doctrine”, regardless of what Congregation they belonged to. Here, the Inspector is referring to the De la Salles.

The 1824 Prospectus noted that “In their teaching, they follow the method of the De la Salle Brothers.” The big change came in 1837. The letter to Salvandy, the Minister of Education, which set out the 1834 Statutes (Letter 159¹⁵³) said, “In their teaching, they will use the new pronunciation and the simultaneous mutual method.” Brother Jean-Baptiste goes as far as to say, “Without knowing it, Father Champagnat combined the simultaneous and mutual modes, taking the best from the latter to perfect the former and [...] he prepared his Brothers to later definitively adopt the simultaneous-mutual method.”

Such a statement must be taken with caution because, at the high point of the quarrel about the two ways of teaching, Marcellin will bluntly confirm his fidelity to the simultaneous method. There is nothing extraordinary in his introducing elements of the mutual method into the De la Salle method since practically everyone did that. Moreover the 1837 edition of *The Conduct* incorporated new material: History, Geography, Linear and Perspective Drawing, also the Simultaneous-Mutual Method.

2. The simultaneous-mutual method and the teaching certificate

Marcellin had another reason for adopting the simultaneous-mutual method: the obligatory teaching certificate. The Ordinance of 18th April 1831 took from Religious the privilege of the letter of obedience¹⁵⁴. That inconvenienced the De la Salles and other recognised Congregations but not the Marist Brothers, who had never enjoyed that privilege. In contrast, Marcellin was worried: would the assistants who took the infant classes have to get the certificate? The letter to Brother Antoine at Millery (Letter 32) of 10th November 1833 (Marcellin was sending him a young, uncertificated Brother) betrayed his concern: “The principal in Saint-Etienne told me that, according to the *Moniteur*¹⁵⁵, a teacher who has his certificate of competence and his authorization can take on another teacher for whom he is responsible. They assured me in Lyons that this was so. In any case, find out for yourself about this. None of our establishments is having any trouble, even though we have only one brother with his certificate of competence in each place.”

Marcellin probably did not know that, in a Circular of 20th June 1831 to the Rectors of the Academy, the Royal Council had admitted that, in a school of several Brothers, only the Headmaster was obliged to have his 2nd class certificate, but, as his Congregation was not recognised, his case did not fall under the category of Congregations, but under common law.

3. Resembling the De la Salles as much as possible

Marcellin’s strategy seems to have been to adhere to the policy of the De la Salles. He adopted the simultaneous-mutual method in 1837 when *The Conduct* did. At the same time, his requirements on the subject of locations were modified: in 1828 (Letter 9) he asked for a very large house, very large classrooms and a garden. In 1836 (Letter 71) there was no change to his requirements. In Letter 161 of November 1837 he wrote to the parish priest of Sury-le-Comtal asking that the classrooms be “brought into line with our method”. “This is,” he continued, “the

¹⁵³ [Translator’s Note] The original French text has Letter 15, but this is a misprint; it is definitely Letter 159.

¹⁵⁴ [Translator’s Note] A Brother’s letter of obedience from his Superior assigning him to a school was sufficient for the French government to recognise him as a teacher.

¹⁵⁵ [Translator’s Note] The official journal of the French government.

advice of my confrères¹⁵⁶ and of the senior Brothers whom I have consulted. This is also the Rule of the excellent Brothers of Christian Schools who ought to set an invariable standard for us in everything. In their *The Conduct*, page 187 Chapter IX, they have this to say about the layout of the classrooms: ‘the classrooms must always be adjoining, the connecting door must have a glass partition, and there must be openings in the separating walls or partitions so that the teachers can easily see one another from their place.’¹⁵⁷

The details given in this letter show an important change in the Congregation’s customs as it chose to follow the development of the De la Salle Brothers. This new arrangement of locations had many advantages: the Brother Director could supervise what was happening in the classroom, or with his assistants; the Brothers could claim that the assistant (and the Brother Cook, when he was present in the afternoon) were acting as monitors and so were practising the mutual method. In this way, a certificate could not be required of them.¹⁵⁸ Realistically, this arrangement of locations was more a concession to those holding onto the mutual method than a real change. Moreover, it had the advantage of offering a model for organising locations clothed with the authority of the De la Salle Congregation and so would be more acceptable to the founders of schools.

In the *Life* of the Founder, Brother Jean-Baptiste described how the First Class worked and noted that the master had to return frequently to lessons already-given: “To avoid losing too much time through these continual repetitions, the teacher 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.” (*Life* Page 546)

However, it seems that this adaptation of the old method was delayed as the 1837 Rule, which codified the approved customs, carries no trace of it.

We can add that Marcellin had a political reason for adopting this method since, still not having obtained the official authorisation, he undertook further steps. Writing to Salvandy, the Minister of Education, on 27th November 1827, he was able to declare that he was following the simultaneous-mutual method, which showed that his Institute was not stuck in a method considered old-fashioned.

¹⁵⁶ That is, the Marist Fathers.

¹⁵⁷ Letter 97 of 1st March 1837 had already alluded to a “brick partition between the classes” allowing the Brothers “to easily be able to work together”.

¹⁵⁸ After 1880, the Brothers would have a quarrel with Jules Ferry, the Prime Minister, who was demanding that the assistants also had the teaching certificate. For several years the Brothers would have suffered from the fact that there was an open door between the classrooms, which made the second class an annex of the infant class, the Brother in the second class being a simple assistant-master and not needing the certificate.

4. Reservations of the De la Salles

In order to refuse his Congregation's authorisation the State accused Marcellin of being in competition with the De la Salles. So that he could put a stop to this objection, one of the things he did in Paris in 1838 was to enter into a contract with them for the sale of their standard textbooks at the same price as offered to their own establishments. They offered him books on Grammar, Dictation, Arithmetic, Linear Drawing, Duties of a Christian, French History and Geography at prices which were "very modest, being almost the same as those which our pupils receive from our own dear Brothers." The Founder had not quite obtained all that he wanted.¹⁵⁹ At the same time, (2nd August 1838) Brother Anaclet¹⁶⁰ granted him a well-judged letter of approval: "I have learned with the greatest pleasure that [...] you have established for the dioceses of Lyon and Belley a Congregation of teaching Brothers, under the name of Marist Brothers, which is destined principally **for communes which are not large enough for our Institute to be set up there.**"

He then wished that the government "would do everything in its power to favour your plan". "The protection which it deigns to surround our establishments gives me hope for a similar advantage for your men, who are called to deliver the same benefit in **small localities.**"

It might be said that Brother Anaclet focused primarily on the terms of Marcellin's letter which envisaged the Institute's destiny **principally** but not exclusively in small communes. In the course of his letter, Brother Anaclet saw only "small localities". That did not suit the Founder's enterprise as he had rejected an authorisation which confined him to localities of less than 1,000 inhabitants since his schools were almost all situated in villages and small towns of 1,200 to 4,000 inhabitants.¹⁶¹ Brother Anaclet's letter, then, would not be able to prop up Marcellin's file at the Ministry.

5. The De la Salles: protectors and competitors

We notice throughout this tale how many complex political implications there are for the method of teaching. Marcellin had not only to persuade the State that he was not questioning its prerogatives, but he also had to move closer to the De la Salle Institute, which, without wanting to exercise some sort of monopoly over teaching Congregations, held onto its status as a privileged partner of the State and did not want to endanger its expansion. More than ever, it was coming to be about teaching: Public Education, of which the De la Salles were moreover a branch, with their simultaneous method mixed with the mutual method. Every organisation which had not obtained its agreement was in difficulty. Conscious of this fact, Marcellin had, from the end of the Restoration, progressively manoeuvred to make his Brothers as close a copy of the De la Salles as possible. If this step had not enabled him to obtain official recognition, it

¹⁵⁹ Not only was it not the price to their establishments, but it was higher than the price charged to their pupils.

¹⁶⁰ [Translator's Note] The De la Salle Superior General at the time.

¹⁶¹ [Translator's Note] For full details of Marcellin's struggle for legal recognition of the Institute see Brother André's Paper "The Long March towards Legal Recognition of the Little Brothers of Mary" on the Institute website.

did not prevent him from getting involved with a model which was powerful enough for him to benefit from its influence. Moreover, this business is a clear illustration of a fact that historians tend to hide too much: the schools debate was not exclusively between Church and State, but between the State and private educational bodies, be they liberal or religious, and also between Religious Congregations acting as educational business competing against each other, most often discreetly, but without self-satisfaction.

LIFE IN SCHOOL

We know now that the Marist Brothers were strongly influenced by Marcellin's thinking on education, that they used the simultaneous method, then the simultaneous-mutual method. It is more difficult, but not impossible to see how this teaching worked out in practice.

1. The Directors of schools¹⁶²

The Founder was particularly keen on forming Directors, who occupied a strategic post since they were scattered around small schools of two to four Brothers and the Congregation largely depended on them. Chapter 17, in particular, of the *Life* is concerned with the care with which he formed Directors and offers numerous examples of this work of adult-formation.

It picked up on four faults they had: scolding, sulking, loss of temper, weakness of character or spineless concession. As to their qualities, they had to have: good spirits, great devotion to the Institute, a lot of know-how, a liking for order, fidelity to the Rule, real piety, charity, humility, prudence. It goes without saying that this plan was not easy to realise. However, the Founder did not joke: the Directors were put through trials. One of them had to do the washing-up during the two-month holiday at the Mother-House; another had to clear out from the latrine-ditch a dead calf that had been thrown away, a third had to do the cooking during the holidays. A fourth was sacked from his post as Director without explanation.

Over and above the harshness of the treatment, which was inspired by the monastic model and reserved for men called to positions of great responsibility, during the two-month holidays the Founder gave talks to his Directors, that is to say, informal instructions on managing houses, temporal administration, managing classes, and other more spiritual topics during which they could interrupt him point-blank with objections and questions. These efforts more or less bore fruit: "There are Brother Directors who make their exercise of authority consist in teaching the advanced class; in controlling the purse strings; in arrogating to themselves the best of everything in the house; in providing themselves with a thousand trifles and superfluities; in

¹⁶² [Translator's Note] The word "Director" designates a Brother who was both the Principal of the school and the Superior/Leader of the community.

cutting a figure in public; in availing themselves of all sorts of privileges; in seeing that they receive service from the Brothers; and in sometimes tyrannizing over them.” (*Life* Page 478)

2. An examination of conscience relevant to a village school

A long handwritten examination of conscience “On the principal duties of Brothers, in particular Brother Directors”¹⁶³ will help us with its detailed questionnaire to see what community-life could be like in the middle of the 19th century. As we are focusing on teaching, we will eliminate the religious aspect.

So, the author asks: “Have we sometimes failed to go to bed on time in order to spend time chatting or studying?”... “Are classes taken in accordance with the Rule and the customs of the society? Have we been exact in leaving and returning on time?” ... “In classes, have I obliged the children to be respectful during prayers, to fold their arms and lower their eyes? Have I not let them pray too quickly and in disorder, shouting too loudly and praying without piety, without attention, without devotion?” ...

In relation to the Brothers: “Did it sometimes happen that I complained to them about the burdens of my state of life, seeing them as very heavy?” ...

“For teaching, have I tried to acquire all the knowledge necessary for our state of life, giving them lessons when I can and supervising their studies? [...] Have I myself not wasted time or that of the Brothers with me? How many times have we spent the time of study warming ourselves, or chatting about nothing in particular, in walks or games in place of study? [...] Is it not true that several of them have just been leafing through books rather than studying any, that each one has studied just what he wanted, and that several have read books not suitable for them or which contain material irrelevant to our programme? Have weeks, months, sometimes several months been passed without studying the catechism, without constructing models of handwriting, without preparing other topics for class? Should we be astonished then if the Brother does not know how to teach catechism, if the children are not making any progress, if handwriting declines, if there are always the same handwriting samples hanging in the classroom and they end up getting dirty and black as ink? Have I considered that, if the children are not progressing, it is because the Brothers are not preparing anything, don’t know how to ask follow-up questions in class and are perhaps giving their children false ideas in the sciences, or, still worse, erroneous explanations of religion.?”

For the Brothers’ recreation, the Director must ask himself if he did not spend the time in his room studying or writing up the accounts; if he has not allowed the Brothers to study or spend

¹⁶³ Several more or less complete versions of this exist among the manuscripts of Brother Jean-Baptiste. It is difficult to establish their date, but they probably go back to the Founder.

time on their own, apart from the others. Has he watched over the silence of the Brothers since...

“In an establishment where there is no silence one can see only Brothers who are constantly unruly, disorderly, with no discipline, no liking for study, and almost always without piety. There are roars of laughter, shouting, noisy conversations being held, singing, unsuitable games being played, ridiculous playacting.”

At the same time, has the Director taken note that the Brothers walk modestly down the roads on their way to church?

“Have we not sometimes processed out, some leaving before others, and returning in the same fashion; this displays a lack of union, subordination among the Brothers and little order in the house.” Do we amuse ourselves by chatting to outsiders? At church, do we think about closing our eyes “to compose our interiors and exteriors”?

In school: “If the children stay in the house, the Brothers will constantly be disturbed; they will not be able to make the exercises on time nor study at the appointed time and if strangers are admitted, they will first of all cause the same disturbance as the children and, what is more, they will bring all the news and the world’s vanities into the community.”

Also: “Have I not kept the children back as a punishment or to make them work, which the Rule forbids (Before and after class, have I not let the children play in the yard)? Have I not allowed the children to go into all the rooms, which badly annoys the Brothers and prevents them from working? Have the children not been shouting, running around and singing, even in the Brothers’ house as if they were in the middle of the town-square? Has it not often happened that the children have been pushed and pulled around and beaten in class after school or in our apartments? Have I not often left the Brothers to amuse themselves, to disappear or to argue with the children, something they do if they have no respect for them, no self-restraint? Have I not been too free with the children, addressing them with “tu”¹⁶⁴, being familiar with them? Have I not allowed particular Brothers to get to know the neighbours and leave the house without my permission to do business with people outside? [...] Have I not permitted some young people in the world to come and have their recreations with us, even on Sundays? Have I not spent too much time with the parents of the children, often spending a large part of the recreation with them? Have I not brought them into the house? Have women not come into the kitchen and even into the Brothers’ bedrooms? Have I not allowed them into the garden, the classrooms, or elsewhere? [...] Have I not brought strangers in for a meal, the parents of children or others under

¹⁶⁴ [Translator’s Note] In French there are two words for the singular “you”: “tu” and “vous”. Up until the 1970s/80s “tu” was used by adults to speak to children and other people considered inferior, and “vous” used by children to speak to adults, even their parents. Marcellin forbade his Brothers from addressing children as “tu”; “vous” had to be used as a sign of respect. Nowadays, although “vous” is still used as a sign of respect, even God is addressed as “tu”.

the pretext that they had rendered some small service for me? Have I myself not visited the homes of parents of my children; have I not had meals; have I not remained too long with them?”

With regard to cleanliness, has the Brother Director checked that the Brother Cook has swept out the apartments, washed the tables, the windows, the dishes and kitchen utensils? Are the classrooms swept out every day?

“Have I made sure that the children are not throwing papers under the tables, are not scribbling on the doors or walls? Have I made them keep their desks tidy? Are their books and papers piled up one on top of the other, without any order? Have I forbidden the children to write in their books? Have I highlighted cleanliness every week by checking books and exercise books?”

At the same time, does order reign for the Brothers in their work-room, dormitory, and office?

“Are cloaks and hats left around every corner of the house? How are the beds made? Does it not happen through lack of care and attention that the Brothers’ habits are dirty, completely stained and full of dust, and that shoes rot and deteriorate because trouble is not taken to keep them in good repair? Has it not been noticed that the Brothers are not even washing their hands or bodies and that their hair is always in disorder? “

If the Brother Director admits boarders, he must ensure that they are supervised! “Have I not left them alone in the yard or classroom , not being able to even see or hear them? Have I not appointed one of them for the task of supervision, either during recreation or in the dormitory? Have I not let them out too easily, even into town, with all sorts of people, even other young people, their former companions without assuring myself of their religious principles and morality? [...] Have I not allowed the boarders to get ready for bed on their own or left them alone in the dormitory without ensuring that they are asleep?”

Finally: “Have I watched the Brothers who take class with me? Have I sought to train them and correct them when they are not doing well? Have I seen how they do reading, writing, number-work?”

“And the Brother in charge of the kitchen: Have I followed him, trained him in order, exactitude, cleanliness, economy¹⁶⁵”

Such lengthy extracts should be excused; this examination of conscience gives us evidence of the life of Brothers in the villages. The purpose of the Rule was to make them live separated from the world, leading a “monastic” life “unknown and hidden”. However, village-reality forced

¹⁶⁵ Marist Brothers’ Archives, Rome. Manuscripts of Brother Jean-Baptiste. Ecrits Divers and Ecrits 3 pages 292 - 303 and 206 - 225. These three versions are very close to each other. They probably come from notes taken by Brothers during talks by the Founder.

them into multiple contacts with the population, which they particularly valued, according to all reports. School-life meant that their house was always being invaded by children, particularly if there was a temporary boarder, and it even became one of the gathering-places for young people.

3. Separate in order to educate

This is why the texts of the Rule were rigorous on the need to flee the world because they had to struggle ceaselessly with the tendency of the Brothers on the ground to get mixed up with village-life. The danger was all the greater since the Brothers themselves came from this environment: it was part of them and a vigilant Director had to try to get rid of it. However, the task was difficult as many of the Directors were themselves very close to that environment and, on the other hand, they worked out important limitations to many of the agreements. Beyond this, the multitude of their tasks (training and supervising the children, the boarders and the Brothers; being the contact for the municipal authorities, the parish priest, the parents) demanded an ability which not all of them had. On the other hand, when they succeeded in their duties as a teacher, they could be tempted to neglect their religious responsibilities. This is why the “Senior Directors¹⁶⁶” and Visitors endeavoured to be in command, without always succeeding.

4. The arrival of modern education in the village

However, in spite of all these limitations, the Brothers managed to offer, more often than not, the model of a teacher that was a complete rupture with that of the traditional master. There is nothing more significant in this regard than the evidence of Brother Avit, who was a child in Saint-Didier-sur-Chalaronne, who described, with a certain amount of talent, the arrival of the Brothers in his town: “ We did not know what schools St-Didier had before the Revolution, but it had been very badly provided for up until 1836, the year the Brothers set themselves up. The only boys’ school which existed around 1820 had been run by a man named Baune. This man had been a servant on a farm.

Busy with cutting down an oak-tree, he cut off the branch on which he was sitting, fell along with it and broke his leg. It was badly set and he remained lame and had to use a crutch for the rest of his life. He installed himself in a fairly small room and became a schoolmaster. We were among the number of his pupils. His rules were flexible. You arrived at a time of your own choosing and left when you wanted to. Some rascals used their parents’ orders as an excuse and stayed for only five minutes each day. Absences were not noted.

This “mentor” could barely read and had never held a pen. You can imagine the rest. He followed the individual method. He was seated in an old armchair, covered with a hundred bits of cloth with a thousand colours, which had once been new; beside him was a bundle of hazel sticks which he stocked up on during the summer. While each child was reading at his side, the

¹⁶⁶ Those in charge of an area comprising several local schools.

others were carrying on. The sticks were often used and sometimes broke.¹⁶⁷ When a pupil did not know a word, the mentor was not always able to find it. He would then say, in the local dialect: “Skip it, skip it. We’ll find it some other time.”¹⁶⁸

After the parish priest installed the Marist Brothers: “The pupils were taken to Mass every day. The catechism, the Gospel, even the Passion, church history, grammar, arithmetic, history and geography were all enthusiastically learned. We made more progress in eight months than we had in the eight previous winters with the laymen.

Father Madinier gave (the Brothers) such high praise, either from the pulpit or in private that the people looked on them as if they were heavenly beings.”

This lengthy extract, a Brother’s childhood memory, may be a bit forced in its portrait of lay teachers, but he took care not to be too flattering about the Brothers. Moreover, his portraits were not too far from what was known about teachers of the time: poor, ignorant chaps, without any dignity, forced by physical disability to take on the job of assistant-clerk, which, at least, allowed them to be integrated into village-life, but also more educated men, appreciated for their ability to sort out business for the peasants, allowing them to absent themselves from their classes. In short, Brother Avit showed that there was no lay teaching-body. Many French communes were still at the mediaeval stage with teachers.

The arrival of the Brothers in this town was, on the contrary, was the arrival of modern education. They were a body provided with a Rule, a method, a programme, a Christian missionary endeavour. Also, in spite of a real mediocrity which the author did not trouble to hide, the personnel obtained remarkable results, albeit faced with weak competition. That was the golden age for members of Congregations: the Guizot Law had decreed a school for boys in every commune. Departmental teacher-training colleges, set up by the same Law, had not yet had time to train a large number of competent lay masters. Parish priests, anxious to use worthy, trained catechist-helpers, were the agents for the Congregation-members. The authorities in the communes were still little concerned with education and let them get on with it or were delighted that ecclesiastical initiatives freed them from costly expenditure and having to take steps with which they were not very familiar.

Members of Congregations in much of the countryside made real advancement, something that was going to diminish rapidly since the State had learned its lesson. It took from the Brothers their method and, in creating the teacher-training colleges, it largely copied their system of training. Having resources infinitely more substantial than they had, the State was able to compete against the members of Congregations on the progress of education from the middle of

¹⁶⁷ [Translator’s Note] That is, he would hit the misbehaving children with the stick.

¹⁶⁸ [Translator’s Note] Avit continues with several other, equally unflattering, portraits of lay teachers he knew.

the century. This does not deny that Congregations were the first to create a teaching body better able to face up to the demands of teaching and education.

5. Separation of competence and spiritual life

In Brother Avit's story there is a very significant remark about the Brother Director, of whom he says that he was "a good schoolmaster but not very edifying" Brother Avit put his finger on the contradiction in the world of Congregations which for him was an example of weakness: the separation between religious motivation and teaching competence, in spite of the concern of Superiors about allowing teaching to be something of a "bait" for religious education. The conduct of this Brother, who, like so many others, would eventually leave the world of Congregations, illustrates the fragility of the model of a teacher who wants to cut himself off from society while being very much part of it. Still well-tolerated in the first part of the 19th century, this form of educational activity would later be less well-accepted. Internally, Religious would often set about leaving the Congregation to become simple lay teachers, secular priests or monks. It was as if the role of teaching Religious was not a socially and religiously recognised state, but a hybrid status generating discontent.

Moreover, members of Congregations - obliged by prestige and competition! - were the first to launch themselves into the enhancement of elementary studies. The *Treatise on Education* which dates, at the latest, from 1852, denounces "the most frequent intellectual constraints [...] of which the Brothers are most ordinarily guilty."

"1. Applying to certain children, subjects and homework for which they have no aptitude, either through lack of age or talent, or openness of spirit. Giving a child who can scarcely read and whose memory is not yet formed entire chapters of catechism, prayers in Latin, pages of grammar, history, geography or arithmetic to learn. Imposing homework in spelling or arithmetic when they understand nothing [...] is the most brutal intellectual tyranny that one can imagine...

3. Condemning certain children to work tirelessly every day and sometimes into the night for several months for the stupid vanity of having excellent pupils and seeing them shine and covered in worldly praise and esteem at a display or prize-distribution [...]

4. Neglecting essential elements of teaching, or those which are the most necessary or practical relative to the condition of the pupils in order to give the children topics which would be of no use to them. Keeping the children busy with copying for part of the year, maps, free-hand drawing, making exercise-books or great bundles of writing, throwing them into questions on algebra, making them waste their time on books on physics, astronomy, trigonometry¹⁶⁹ and other similar idiocies while they do not know spelling, practical arithmetic, how to write a personal

¹⁶⁹ See *Life* P 468. A Brother asked the Founder for permission to buy a book on geometry. Marcellin gave him instead a book on humility.

story, make a statement or keep accounts - this again is a shameful injustice on the part of the master and an unconscionable intellectual tyranny.

5. Keeping the children amused for several months by learning plays and declaiming actors' speeches.¹⁷⁰

Such a passage sends us back to the lengthily developed examination of conscience above in which we can see that the Brothers often neglected study of the catechism in order to devote themselves to reading up on topics which bore no relation to the subjects they had to teach. There is a particular description there of the tendency of Brothers to raise the educational level, not only of the most important schools where it was planned to follow the complete elementary programme, but probably also in the villages. We again find the eternal debate there as to what are the useful subjects for children.

The combined action of society and the State, the aspirations of many of the Brothers themselves, more and more preoccupied with teaching, were actually distorting the Congregational ideals. By 1833 the State had seized its independence in this area and society was getting ready to respond to its offer. Members of Congregations were in a strong position, but had not been able to make the same impression in the education of boys as Congregations of women had been able to do in the education of girls.

6. How to reconcile educational utopias and realities

The Marist Brothers were far from being completely satisfied with the effectiveness of their activity. Chapter 16 of the *Treatise on Education* devotes a lengthy "Response to complaints made", among which are the following:

1. Nothing is gained from my teaching.
2. Nobody listens to me
3. What am I getting from my teaching?
4. Every day we see children who have been raised in a Christian manner become wicked.
5. Whatever is done, children are always the same and constantly repeat the same faults.
6. Whatever you say, I don't see that my teaching is doing the least good.

Of course, teachers have been making these complaints since time immemorial.

However, we are very far from the first utopia describing the first school, that of Marlies: "Next day, the school was opened. They concentrated on establishing discipline, on necessary silence, on habits of orderliness and cleanliness, on formation in piety, modesty and courtesy, on cultivating emulation and all those externals which denote a well-conducted school. In less than

¹⁷⁰ Marist Brothers' Archives, Rome. *Traité de l'Education* 2nd Part Ch 17.

a month, the children were transformed. They seemed to have absorbed the piety, reserve and modesty of their young teachers. Parents, authorities and the general public were delighted at seeing the children so docile, so polite, so keen to learn and so attached to their masters. People never tired of watching them pass along the streets on the way to their hamlets. They walked in pairs, orderly and quiet.” (*Life* Page 105)

In short, we are present, in this village, at the same irruption of modern education as at Saint-Didier-sur-Chalaronne in 1818 with less-educated, more spiritually-motivated Brothers. It does not prevent the author from idealising, from creating a real archetype. We have seen, from the examination of conscience above, that reality is not quite so clear. Moreover, the multiple recommendations of the Founder to the Brothers, asking them to put up with the children’s lack of sophistication, are there to remind us that, if the school does transform the children, it is over time and with many failures. The complaints of the Brothers carry traces of their disillusionment as well as taking into account the stark reality which demands lengthy patience. Imbued from the beginning with a utopian and eschatological spirit, full of enthusiasm, but also illusions, the Congregation settled down to reality, but constructed an original template and did not neglect to raise its own intellectual level in spite of the basic problems that that posed.

7. Neither preachers nor mercenaries

It was because he became better and better at mixing idealism and realism that Marcellin was able to form his disciples. Thus, one of his instructions, reported later¹⁷¹, has the heading: “Brothers that Father Champagnat does not like”: “I do not like the preaching Brothers, “ he said, because they confuse preaching and the catechism, which must not consist of explanations or difficult questions; “these things must be left to ecclesiastical gentlemen and you must confine yourself to teaching perfectly the letter of the catechism.” In saying this, Marcellin underlined the tendency of Brothers to profit from their knowledge and compete with the clergy by setting up a hierarchy of transmission of the Word. The Brother must remain a coach.

However, we can clearly see that this division on the teaching of the catechism between the priest, who had the monopoly on explanation, and the Brother who had to see that it was memorised, was in the process of disappearing. Moreover, the preaching-specialists themselves were critical of florid, rhetorical sermons and were recommending simple but solid language. Thus, two literary genres were in the process of coming together: the formal sermon was slowly giving way to the informal teaching and the function of the simple coach was shrinking as the teaching Brother became conscious that he was exercising a complete catechetical ministry along with his job. The ascent of this specialised laity who were Brothers tended to dispossess priests of their speciality. At the end of the century a group of clergy wanted to reappropriate teaching at the expense of members of Congregations while a large number of ecclesiastics had not noticed

¹⁷¹ *Lessons, Opinions, Sayings of Venerable Father Champagnat*. Chapter 5.

the change in the teaching environment and still believed that teaching Religious were simply catechism-coaches and easily replaceable by devout seculars.

The Founder had no more liking for the “perambulating Brothers” because he walked around the classroom, leaving the children to misbehave or scandalise each other. By doing so, they violated the customs in *The Conduct* and the Marist Brothers’ regulation which presumed that the Brother remained permanently in his chair so that he could keep an eye on the whole class¹⁷². This constraint probably limited the use of the blackboard, as we see at L’Hermitage in 1839 in the class of candidates for the teaching certificate. Brother Eleazar was not able to resolve a fraction and “the professor grew impatient and threatened to come down from his chair”, but did not do so. In any case, this is evidence on the use of the blackboard in Marist Brothers’ schools before 1840. Because it was a question of the “teacher-training college” it is certain that its use in teaching also existed in the elementary schools. In addition, the 1838 Prospectus mentions, in furnishing the classroom: “a walnut blackboard 2m by 1.50m” and “2 walnut blackboards 1.50 by 1m)

This custom of remaining in his chair averted two opposing faults: firstly, that of the “old-maids” Brothers who, lacking in dignity, “unhealthily caressed the children, spoiling their character” and the “torturer” Brothers who hit the children. Marcellin seems to have had a difficult time in persuading the Brothers that correcting the children did not mean hitting them.

The “Brother with the sore elbow” that is, the lazy one was not fit for teaching “because to teach others, there must be ability and devotion” nor was the “servant Brother” who was “without enthusiasm or devotion to the common good”.

8. Neither cantors nor sacristans

It remains for us to have a quick look at another aspect of the Brothers’ life, which traditionally touched on the functions of the elementary teacher: that of cantor and sacristan. We have already seen that Marcellin had provided, right from the start, for the study of plain-chant, which was traditional since schools were destined from the High Middle Ages for the training of clergy. However, that meant that Brothers trained in the technique could be called on by the parish priest. The Founder seems to have been aware of that: writing to the parish priest of Saint-Paul-en-Jarret in 1834 (Letter 35) with whom he was having a disagreement about finances, her remarks, “The Brothers of Christian Schools will never sing Mass for you” (as the Marist Brothers are doing, to be understood)

The 1837 Rule states: “Without the permission of the Superior, the Brothers will not take on any function in the church such as Sub-Deacon or any other, even if the parish priest requests it;

¹⁷² This was also a criticism of the mutual method, which presumed that the teacher walked around the class.

however, in the absence of an altar-server they can serve or sing the Mass, always taking care not to leave the children except when a second Brother can keep an eye on them.”

This measure is explained in Letter 216 (31st October 1838) to the parish priest of Sury-le-Comtal: “The reasons which made us include in our regulations the article which forbids our brothers to fulfil any ecclesiastical function have come to the fore again through the departure of two or three of our Brothers who in spite of their commitment are beginning their studies for the priesthood.”

However, the practicalities seemed to cause difficulties. Marcellin wrote to Brother Antoine at Perreux on 13th January 1839: “You cannot continue to sing the Mass or act as Sub-Deacon without compromising your health. Prepare the way so that the parish priest no longer insists. We are about to let him know.”

So, the suppression of the function of cantor or assistant altar-server in the liturgy seems to be part of the Congregation’s effort to get to a model of Brother clearly separate from the clergy, like the De la Salles.

The problem with sacristies seems to have been different: Marcellin had received a proposal for Brothers to manage the sacristies of the Basilica of Fourvière and the Cathedral at Belley. Refusal could have been considered an affront by the ecclesiastical authorities, whom Marcellin needed, and who saw this proposal as a compliment. However, he could not be moved: teaching was the sole task of the Brothers. Also, at the same time as he was rejecting sacristies, he agreed to supply a Brother for the teacher-training college at Montbrison.¹⁷³ In 1840 the commune of Saint-Etienne officially asked him to take charge of its institution for the deaf and dumb. Marcellin obtained the admission of two Brothers to the Institute for the Deaf and Dumb so that they could be trained.¹⁷⁴

9. A non-clerical ministry

We see, then, that, little by little, Marcellin was de-clericalising his Brothers and getting them to reject the cultic aspects of the traditional mission of the elementary teacher. This development preceded that of the lay teachers who, at this period, largely remained under the thumb of the parish priests and were beginning to find that a heavy yoke. Because the Brothers were organised as a Church-body, they were more protected from clerical encroachments and could have their specific role recognised sooner. Marcellin’s vision of the teaching-function must be recognised as more modern than that of certain Founders who continued to be imbued with traditional ideas and saw no major obstacle in having their Brothers serve as minor-clerics for the parish priest.

¹⁷³ Letter 64 12th April 1836 to M. Arquillière, Principal of the college: “We are extremely flattered by the honour which the Prefect and Supervisors of the college have done to us...” This proposal was not followed up.

¹⁷⁴ Letter 320 14th February 1840. This project did not come to fruition. The acceptances by Marcellin were also linked to his concern to obtain the State’s official recognition.

On the other hand, in forbidding his Brothers access to the priesthood, Marcellin followed Jean-Baptiste De la Salle and affirmed that the “ministry” of the Brother was not some pious domestic service but a path different from the priesthood and completely legitimate, even if it did not have the same social recognition. Without saying so, and without conceptualising it, he affirmed the participation of lay people in the universal priesthood.

PART 4

THE COMPLETION OF THE WORK

The Schools Guide, A New Teaching Manual

When Marcellin died, his work was incomplete: it was recognised officially neither by the State nor the Church. In addition, the internal structure was still weak: the 1837 Rule was only a draft and the teaching manual was borrowed from the De la Salles. It would be up to the Director General, Brother François, and his two Assistants, Brothers Louis-Marie Labrosse and Jean-Baptiste Furet to complete the work while managing a very rapid development enabled by strong recruitment and the absorption of two Congregations, in 1842 the Brothers of Christian Instruction of Saint-Paul-Trois-Châteaux, and in 1844 the Brothers of the Diocese of Viviers. Moreover, the Congregation acquired a quasi-independence, since, in 1845, the General Chapter of the Marist Fathers decided that the Fathers' Superior General would have only the right of general supervision over the Brothers.

1. Structuring a group expanding in all directions

It was necessary to obtain for the Congregation a legal, canonical and administrative framework, with a complete Rule, a method of teaching, and a Life of the Founder, which would serve as an indisputable reference. All of that was undertaken, and more often, achieved in the years 1845 - 60. The Institute benefitted from the goodwill of the conservative Republic under Louis-Napoleon to finally obtain legal authorisation as an organisation of public benefit on 20th June 1851.¹⁷⁵ At that time, there were 826 Brothers, of whom 565 were teaching 21,665 children in 371 classes and 150 houses. The numbers had almost tripled since the Founder's death. There were around 58 pupils in each class, with an average of 144 pupils in each school.

A General Chapter was held to focus on the main legislative texts of the Institute: in 1852, there was the debate on the Rule, in 1853 on the *Schools Guide* which would replace *The Conduct*, in 1854 on the Constitutions or Rules of Government. In 1856, the *Life* of the Founder completed the architecture of this normative literature.

2. The contents of the *Schools Guide*

Obviously, the *Schools Guide* will claim our attention for some time since it codified the practicalities of Marist teaching. [The initial French edition] was presented as a booklet of 256 pages, divided into 3 parts. The first part was about "Organisation and Discipline in the School", namely the admission of children to the school and their leaving, the conduct of masters and

¹⁷⁵ [Translator's Note] For the details of this achievement, see Brother André's Paper "The Long March towards Legal Recognition of the Little Brothers of Mary (1822 – 1851)", available on the Institute website.

pupils in class, the daily timetable, silence, clickers¹⁷⁶, class-monitors, catalogues, discipline, punishments, classroom furniture. We can immediately recognise the influence of *The Conduct of Christian Schools*.

The Second Part: “Religious Teaching and Education” is much more fundamental: after a chapter on the aim of the Brothers, there was a lengthy treatment of the catechism, on education, prayers, physical education. It ends with three summaries: “The Example the Brothers must intend giving in the Education of Children (to be the children’s guardian angels)”, “Conduct of Young Brothers when responsible for a Class”, and “Conduct of the Brother Director in Training Young Masters”.

The third part, “On Elementary Teaching” essentially concerns secular subjects: Reading, Writing, Spelling, Arithmetic, Linear Drawing, Geometry, Bookkeeping, Surveying, Singing, Lessons to improve memory.¹⁷⁷ The last two chapters, the subjects of which were imitation and rewards, would have been more suited to the first part.

The work’s complete title, “School Guide for the Use of the Little Brothers of Mary drawn up according to the Rules and the Instructions of Father Champagnat, Founder of this Institute”, clearly tells us of the source from which the author has drawn. The Superior General’s Introduction is a strong confirmation of the willingness to connect with Marcellin:

“We have faithfully followed the regulations and instructions on the education of youth which our pious Founder left us. We have sought, before all else to be penetrated with his spirit, to make it live again, and reproduce it as much as possible. Over many years, our good Father particularly devoted two months of the holidays to train us in teaching, taught us how to do the catechism, and taught us the invariable principles of a good education.”

Brother François underlined the highlights of this teaching: the art of teaching young children in the First Class, the teaching-method for reading, the spirit of good discipline: strong, but paternal, a good teaching-method for catechism, singing, which had been introduced into the curriculum by him, the regulations concerning the training of young Brothers¹⁷⁸.

Curiously, however, Brother François did not clearly attribute to Marcellin the choice of the simultaneous-mutual method, although it was adopted in 1837. It seems, tho, that the argument chosen to justify the Institute’s choice came from him because, in 1851, mutual-teaching was

¹⁷⁶ [Translator’s Note] Use was often made in class by the Brother of a hand-held “clicker” which made a noise loud enough to attract the children’s attention. There was a system of the number of clicks denoting different instructions.

¹⁷⁷ [Translator’s Note] This curriculum would be quite usual in European elementary schools in the nineteenth century.

¹⁷⁸ [Translator’s Note] The French might also mean “the (religious) formation of young Brothers”, but I think, in this context, teacher-training is intended.

scarcely more than a memory, along with individual-teaching. In setting out each of these modes, as if the Institute had a choice, Brother François seems to have taken on the particularly harsh words of the Founder for mutual-teaching. He recognised it as “useful for everything concerning memory, repetition, geography-exercises¹⁷⁹; useful in that it enables a Master to keep a large number of pupils busy at the same time.” However, this form of teaching “has nothing to do with education; only the direct word of the Master can have: for it alone can touch the heart, enlighten the conscience, regulate the child’s behaviour and truly train it in virtue.”

The Guide adds something on education, such as: “Secular education adds nothing to man’s good fortune, it can make him neither better nor happier.

Education gives ideas, but it gives neither integrity nor morals, nor any virtue; it can make wise men, but never citizens. [...] Education still has nothing to say on man’s well-being or temporal happiness.”

Brother François then goes on to develop the theory of simultaneous-mutual teaching: “It is easy to bring together the last two modes of teaching (the simultaneous and the mutual) and thus profit from the advantages of each. To do so, it suffices that the Master, after having divided his class into sections, as has been said for the simultaneous mode, while he is giving his lessons alternatively to each section, has the same lessons repeated or has other, different lessons given by monitors to sections. It can be particularly advantageous to him to have monitors for the repetition of lessons which rely on memory.”

Brother François was describing a theory of teaching that was adopted more than fifteen years beforehand, but probably not wholly practised.

3. The process of putting the Guide together

We know that the author of the Guide was Brother Jean-Baptiste Furet because, at the end of the 1853 Chapter: “A member proposed a vote of thanks to the Rev Brother Assistant, who had prepared the works; Rev Brother Jean-Baptiste stood up and said that the Guide was the work of the Regime¹⁸⁰ inasmuch as it had discussed it many times; there was a unanimous vote of thanks to the Regime¹⁸¹”.

It was completed in June 1852, having been in preparation since 1845: “It was proposed by the Second Commission (of the Chapter) that it would be useful to send a certain number of copies of the Guide to the most capable and most experienced Brothers of the Institute, both Capitulants and others, so that they could examine it and make their comments before the Second Session of the Chapter.”

¹⁷⁹ This indicates that he saw it as useful for simply reciting (geographical) classifications.

¹⁸⁰ [Translator’s Note] Until comparatively recently, this was the name by which the General Council was known within the Institute.

¹⁸¹ Acts of the 1852-54 Chapter. Marist Brothers’ General Archives, Rome.

Brother Urbain's biography noted the judgement of one of these 'experts': "In total, the *Guide* seems good to me; however, in my opinion, it lacks a chapter on the training of young Brothers and the paternal nature of discipline. If I am allowed to express a desire, I would add that I would like to see the paternal nature and reason appear on every page of this book."¹⁸²

It is certain that the *Treatise on Education* was the basis from which the *Guide* was edited. For example the 4th Section of Chapter 11 of Part 1 of the *Guide*, which is concerned with "Repression or Correction" comes from Chapter 12 of the *Treatise* "Correction: the nerve-centre of Discipline". The definitive version (of the *Guide*) was considerably lighter and it adopted a vocabulary and style stamped with moderation. There are many examples of passages taken from the *Treatise*, but always with this same sense of conciseness and moderation. If the *Guide* was a good reproduction of the Founder's thinking, it very much reduced some of the harshness.

Ultimately, his thinking had little effect on the first part of the *Guide* where only Chapters 11 and 12, concerned with discipline and punishment, were inspired by him. It is the second, less technical, more fundamental, part which carries his stamp. Chapters 1: "The Aim of the Brothers", 2: "The importance of the Catechism" and 3: "On Education" were largely inspired by the *Treatise*. Later, his influence is much more diffuse.

4. Other Influences

The author of the *Guide* was not content to stick with the educational thinking of Marcellin and the authors who inspired him. He took care to modernise it by bringing in contemporary educationalists and he primarily plundered Archbishop Dupanloup's work "On Education", published in 1850. This Bishop of Orléans, a celebrated catechist and educationalist, was one of the great figures of the Church in France in the middle of the century. He was a prelate in tune with the Marist Brothers.

By insisting that the child is an entirely separate being, capable of exercising his will and having a right to freedom, Dupanloup appears to have contributed to giving a direction to Marist education, easily using the ancient comparison of the child and soft wax which had to be shaped before it hardened or fallow land which had to be cultivated and moving towards a less traditional view of the child. Not that this modern view did away with the ancient one; it was superimposed on it, especially when the child was seen almost exclusively as spirit and heart (a soul), Dupanloup insisted that there was also a body which had to be taken care of.

5. The Brother, a guardian angel

Chapter 7 of the second part of the *Guide* "The Example which the Brothers must give in the education of children" gives the Brothers the guardian angels as models. The *Guide* restates here

¹⁸² The Chapter took these remarks into account and the definitive version contained what he asked for.

a classic theme of Christian educational literature, notably present in Rollin¹⁸³ and Jean-Baptiste De la Salle, and also developed by Marcellin. However, the chapter clearly seems to be the creation of the Guide's author, Brother Jean-Baptiste Furet who apparently wanted to show a portrait of the ideal Marist teacher¹⁸⁴. Thus, just as the angel goes where God orders, so the Brother will go where his Superior sends him. Just as the angel stays vigilant with regard to humanity and does not lose the vision of God, so the Brother will watch over the children, remaining attentive in His presence. Just as the angel is concerned with the most distasteful of people, so the Brother "will never be put off by the faults and vices of the children", but, on the contrary, will foresee their faults and direct them in the way of good. While the angel leads towards the good "by suggestion, by inspiration" the Brother will then act "respecting the child's freedom" and he will never cease doing good, even if the children do not respond. In particular, he will pray for them and follow them "in class, in recreation, at work and play". In the same way as "the angels come together to procure the good of humanity, all the Brothers of the same house must unite to work in concert for the children's education." Finally, the Brother "watches over the whole being"; "he must carry out moral, intellectual and physical education" in a disinterested manner, "solely for God".

6. The problem of punishment

Debates on the chapters and articles of the *Guide* rarely gave rise to lively opposition, except on one issue: the retention or suppression of the ferrule¹⁸⁵. On 20th May 1853, the Chapter Secretary noted: "the chapter on the toleration of the ferrule was very vividly fought over. Retention was carried by 18 votes to 14 and an amendment seeking to restrict the power of punishment to the Brother Director alone was rejected."

However, the opponents returned to the charge on 30th May: "The Third Commission requested that the article relating to the ferrule be withdrawn and that the Brothers who wished to use the ferrule be obliged to obtain the permission of the Superior."

The discussion was held in the afternoon until 2:15, at which time the *Guide* in its entirety was adopted by 29 votes to 4. However, on 31st May: "After the signing of the decision, there was a proposal to regulate the type of ferrule, how it was used, and the type of leather of which it was made. There was even a request to do away with the sign of the cross which the masters had to make before using it. After some discussion on one or other of these areas, it was felt appropriate to leave the article in the *Guide* for a time on an experimental basis."

¹⁸³ [Translator's Note] For information on Rollin see Footnote 125 above.

¹⁸⁴ At the beginning of the Second Session of the General Chapter in 1853, Brother François praised the chapter, "You will see in the *Guide* how the guardian angels are to be our models in everything we do for the children, to form them in virtue and to sanctify ourselves."

¹⁸⁵ [Translator's Note] The ferrule was a length of wood or leather which was used to punish children, usually by rapping over the knuckles or hitting the palm of the hand.

This article took up almost two pages. What did it say? “The ferrule will simply be a piece of leather, without any addition whatsoever, forty centimetres long and a few centimetres wide; only a single blow to the middle of the left hand will ever be permitted. This penance must be rare and never given to young children, not to those who have something wrong with their hand. This type of punishment is in no way authorised in our schools, but only tolerated. It is supremely to be hoped that the Brothers can move beyond any type of corporal punishment. They are particularly forbidden to strike the schoolboys with their hand or foot, to use any type of wooden stick or the clicker, to pull their ears or hair, to strike them or push them away roughly.”

Such fierce opposition to the ferrule and any sort of corporal punishment was certainly based on the teachings of the Founder, whose *Life* contains a diatribe against the ferrule (Page 551) but he had never succeeded in getting educational practices free of corporal punishment; it was too much embedded in custom. The *Schools Guide*, then, gives witness to an old tension between traditional teaching practices and another type, more respectful of children. To a certain extent, there was a contradiction between the ideal image of the guardian angel and the ferrule, a contradiction that many Brothers could not see, since, for them, chastising and hitting were more or less the same thing¹⁸⁶ and that gaining mastery over the country-children was hard work¹⁸⁷.

7. The 1891 new edition of the *Guide*

It was necessary to wait for the new edition for the problem to be settled. The Circular of 18th January 1891 noted that a large number of establishments had found themselves deprived of the *Schools Guide* as the first edition had sold out and the General Council had decided on a reprint, which would make the work available at Easter. The Superior General took the opportunity to praise “such solid principles, such sure methods, such wise advice”, on which he invited meditation.

This new edition allowed for some changes, notably that which closed the debate on the ferrule: “Corporal punishment is not authorised in our schools; it is therefore expressly forbidden for masters to strike the schoolboys with the hand or foot, with the pointer or clicker; to pull their ears or hair; to pinch them or push them around roughly.”

Passages relating to writing were also amended. The 1853 *Guide* said, “Use can be made of metal pens, if desired as they can advantageously replace quills¹⁸⁸ especially as they do not need to be sharpened and can be used for all types of writing and all the letters.” However, it was

¹⁸⁶ See *Life*, page 551. The Founder clearly establishes this distinction and explains that Holy Scripture asks parents to punish their children, but not to strike them.

¹⁸⁷ The General Chapter was made up only of 92 finally professed Brothers and so this reflects the opinion of the oldest Brothers.

¹⁸⁸ [Translator’s Note] A quill was a pen made from the feather of a goose. The end of the shaft was sharpened and dipped into ink.

thought that quills were most common. In 1891 the *Guide* did away with any mention of sharpening pens and did not even mention the possibility of using quills. For ink, the *Guide* retained a recipe for home-made ink dating back to the 1650s.

The most important change was the suppression of a section on “Writing Models” which meant that the Brothers no longer had to constantly be making handwritten exemplars

8. The 1923 *Guide*

The 1907 General Chapter decided on a revision of the *Guide* and not just a new edition. The General Council took responsibility for this. The Circular of 2nd February 1918 asked the Brothers for their comments and suggestions for a well-produced new edition. The General Council devoted a number of sessions to examining a draft which had been drawn up by a Brother appointed for this purpose. A few days before the 1920 General Chapter a number of Capitulants were invited to go over it one last time. During the Chapter, the new text was read and discussed chapter by chapter and approved on 11th June. It appeared in 1923.

The principles governing the new edition were as follows:

1. Suppressing everything which “does not apply to the entirety of schools the world over”, in particular timetables, holidays...
2. Keeping everything which pertains to the spirit of the Institute.

However, new areas were added:

1. “A very brief psychological study of the faculties of the child” necessary for a modern approach to education.
2. A section on school- and postschool-works, such as marian sodalities, St Vincent de Paul societies, study-circles, sports groups and former pupil associations...
3. A section on cultivating vocations.
4. A chapter on social education: love of one’s country, accomplishing the duties of a citizen, knowledge of public institutions, respect for law, social and economic facts (with priority given to the organisation of the Catholic Church), moral facts.
5. A chapter on the formation of young Brothers in the scholasticate, a structure which did not exist in 1853.
6. A chapter on nature study.
7. Integrating gymnastics into physical education.

The *Guide*, therefore, was the result of the somewhat acrobatic effort to reconcile the origins with the needs of modern education and, at the same time, being usable in a large number of countries. For example, the use of the clicker was maintained, but it could be replaced with a simple pencil which would be rapped on the desk. Sometimes there were contradictions. Chapter 13 on teaching set out two methods: the deductive and the inductive. However, this did not

prevent the *Guide* retaining the comparison of the three models of teaching from the beginning of the 19th century: the individual, the mutual and the simultaneous. Taking up this theorising again at the beginning of the 20th century seemed archaic.

As for religious education, just as from Marcellin's time, it was a not a question of knowing Christianity "in a completely speculative manner as one might study Mohammedanism¹⁸⁹ or mythology". The school must be impregnated with Christianity and lessons in apologetics¹⁹⁰ will not be neglected so that "the class forms a truly Christian *mentality*".

The *Guide* set out three levels of religious teaching. The first two were based on the diocesan catechism while the higher level used a course on religion, a history of the Church and a course in apologetics. In the middle course, "explanation, without losing sight of the literal sense, becomes the most methodical and highly developed setting-out of Christian doctrine". When it comes to the oldest pupils, "explanation consists in setting out in a highly developed way the dogmas and precepts of Christian doctrine". In the three sections, "it would be useful to continue to recite *by heart*, each day the catechism lesson, and on each Sunday, the Gospels", even if one allowed that, for the oldest ones, the religious course, the history of the Church and the course in apologetics could be recited in a more detailed way." Finally, a novelty in relation to the past, religious homework would be given, just like other subjects.

In spite of concern to hang onto tradition, there were several important slippages in the 1923 *Guide*. Firstly, it had to adapt itself to several levels of teaching since the Institute had largely diversified and moved into secondary education. Thus, the Circular of 5th August 1932 stated that the great majority of establishments in France and in French-speaking countries were elementary schools; that secondary and commercial education was practised in (French) boarding schools and in English, Spanish, and Portuguese -speaking Provinces. The teaching of trades was important in Belgium and in the Belgian-Congo. In Canada and Argentina there was agricultural education and in Brazil the Congregation had several schools of Arts and Crafts. The Institute congratulated itself that, wherever it was, it adapted itself as well as possible to the needs of the country. However, did such diversity, already clear in 1923, not immediately condemn a single code of teaching for such diverse situations, influenced as they were by educational currents proper to the different countries and to very different educational legislation?

Further slippage: the catechism became a school subject demanding specific competence since learning by heart had all sorts of practical difficulties and could find itself replaced by homework. On the other hand, from the middle course, explanation had become fundamental and had to be given by the Brother, not only by the priest, of whom the *Guide* spoke no further. The

¹⁸⁹ [Translator's Note] that is, Islam.

¹⁹⁰ [Translator's Note] Apologetics is the study of how to explain the faith.

General Chapter of 1932 had to reject a proposal on "the teaching of religion to senior pupils by specialist teachers". The catechism did not escape the popular movement which made all teaching a specialist profession with specific knowledge. In addition, the clergy were increasingly absent from the teaching of the catechism.

The Chapter rejected the proposal "because it would take away from a certain number of Brothers, the title of catechist, which is the secondary aim of our vocation. Every Brother must be able to teach religion with knowledge and aptitude." It also condemned the tendency, in certain colleges and schools, to abandon the daily half-hour of religious education "under the specious pretext that time was needed for other subjects in order to be successful in examinations."¹⁹¹

From 1932, it appeared that the status of the catechist-teacher, so dear to Marcellin, had been overtaken by currents of professionalisation of teaching and the renewal of catechetical education. Faithful on the first point to the *dévot* model, and on the second to the Sulpician heritage, both of which came from the Founder, the Capitulants contented themselves with relatively secondary adaptations, which seemed not to have been sufficient, since the 1923 *Guide* was printed only one more time, in 1932. It is moreover probable that by this time it was already, for Marist Brothers, only one more educational manual among others, and not the most important.

DID THE CONDUCT INSPIRE THE GUIDE?

We have seen that, up to 1837, Marcellin thought of his Institute as complementary to that of the De la Salle Brothers for the countryside, but that, in practical terms, he envisaged foundations which competed with them because the Congregation had to be certain of revenues in order to structure its network of small schools and to have establishments in small towns in order to acquire prestige. The principle of complementarity - always affirmed in official texts - was attached little by little to the principle of competition. Brother Avit's *Annals* witness to this fact in small towns. He goes as far as suspecting the De la Salles of manoeuvring to prevent the Founder from obtaining legal authorisation.

It is true that these rivalries were most often of local or regional origin and it was the constant policy of the Founder and his successors to settle these conflicts amicably and discretely. The principle was not to replace a Congregation without its agreement in order to prevent parish priests and mayors playing up an unrestrained competition. That did not prevent competition from being a permanent fact whenever two teaching Congregations were installed in the same region; this was the case with the Marist Brothers and the De la Salles. It was not by chance that

¹⁹¹ It seems clear that the Capitulants had in mind the Founder's argument against Brothers who thought they did not have enough time for secular subjects.

the Founder recommended in his Spiritual Testament that the Brothers avoid any rivalry with other Congregations. Everyone more or less knew about the episodes in the battle between the secular and independent schools. The story of inter-Congregational rivalries would make a very interesting chapter in the History of Education in the 19th century. The composition of the *Schools Guide* by the Marist Brothers seems to me to be connected with a desire for emancipation from the De la Salles. A comparison between the two educational codes will allow us to judge just how far it succeeded.

1. Comparison between the 1838 *The Conduct* and the *Guide*¹⁹²

If *The Conduct* profoundly inspired the *Guide*, the text of the latter is not simply a copy, but an extensive adaptation since the *Guide* took care to justify what it asked for and to describe the practical norms to be respected by the master and pupils. In short, it sought to be, not only an educational code, but a small treatise concerned with theory. The *Guide* was much more explanatory and analytical than *The Conduct*.

The *Guide* suggested four levels of class: first class, second class, senior class and advanced class, while *The Conduct* offered three levels: first class, second class and senior class. However, the senior class could be divided into two levels. Both works suggested that school should begin at 7.30am with prayers and catechism, followed by Mass. There was a break from 11.15am to 1.00pm and the day ended at 4.30pm. Over the course of the week the De la Salle pupils would have had five and a half hours of catechism, with the Marist pupils having between five and a half and six hours each week.

The practice of writing from the First Class¹⁹³ might have been caused by concern to give the children a minimum of ideas as they often did not complete their schooling. It might also be that the *Guide* was being adapted to the tendency to link the learning of writing to that of reading. While the two codes devote the same amount of time to reading in the First Class, *The Conduct* devotes much more time to both reading and writing in the other classes than does the *Guide*.

2. Does the weight of tradition come from the Founder or from the environment?

We have already said that the *Guide* was not a copy of *The Conduct*, but an adaptation, which seems to have had two objectives: respecting the teachings of the Founder and adapting the simultaneous method to country schools by taking account of the already lengthy educational experience of the Marist Brothers. That is why it contains a theory, absent from *The Conduct*, of the importance of the catechism and First Communion. Moreover, Saturdays were devoted to a marian catechism, in conformity with the Congregation's spirituality. The collective recitation of

¹⁹² [Translator's Note] The sections of this chapter in Brother André's original contain highly detailed textual and thematic comparisons of the two works. I have edited these sections to provide English-speaking readers with an overview, rather than details, and so the numbering of the sections does not follow that of the original.

¹⁹³ [Translator's Note] This was only for children who already knew how to write. The learning of writing was not introduced until the Second Class.

the rosary at a specific time seems to have the same motivation. Two singing lessons each week seem to have been justified by the concern to offer rural parishes a more dignified liturgy while, at the same time, enabling Brothers to avoid, at least partially, the traditional function of cantor. Physical education, taken into account in the *Guide* but not *The Conduct*, seems to have come from Archbishop Dupanloup, who, in his 1850 treatise *On Education*, touched on the subject. It was not a question of the gymnastics advised by the Falloux Law, but essentially of preserving the children's health through attention to bodily cleanliness, of refreshing the air throughout the school, to the pupils' good posture, thanks, notably, to furniture suitable for their height, a reasonable amount of work, and recreation allowing for relaxation and good spirits. One article was specially adapted for the countryside: "Pay particular attention to children who come from far away, especially in bad weather, let them warm themselves if they are damp."

At the same time, the concern with introducing the children to geometry, surveying, and bookkeeping was completely adapted to the rural environment. For spelling and grammar "in classes with pupils who have had some training, there will occasionally be dictation of promissory notes, receipts, notices of workers' markets¹⁹⁴, and other documents they would need to know about later in life."

There were some significant differences about disciplinary measures: the *Guide* used the writing up of the names of poorly behaved children on a small blackboard, or the "signum" - a small piece of wood or cardboard indicating the fault ("chatterbox, lazy, untidy") which the child had to keep in his pocket until someone else merited the same punishment and took it. As for the expulsion of a pupil, the *Guide* did not follow *The Conduct* which considered that a pupil could be expelled if his parents were negligent in sending him to church. The *Guide* allowed the expulsion only if it was the pupil using his own initiative about not going to services, and not the parents. Caution was important within the cultural context of parents having little regard for school, but very aware of the dishonour of seeing their child expelled. In contrast with *The Conduct's* leaving each master with a certain amount of autonomy about punishment, the *Guide* forbade all individual initiative. On attendance, the *Guide* suggested seven prompts, about which *The Conduct* said nothing: warn the parents at enrolment that attendance is essential; give the parents a warning on each absence...etc.

3. Contributions and limitations of the *Guide*

In what concerned the practicalities of teaching, the *Guide* was not very original, compared to *The Conduct*. In contrast, it was careful to develop theoretical foundations, which were not only those found in *The Conduct*. In treating discipline, it was careful to show its necessity and qualities, so that it might be an essential part of education. In the same way, the catechism was seen in its importance, in its fundamental contents, as being linked to First Communion. On education, there was a lengthy treatment on the way to form the heart, conscience and judgement

¹⁹⁴ [Translator's Note] These were markets where casual labourers could be hired by farmers for temporary work.

of pupils... It is here that the Founder's instructions played a considerable role in the editing of this *Guide*. It was through him that other educational authors had been grafted onto the educational tradition of *The Conduct*. These authors had inspired him, but he also reinterpreted them in line with his own ideas. If *The Conduct* provided a good framework for the organisation on the *Guide*, it was the reflection of Marcellin's thinking on education.

Having said that, it is not really necessary to attribute to Marcellin the role of promoter of modern education: he saw himself as a bearer of a tradition which needed renewal and extension and not as the standard-bearer. His merit lay rather in knowing how to bring a new approach to Catholic education from a Congregational perspective born in the wake of the Council of Trent by adapting it to the 19th century and to the rural world. Nevertheless, what must not be underestimated is the specific contribution of his disciples, notably Brother Jean-Baptiste Furet, who was able to draw up a systematic work from the Founder's instructions and also from contemporary authors such as Dupanloup and even, in Chapter 7 of the second part of the *Guide*, constructed a theory of the Marist educator, which, although embedded in a tradition (the Brother must imitate the angels in everything) is no less original.

4. What was the new approach to education?

Chapter 1 of the second part of the *Guide* (The Aim of the Brothers. The Target of their Teaching) gives us everything essential on the subject of the educational ideas of the Brothers of 1853, ideas directly inspired by those of the Founder. The chapter states that the aim is to give children a "Christian education", that is to say, knowledge of the mysteries of religion, the preservation of innocence, training in virtue, love of their religion and its practices, respect for parents, pastors and civil authorities, love of work, order and cleanliness etc... "elementary education in line with their needs and condition". It is the ideal of the good Christian and virtuous citizen, at one and the same time civic and religious. The Brothers could not conceive of one without the other. Secular instruction was itself integrated into this educational programme, albeit lastly.

This last point is particularly significant as this chapter was inspired by the "Short Summary" of 1824 in which Marcellin set out this whole programme in detail, **except for the teaching**.¹⁹⁵ This simple modification shows us the journey taken by the Marist Brothers in a little less than thirty years: from then on elementary instruction had a place in Christian education.

The chapter continues by telling us of the exact choices made after 1824 for a teaching-programme conforming to people's aspirations: "The Brothers' teaching-programme consists, in addition to Religion, Reading, Spelling, Arithmetic etc and, in important localities, if

¹⁹⁵ *Life* Pages 150 - 152.

necessary and if requested by the authorities, History, Geography, Linear Drawing, Geometry and Singing¹⁹⁶.”

The last paragraph operates a wise balance between the objectives of the Congregation and those of society: “Although the teaching of Religion is the principal aim of the Brothers and must hold first place in their Schools, the other areas of elementary education must not be neglected and the Brothers will apply themselves to supplying these to their pupils with much care and zeal; for it is important that their classes leave nothing to be desired in the strength and good management of the studies, so that the parents who give them preference because of their religious principles have no regrets about not finding everything they desired for the education of their children.”

The Institute, then, had a vivid concern not to oppose the aspirations of society so that it could continue to exercise its task of Christian education. The weakness of this position was that it was founded, not on principles, but on strategy. The Marist Brothers had no philosophy legitimating secular education. It was the weakness of their programme, as it was of every programme of a Religious Congregation.

This is why the *Guide* does not speak of the secular studies required for elementary teachers. The single passage on this issue concerns preparation for the catechism.

In short, the programme offered in the *Guide* finds practical solutions which will enable the Congregation not to shut itself off with the role of catechist, but to develop over the course of the century. By this fact, the Marist Brothers were real elementary teachers. What would distinguish them more and more from lay teachers was not the practicalities of teaching, but the understanding they brought to secular knowledge... what was for them a simple concession, was, for others, fundamental - and vice versa. The Brothers wanted to form good Christians who, as a consequence, would be virtuous citizens; lay teachers gave themselves to the mission of forming educated people who would then be virtuous citizens.

¹⁹⁶ It was certainly not a question here of plainchant or the singing of hymns, but of the solfa.

PART 5

EXPANSION BLOCKED

Adapting To Hostile Modernity

The publication of the *Guide* in 1853 confirmed the Congregation's educational maturity and systematised the teaching of the Founder. More profoundly, it brought an end to the phase of heroic times. After a difficult birth, the Congregation had matured towards a rapid blossoming.

1. The *Guide* between two eras

However this historical phase of the Congregation would be upset by the general atmosphere. By the time of its publication, the *Guide* had already been overtaken by political, social, and educational reality since the State, under the Guizot Law, had confirmed that it would organise education and the training of masters, with the setting-up of teacher-training colleges in each Department. On the other hand, since 1848 universal suffrage had imposed the urgent need for widespread education, founded, no longer on religious criteria, but for civic reasons.

The ascent of socialism and the workers' movement brought forward a thinking which rejected the type of education offered by Congregations. Economic development brought about an exodus from the countryside and demanded in the factories, mines, and railways... accountants, employees and workers who had a good knowledge of reading, writing and arithmetic. In short, the dynamic forces of the 1850s were committed to educational planning which was either opposed or indifferent to that of the Marist Brothers. The interests of the State, businessmen, revolutionaries, republicans, was that French people be able to read, write, count, and morality would be some sort of by-product of this acquisition. As for religion, if many believed that it was still necessary for good social order, far more thought that it was a relic of the past, still capable of holding back the emancipation of humanity, but certainly not contributing to it.

Symbolically, the *Guide* was situated at the turning-point of the two eras: that of the 17th century, Catholic Modernity which had succeeded in enforcing a certain type of Christian, thanks notably to wide-spread education and was now dying embers (of which the *Guide* was a modest manifestation); and 19th century Modernity full of contradictory utopias, but wanting to replace, to marginalise, Christianity.

It is true that, at the time the *Guide* was drafted, there was apparently nothing in play: the conservative republic had just agreed, under the Falloux Law, on the freedom of secondary education; and, in the elementary sector, that the teaching certificate could be replaced by the in-service certificate, which was much easier to obtain. This same conservative republic officially recognised the Marist Brothers (1851). However, the favourable time would be of short

duration: from 1860 the Second Republic blocked all Congregational expansion, while waiting until after the short and splendid period for Congregations of the Moral Order¹⁹⁷ (1871 - 1877) and the secularisation laws of 1881 - 82 did not force them onto the defensive in the independent schools until the secularisation of 1901 - 1904.

If the Congregation was faced with the thorny problems of all Congregations over the past fifty years, the statistics hardly bear that out: in 1861 there were 1681 members in 301 establishments; in 1877, 3,600 Brothers in 504 establishments; in 1903, 4240 Brothers in 595 establishments.¹⁹⁸ The Superiors were conscious that their activity was taking place in a world that was becoming more and more difficult.¹⁹⁹

2. Secular laws impose profound changes

In 1878 an Inspector of the Academy of Lyon issued a lacerating report on the education offered by Religious Congregations: “The Religious Congregations are abusing the privilege granted them by the law of 1851. The lower classes of their schools are confided to teachers who are completely inadequate. Some of them would be incapable of passing the certificate of elementary studies.”

Account has to be taken of the fact that the report came from a functionary of the State, steeped in a certain model of teaching which he wanted to impose and who had a tendency to generalise and be pessimistic about a situation which was more diverse and nuanced than appeared. Moreover, it is clear that he looked more particularly at the women’s Religious Congregations where, with a letter of obedience, teaching functions could be exercised without much preparation. Brothers could not allow themselves to be too lax in their training. They often had to prepare their pupils for the certificate of studies and public examinations. The Marist Brothers offered a certain elite education, capable of sustaining superior elementary schools and boarding-schools of a high level.

Having said that, the quarrel with the Inspectors lay in the status of knowledge in education and so in the mode of preparation for teaching. Faithful to the world into which they were born, Congregations were still part of that world in their training through apprenticeship while the Inspectors wanted to make general the more technocratic, more state-controlled model of the teacher-training college. For them, the teaching certificate was the touchstone of education while

¹⁹⁷ [Translator’s Note] The Moral Order was a coalition of right-wing parties which governed France after the collapse of the Second Empire.

¹⁹⁸ [Translator’s Note] These numbers apply only to the Brothers in France. From information supplied from the Marist General Archives, the numbers for the whole Institute were: 1861: 2047 in 370 houses; 1877: 2884 in 541 houses; 1903: 4770 in 707 houses. Brother André’s figure of 3600 for 1877 must be a misprint for 2600. Also, it is uncertain whether he means houses or schools, or both, when he uses the word “establishments”.

¹⁹⁹ [Translator’s Note] Brother André goes on to another section which deals with the religious sociology of areas of France in which the Brothers were involved at the end of the nineteenth century. This section has been omitted from this translation.

the Congregations did not just consider the diploma as an arbitrary constraint having no effect on the capacity to teach. Their struggle against the generalised obligation of the teaching certificate was not fundamentally due to ignorance, but to real political, educational and moral thinking which made them consider the diploma as the sign of enslavement to the State and the abandoning of education to the advantage of knowledge disconnected from its moral and religious foundations. The old adage, “knowledge without conscience only ruins the soul” could have been their motto. Arguable thinking, no doubt, since it led to the thinking that devotion supplied the knowledge and method, yet it merited some consideration. Wanting to judge the teaching by Congregations only on the statistics of teaching certificates and Inspectors’ reports is adopting a highly partial point of view.

3. The State imposes its regulations

However, the Congregations had to accede to the wishes of the State as the law of 16th June 1881 obliged all elementary teachers to have the teaching certificate, whether they were proprietors of the school or simply assistant-teachers. In 1879, out of 2, 211 Brothers teaching, only 754 were certificated. For the first time, the Congregation had to look at the closure of a large number of houses: those which had insufficient resources, where the population was hostile, which did not provide vocations - in total 100 schools.²⁰⁰

4. Modification of their system of training

Because of the obligation of the teaching certificate, the Marist Brothers had to change their way of training. Since the time of the Founder, there had existed a “school of higher education” where the Brothers could spend some months preparing for the certificate, but it only functioned intermittently because it was a sort of reserve from which the Superiors could draw on to replace sick Brothers over the course of the year. On the other hand, the Congregation had experimented with a “preparatory novitiate”, for candidates who were too young, operating firstly near L’Hermitage at La Grange Payre from 1837 to 1854. Refounded in 1875 this work of “Juniorates” would furnish the Congregation, thanks to a network of preparatory schools with numerous, better trained young people: in 1880 there were 152 Juniors, by 1900, 1213 Juniors.

The Juniorate was a mixture of college, monastery, advanced elementary school, quite close to the functioning of many teacher-training colleges. More particularly, Juniorates were places which applied, almost to the letter, the teachings of the *Guide*. Trained in such a way, the young people did not find the move to the novitiate as a break: it was done “with the least possible solemnity and with scarcely a change of regulation.” Then came the time for the scholasticate at Saint-Paul-Trois-Châteaux. Success in initial examinations often meant that the young Brother was sent to Paris or some other city to study for the teaching certificate. In a sign of the times, there was no longer a question of sending out a young Brother to do the cooking. After obtaining

²⁰⁰ However, these closures were rapidly compensated for by openings in other places.

the certificate the Brother was sent to a school where, in addition to his duties in the classroom, he had to study for the higher teaching certificate.

The education of the Brothers had progressed markedly by the last decade of the 19th century, even if it did remain book-bound and based essentially on the obtaining of the teaching certificate, without any training in teaching. That was done directly in the classroom, under the supervision of the Director and his confrères.

5. A profound desire for education

The desire of the Brothers for their own education had already aroused in the Founder and his successors a deep concern: was it not the abandonment of the educational ideal of the Institute and did we not constantly see Brothers who had obtained the teaching certificate puffed up with pride and with an independent attitude often leaving the Congregation to get a job as a lay public-school teacher? In a Circular of 1842 Brother François recalled the knowledge necessary for Marist Brothers: exemplary handwriting, a deep and practical knowledge of the catechism, a good reading-ability, a little grammar and arithmetic. “Beyond that,” he said, “there is no need to study to meet the demands of the place or time. May certain Brothers seek to destroy in themselves the false and mistaken ideas they have of the knowledge that a Little Brother of Mary must work at acquiring.” This exhortation was aimed at Directors and certificated-Brothers.

However, the Superiors were constantly wrong-footed by the need to obtain more and more teaching certificates. So, in 1854 the Superior General announced examinations and competitions in order “to maintain the taste for, and practice of, study” particularly of the catechism, but also of arithmetic. In 1866 Brother Louis-Marie suggested the following practice: following Morning Prayer, 10 minutes to give the Brothers dictation, 10 minutes to correct the previous evening’s work. Four homework-notebooks to be seen: one for catechism and spiritual notes, one for dictations and analyses, one for models or pages of writing, and one for arithmetic problems. The practice seems to have been going on before this attempt at systematising it since the Superior added, “It has been stated that, in all the establishments where this work is done and these means constantly employed, the Brothers are easily trained and get to the teaching certificate very quickly.

This alternating policy of encouragement and reservation was displayed several times: in 1875 Brothers had to be forbidden from getting up at 4.00 am “to have more time for working”. The biographies of deceased Brothers hit out at too prominent a love of study: Brother Nivard, who died in 1858, regretted at his death, “the six years employed in studying history, literature and knowledge which was not absolutely necessary for a Brother”.

The taste for study was very powerful among the Brothers, apparently for two reasons: coming from modest backgrounds, they shared the liking for improving themselves through knowledge;

being engaged in teaching, they were concerned to be at the height of what was no longer just the charitable work of education, but a real profession.²⁰¹

6. A Congregation more and more directed at teaching

Another important change: the sociology of the Congregation was profoundly modified. We have already seen that the custom of employing a novice as cook tended to disappear with the creation of “schools of higher education” or scholasticates. However, boarding-schools and particularly Provincial Houses employed a range of Brother farmers, gardeners, cooks, launderers, porters, sacristans...poorly educated, almost illiterate. Until the secularisation laws of 1881 they were protected from military service by the fact of being members of a religious teaching association and they were able to sign up for a ten-year engagement, which dispensed them from military service, even if they were not teaching. After 1881 only the teaching certificate allowed this exemption. It was therefore necessary to plan studies for even these Brothers. Almost all of them asked to be presented for examination.

The archives do not state precisely how many were successful. It is probably that their candidature partially explains the mediocrity of the percentages of passes for the years 1881 - 1885, but it is nevertheless clear that becoming a Brother meant being fit for teaching. The manual-working Brothers did not disappear, but their numbers would decline. So, the effect of the secularisation laws was to bring to the Congregation a greater specialisation in its primary vocation: teaching.²⁰²

7. Globalisation of the Congregation

The Congregation began to systematically open up to abroad mainly because article 50 of the military law of 1889, which imposed universal military service, laid down that young people who had established their residence outside Europe before the age of 19 would be exempt from military service. If they returned to France after the age of 30 “they would undertake the obligations of their class”. The Superiors seem to have envisaged, for a time, pushing the Brothers towards the baccalauréat²⁰³ and degrees, which would allow them to avoid two years of military service. However, they rejected this and so some Brothers were prevented from gaining these qualifications. So, during the 1880s and 1890s the Marist Brothers were installed in Canada (1885), USA (1886), Colombia (1889), Mexico (1899), Brazil (1897), Egypt (1898), Seychelles (1884), Turkey (1892), China (1891), Syria (1895) and Aden (1892). Their teaching was generally appreciated in these countries and they were able to establish important works, supplied with young Brothers who were quite well-trained.

²⁰¹ [Translator’s Note] Brother André continues with a section on the comparison between the various 19th century French Marist Provinces of the number of teaching certificates obtained. This has been omitted from this translation.

²⁰² [Translator’s Note] There follows a section on the contraction and expansion of Marist schools in France during the 1880s and 1890s. This has been omitted from this translation.

²⁰³ [Translator’s Note] This is the set of exams taken at the end of secondary school education in France. Passes are necessary for entry to university and other forms of higher education.

At the end of the century the perspectives of Marist education were very much modified under pressure from the evolution of society, but also from the aspirations of the Brothers themselves. Moreover, the notion of competence was no longer reduced to aptitude to teach in a Christian fashion, but to communicating knowledge. On account of this fact, the Marist Brother was no longer a catechist-teacher, but a teacher-catechist. In addition, the Congregation, imbued as it was with the spirit of essentially reconquering French soil, became conscious of the limitations of its activities. It focused on a defensive and more qualitative strategy in the original territory of its activity and sought, through worldwide expansion, other ways of trying out its missionary and educational project. Marist education became an international reality.²⁰⁴

THE MARIST BROTHERS' SCHOOL BOOKS

Over the course of this history we have been able to state how the Marist Brothers were concerned about always remaining attached to the thinking and activity of their Founder. However, there is a domain in which he did not have the time to make his impression: that of school books. From his time, the Marist Brothers seem to have used a variety of books, some of which came from the De la Salles. Only one work was theirs, the *Principles of Reading* based on the new spelling rules, which the Founder had composed with the senior Brothers (*Life* Page 544). Brother Avit stated in 1878 that the *Royaumont Bible* had been the reading-book from the beginning.

However, the 1837 Rule offered a slightly different schema: “At 10.30 on Monday and Tuesday the Holy Bible (Royaimont version) or the *Pensées d'Humbert* will be read; on Wednesday J-B De la Salle's *Civility*; on Friday and Saturday, the liturgical hours of the respective diocese.”

It seems clear that these three works had been the reading-books in the Senior Class (the *Royaumont Bible*, and two by Jean-Baptiste De la Salle: *Principle and Duties of a Christian* and *Civility*), with the First Class using reading-boards and the *Principles*. Thus, the *Pensées d'Humbert* could be substituted in certain cases for the *Duties of the Christian*: the two works were summaries of theology. The 1837 Rule again alluded to the reading of manuscripts which, ultimately, was an apprenticeship for reading as a civilised activity since different forms of manuscript writing and special characters, known as characters of civility, used in the printing of these books were difficult to read. This was the case for lithographed notebooks. The Rule also indicated that grammar had to be recited at 11 o'clock, which presumed the existence of a manual. At 4 o'clock in the afternoon an arithmetic lesson took place, but it is not known if the Brothers used manuals. The fact that the Rule does not mention the *Principles of Reading* seems

²⁰⁴ [Translator's Note] There follows a chapter, in the original work, on the history of specific Marist schools in France. This has been omitted from this translation.

to indicate that the Founder had not drawn it up until later, but it is possible that manuscript or lithographed examples were circulated.

1. The books of the De la Salles

The selections of the Congregation were quite eclectic and the De la Salle books did not predominate. However, in 1838 Marcellin contacted them to obtain “books for the classroom at the same price as they charge their own establishments.” The De la Salles proposed slight reductions, the prices “being almost the same as those which our pupils are charged by our Brothers.”

We do not know if the Marist Brothers followed up on this request, which was related to a tentative policy of a relationship with the De la Salles to obtain legal authorisation, a move of which we have already spoken above.

2. The first works

It was only after the death of the Founder that the Institute began to draw up its own works for the senior class. If the sentences given to the children as examples of writing were standardised, they were still done by hand. However, the Circular of 27th June 1843 announced that a Grammar for the use of the Marist Brothers would be available at the forthcoming holidays in October. Writing exercises would be printed in December. As a help for composition, the Brothers were invited to bring dictations which they had collected, as well as works on the subject which they knew of. We can see in this the process of the production of this grammar: the bringing together of a body of reference-books and the using of what the Brothers brought. It is clear that the Marist Brothers were in no way dependent on the De la Salles, but largely used what was available on the market.

These two works, the grammar and writing exercises, edited around 1841 by Brother Louis-Marie, Assistant to the Superior General, had a certain amount of editorial fortune. In 1877, Brother Avit noted that the grammar was in its 20th edition, of between 12,000 and 15,000 copies each. In 1849 he calculated that the copyright fees for the classics amounted to 10,000 francs, which constituted 1/7th of the receipts.

It was necessary to wait until 1866 for a second work to appear. Brother Avit gave the reason for this: “Many were persuaded that Reverend Brother Louis-Marie (Superior General since 1860) was the only one in the Institute sufficiently capable of making the press groan and of updating the works of others. Through lack of time, he put it off until later.”

This misadventure seems to have happened to the Arithmetic of Brother Marie-Jubin. A Circular of 16th July 1861 announced: “We still have to complete the Collection of Problems which has to accompany the New Arithmetic for the Congregation’s use.”

It was only in the Circular of 21st June 1866 that it was announced that this new arithmetic had to be provided for all the classes. A summary of this work would be available from the Retreat (in October). As for the Collection of Problems (more than 2,000) which had to accompany this summary, it was underway and would complete the calculation-exercises already available. So, the senior classes had to use the complete arithmetic-book²⁰⁵ and the Collection of Problems and the others had to use the summary and the calculation-exercises. The long delay was caused by the corrections which Brother Louis-Marie believed had to be made to the early work. Nevertheless, the Marist Brothers were using their own arithmetic-book whereas up until then they had used that of the De la Salle Brothers.

This slowness of the Congregation to equip itself with its own basic works did not only come from the authoritarian view of the Superior General, since, from 1840 to 1860, he was only an Assistant, and the Institute had scarcely published anything during that period. The real reason for the lengthy delay was that, until 1860, the Congregation was taken up with the editing of its fundamental legislative works, such as the Rule, the *Schools Guide*, the Life of the Founder.

3. The beginnings of an editorial strategy

Things changed in 1860 with the creation of a General Procure where “Brother Directors will be responsible for obtaining all the materials for the office, the library, for reimbursements and for house- and personal-linen.” The basic textbooks were not explicitly mentioned, but the 1866 work was edited by the Procure and the Circular strongly requested the Brothers to equip themselves with this arithmetic-book. Moreover, the 1863 Chapter was preoccupied with the editing of the basic textbooks since it expressed the wish that a Brother be appointed to edit them. Nevertheless, the work did not advance very quickly. The Circular of 2nd February 1869 mentioned that “the Arithmetic-books (the large and small ones with their corresponding Exercises) were now finished.” This was probably a new edition of that of 1866. A Brother Assistant prepared the Summary of Grammar and the writing exercises, probably again an adaptation of the 1841 work. “The other work will appear little by little.” Brother Directors were asked to make known basic textbooks they used or which they liked. “These notes will help us to bring uniformity to all our houses.” The policy of editing basic textbooks was then quite clear: the Superiors wanted to retain the monopoly, but they consulted the Brothers on the ground. On the other hand, it is clear that it was the school-principals themselves who chose the textbooks for their school. The Institute did not yet control the spread of school-books in its own schools.

To remedy this, one hastened slowly. It was only in March 1877 that the Superiors became busy with the second edition of The Elements of Arithmetic, this time seen as three books: a beginners’ arithmetic-book, a summary of arithmetic for middle classes, and an advanced arithmetic-book. The most capable Brothers were invited to participate in the task and, for the

²⁰⁵ Brother Avit remarked that it was “too erudite for the children” and it was not well-received. In 1890 it was only in its second edition and there were still 1st edition copies in use.

first time, a real team was formed: six Brothers from each Province had to be named and were invited to work on six defined areas of arithmetic. They could use the help of confrères and neighbours, of textbooks, mainly those of the De la Salle Brothers, “taking particular care to collect the unpublished problems of confrères.” The work had to be completed by the end of May. A commission would put the finishing touches to the work.

In the same year, the *Children’s Guide* appeared. It had been written by Brother Eubert to replace *The Duties of the Christian* and the Royaumont Bible. Brother Avit gave two different reasons for these books being replaced: the *Duties* had been somewhat expensive and the Bible had been rejected by the inspectors. These two archaic works had certainly had their time and the inspectors were insisting on more modern readers. It seems that the Superior General was anxious to hurry the work of editing in the face of the increasing academic quibbles.²⁰⁶

4. Towards a wider distribution

This editorial effort bore fruit in 1879 with the *Method of Writing* of the Marist Brothers, edited by Hachette and comprising 12 books. The first 8 were for copperplate writing²⁰⁷; numbers 9 and 10 for rounded cursive²⁰⁸; number 11 for gothic handwriting and number 12 for French bastarda handwriting²⁰⁹. The fact that the Congregation had contracted with an editor of national importance seems to indicate a concern for a very wide distribution. At the same time, there was a desire to show, in a political context unfavourable to Congregations in education, that this Congregation was capable of providing works of quality.

After Brother Louis-Marie, who died in 1879, and Brother Nestor, Superior General from 1880 to 1883, and particularly Brother Théophile (1883 - 1907), the writing of new books was encouraged. On 9th May 1884 the General Council decided to inaugurate the F.T.D. collection (from the initials of the Superior General, Brother Théophile Durand), printed and edited by the Catholic bookshop Emmanuel Vitte, of Lyon.²¹⁰ Previously, the works had been produced by Périsse Frères, then by their successor, Lecoffre. Copies were authenticated by the signature of the Superior General. The names of authors were indicated by initials.

²⁰⁶ Marist Brothers Archives. Deliberations of the General Council (1880 - 1889), 27/11.1880: “The Reverend Brother Superior again set out for the Council the need to prepare an up-to-date reading-book for our schools which would shelter us from harassment by the inspectors. The work could include the following topics: 1. Religion and Morality. 2. Hygiene (moral and physical). 3. Horticulture, arboriculture, agriculture etc. 4. Natural History. 5. Industry, Discoveries...”

²⁰⁷ [Translator’s Note] In English-speaking countries, this was the standard form of handwriting in the 19th century. Interestingly, it is known, in French, as “English writing”.

²⁰⁸ [Translator’s Note] Rounded Cursive was a particular French style of handwriting which lasted in French schools until well into the 20th century.

²⁰⁹ [Translator’s Note] French bastarda was a formal style of handwriting in which the letters were inclined 25 degrees from the vertical. It originated in the Middle Ages.

²¹⁰ The Circular of 28th December 1898 reminded the Brothers that the Vitte bookshop was alone responsible for the sale of F.T.D. publications outside our houses.

With the F.T.D. series, the label “for the use of the Little Brothers of Mary” disappears. There remained only two signs of belonging, which could be understood by those in the know: “F.T.D.” and “M surmounted by twelve stars”. Other types of establishment were therefore able to purchase the F.T.D. series. This discretion on the origin of the collection certainly had economic causes, but it was especially an adaptation to secularisation. Thus, the Circular of 29th June 1884 recommended that the Brothers enter the works into the Departmental lists. They should not stand out too much as religious.

The links with the Hachette publishing house seem to have been stretched little by little. On 23rd April 1880, M. Hachette agreed that the covers of the writing-books would not carry the words “Marist Brothers” so that they could be sold in lay schools. On 30th April 1886 the Superiors rejected his geography-book because it was silent on the subject of the Catholic religion and on the civilising role of Christianity. On 25th February 1887, M. Hachette suggested printing the Marist Brothers’ Church History, but the General Council thought lower prices could be obtained in Lyon. Finally, it was in July 1888 that the Superiors agreed a contract with the Vitte publishing house for the exclusive sale of Marist basic textbooks outside the Institute’s houses.

5. A “school-book war”?

The concern to create works responding to the needs of the Brothers’ establishments was combined with the aim of fighting against secularisation on the level of basic textbooks. It seems that the first school-book war took place between 1880 and 1903 and the Circulars of the Superiors carry a trace of this, banning specific books from Marist schools and stating that non-Marist books could only be accepted with authorisation.

The Congregation felt itself obliged more than before to furnish its teachers and Catholic education with books covering the range of the programme. There was another compulsion: uniformity: “when masters change post, they will find throughout, the same methods, the same works, and will teach with much more assurance and facility.”

The Brothers were not very disciplined in getting their supplies from the Procure. The Circular of 8th December 1878 criticised Brother Directors who bought their textbooks in Lyon “contrary to the oft-repeated formal recommendation to buy supplies only from the Provincial Procures”.

There is some doubt that these directives were strictly followed, but it is certain that the Congregation was more and more in the business of supplying textbooks for all elementary levels and subjects. It was even busy creating school-books for the advanced primary and secondary levels since it ran a quite significant number of primary and secondary boarding-schools, without counting the Brothers who had to present themselves for the elementary-teaching certificate and others preparing for the higher certificate or the national

school-leaving certificate. A course in the physical and natural sciences appeared in 1887 linked to the examinations in elementary and secondary teaching.

6. Foreign editions

In 1895 a number of new books related to different state examinations were published, including a course in the English language for the higher teaching certificate.

The Circular of 27th December 1895 marked a turning-point in the editing of Marist books and the idea that the Congregation could do it for itself since, for the first time, mention was made of books edited abroad in foreign languages. Spanish books for reading, Church history, arithmetic, and geography were adaptations of the French works. However, a Castilian grammar could only be original. There were fewer works in English: only four reading-books.²¹¹

7. Evaluations in 1890 and 1917

Around 1890 Brother Avit offered an initial evaluation of this editorial business, saying that “All these works were sampled and rolled out, not only in our schools, but beyond.” He also noted the main authors of these books: Brothers Euthyme, Norbert, Bérillus and Stratonique...in other words, the Superiors.

Between 1840 and 1917 the Marist Brothers of France had published 85 textbooks and 51 religious books. Many of the textbooks went through multiple editions. Brothers from the following countries had also published books: Belgium, Great Britain, Canada, Spain, Turkey, China, Brazil, Mexico and Fiji.

In France, the list would be continued by Emmanuel Vitte after the suppression of the Congregation, from 1903 until the 60s, but under the new name of “the independent school: a collection published under the patronage of school associations”.²¹² Abroad, notably in Brazil, Mexico and Spain, a large number of the works published before 1917 were translations and adaptation of French books, and the titles of these were often kept.

In Spain, the first translation was carried out in 1897 by the first four Brothers based in the country, In 1920 the Brothers became publishers under the name of “Editorial F.T.D.” In 1932 the name became “Editorial Luis Vives”, a publisher mainly of geographical charts and maps. Destroyed in the civil war, the “Editions Luis Vives” were reconstituted and remain an important publishing house in Spain.

²¹¹ Register of Deliberations of the Regime (1889 - 1897). On 1st October 1890 the expenses for translation and printing of books into Spanish and English would be charged to the Provincial Procures. On 3rd January 1894, Brother Marie-Urbain asked for Italian versions of the intermediate arithmetic course and the natural history book.

²¹² Register of Deliberations of the General Council (1897 - 1906). The new agreement was concluded on 25th May 1905. On 11th June 1904: “The Council gave its favourable opinion to M. Vitte’s proposal to replace on our textbooks edited by him the designation F.T.D by ‘a committee of teachers’. This measure is taken in the hope of putting them beyond the reach of our liquidator.”

An article in 1933²¹³ indicated that the Editorial of Barcelona and the Vitte publishing house were the two largest publishers in the Institute. The author considered that they published two million copies each year, not counting magazines and bulletins, and five hundred titles (the majority of which were school-books), some of which reached one million. “The fine F.T.D. collection [...] sees children express themselves not only in French, Spanish, Portuguese and English, as they do abroad, but today even in Italian, German, Greek, Latin, Chinese, Flemish, Fijian etc...and even in Lingala and Kiswahili which are...the principal languages of the Congo.”

There is certainly a need to examine the contents of these works. This task is led today by historians, but Marist Brothers do not attach much importance to this stage of their history. Such an enterprise requires a preliminary tracking-down of collections held²¹⁴ and the cooperation of an international team.

SECULARISATION - AN END TO MARIST EDUCATION?²¹⁵

On 1st July 1901 the Waldeck-Rousseau Law imposed the obligation on religious associations to be authorised. On 18th March 1903 the Combes government refused to authorise men’s Congregations. On 3rd April, the Prefect of the Rhône notified Brother Théophile of the rejection of the request for authorisation of the Institute of Marist Brothers and that it had to be dissolved in three months’ time.

1. Fictional secularisation

The Brothers then theoretically had to choose between going abroad and secularisation which broke their links with the Institute. In fact, three solutions were adopted: a certain number of Brothers completely secularised themselves, but a large number were happy with a fictional secularisation, reverting to secular clothes, no longer living in community, but continuing to be secretly attached to the Congregation; a large number of others went abroad, taking with them novitiates and even a certain number of boarding-schools. In 1906 there remained in France between 840 and 1113 secularised teachers still attached to the Congregation²¹⁶ and 400 elderly retired Brothers in the Provincial Houses. More than a thousand had left for other countries of Europe or other continents since 1903 and, in the succeeding years, others followed. In 1908

²¹³ Bulletin of the Institute no 94, October 1933.

²¹⁴ The Marist Brothers Library at Saint-Genis-Laval contains the only collection of Marist works that I know of. It was brought together by Brother Florian Szombath.

²¹⁵ [Translator’s Note] Readers should be aware that most of the events described in this chapter applied only to France. In other countries where the Brothers were based by 1903, Marist life carried on as normal.

²¹⁶ Many of the situations were fluid since many Brothers had left teaching, often temporarily, for other pursuits and had lost contact with the Congregation. A certain number returned, but not all.

there were still 264 schools held by the Marist Brothers. With the numerous foundations abroad, the Congregation became massively international while losing around 60% of its French works.

The Marist Brothers went on to battle against the government which sought to forbid them reconstituting their schools by forbidding secularisation-in-place through formal investigations, often followed by a court-case.²¹⁷ However, there was a second adversary: the bishops, who sought to make those who had been secularised into diocesan staff, under ecclesiastical management. That is to say, a number of bishops were pressing for complete secularisation. Members of Congregations only got peace when the De la Salle Brothers obtained a letter from Pius X on 23rd April 1905 stating that: “What we absolutely do not want is for you and for Institutes similar to yours whose aim is the education of children, to entertain the opinion, which we know is already spreading and according to which you must give the education of children the first place and religious profession only second place, under the pretext that the spirit and needs of the times demand this...”

Such a declaration saved the Congregations in France and allowed them to continue their educational activity, without the bishops being able to create a lay diocesan teaching-body.

There were two other tendencies which might have delivered harsh blows to the tradition of Congregations. The first, clericalism, which wanted to make them a type of sub-clergy, organised as a Third Order, responsible for schools, but also for catechism and other works. The second was that of the supporters of independent lay education, of a liberal mind, who wanted to reorganise education without explicit reference to the Catholic hierarchy. Because they were professionals and not auxiliary clergy, members of Congregations, in particular the Marist Brothers made the first attempt fail; because they were Religious, the secularised men made the second fail.

2. The Marist Brothers and the Gerson Teacher-training College

One of the major problems facing the new organisations sponsoring independent education was organising training-courses. In Lyon, the management of independent education was the responsibility of a group of lay people, the Regional Association for Independent Education, whose aim was to create a regional teacher-training college for boys. M. Balichard, the former Head Teacher of the Valbenoîte boarding-school in Saint-Etienne and a secularised Marist Brother was recruited as Principal of this establishment on 8th December 1905, with a recommendation to give the establishment “some character and a modern, liberal spirit.” On 29th January 1906 he opened the Gerson Teacher-training College with three students. By the end of the year, the establishment had thirteen students and had obtained three elementary-teaching

²¹⁷ It was the trial of two Marist Brothers, Cointe and Duret, which settled the legal issues in cases of fictional secularisation.

certificates. From then on, it increased regularly. By the year 1910 - 1911 it had sixty-two students and had obtained 28 elementary and 8 higher certificates.

In spite of these successes, there was no lack of difficulties. All the bishops wanted to forge a diocesan body of teachers and the Gerson regional remit barely achieved that. On the other hand, recruitment was difficult. As a good Religious, M. Balichard had envisaged using the method of the Brother Recruiters and the old Marist Brothers system of training: the region's schools would be visited by him to find candidates who, after the age of twelve, would be employed as monitors in a school, while preparing for the elementary teaching certificate. Then the training-college would provide the particular education in preparation for the higher certificate and the modern school-leaving certificate. It seems that, in practical terms, ordinary schools had prepared candidates for the teaching certificates and then directed them to the Gerson and that certain boarding-schools had established preparatory classes for pupils aged thirteen to fifteen, then directed them to the Gerson to complete their training, notably while preparing for the higher certificate.

First set up in a building belonging to the Religious of the Incarnate Word, the training college could accommodate no more than 50 students, and was cramped. The Regional Association then bought the old novitiate of the Marist Sisters, which, from 1909, enabled them to make 80 places available. That year, M. Balichard was replaced by his Deputy, M. Dubois, himself also a secularised Marist Brother. To recruit students, he put his relationship network to work: Charlieu, Bourg-Argental, Saint Symphorien and other establishments - all schools directed by secularised Marist Brothers. Such single-mindedness concerned Pierre Pagnon of the Regional Association who wanted a training college "where the staff were strangers to the former Congregation of Marist Brothers". His objection had little success. The training college would be in the hands of Marist Brothers up to around 1950.

In 1913 M Dubois was replaced by M. Dubourge, another secularised Marist Brother, up until then, Head Teacher of the Bellegard boarding-school at Neuville-sur-Saône. His Deputy, M. Garnier was also a secularised Marist Brother. It was thanks to this Marist network that the college managed to survive during the 1914 - 1918 war: M. Poyard, Head Teacher at Bellegarde took in ten students who had to leave Gerson as it had been requisitioned by the army for use as a hospital. We can add that the Marist Brothers equally played a role in the training college for girls, Sainte Marie, as it had been set up at Saint-Genis-Laval, when the boarding-school closed in 1903.

We can see that Marist teaching was perpetuated after 1903 since the lay teachers destined to succeed the Religious had been trained in Lyon by Marist Brothers. The Congregation gained the possibility of providing teachers trained according to its criteria at the same time as it occupied a key-position in the area of Catholic education in the diocese. At the same time, the liberal

Regional Association, whose founder, M. Bornet, wanted up-to-date teaching, implicitly recognised the educational standing of the Marist Brothers, along with their adaptation to the modern world.²¹⁸

That said, it is clear that the education practised and taught at Gerson was no more than indirectly a Marist education. The *Schools Guide* was certainly no longer taught and the authorities who employed the Brothers had different views on what a teacher was. In creating a lay teaching body under the leadership of a lay association linked to the Archdiocese which would finally be replaced after the Great War by a Catholic Education Board, the Marist Brothers worked, so to speak, for their own replacement. Their success was to have managed to place themselves as tutors; their failure was to be no more than employees in an enterprise, the objective of which was to overtake them.

3. The trade union in the Department of the Loire

However, this abandonment of power did not take place without serious resistance. In 1904 secularised Marist Brothers widely participated in an effort for the control of Catholic education by the professionals themselves by means of the “Professional Union of Elementary Teachers of the Loire and the Neighbouring Region”. Seven eighths of its 800 members were secularised Religious, among whom there were numerous Marist Brothers. The union-format had been chosen “to clearly indicate its willingness to devote itself exclusively to the professional interests of its members.” It took time for the ecclesiastical authorities of the diocese to have these union members accept the oversight of the Church.

In the Department of the Rhône, secularised Religious, while moving towards unionising themselves, set up a “Friendly Society of Elementary Teachers of the Rhône” only in 1908. However, their statutes stated that, in order to be an active member, it was necessary to be employed in independent Catholic education and this excluded the leaders and members of independent lay education. On the other hand, honorary, non-teaching members could hold no more than one-fifth of the seats on the Committee, which was composed essentially of Marist Brothers, De la Salle Brothers and Clerks of Saint Viator. The Society was a trade-union in spirit, if not in fact. It wanted to ally itself with the school authorities of Catholic education, but not submit to them.

This sense of unity seems to have played out in at least two other instances. In the Loire, the Union was the place of an important debate about married teachers since, at the time of secularisation, a number of Brothers and Sisters married, becoming, in the eyes of others, if not traitors, at least dubious people.

²¹⁸ It is important to note that, in setting up the training college for young girls, the Regional Association did not choose Religious women, but young ladies. It is true that it was easier to find lay women tutors than lay men.

The secularised Religious also attempted to block an agreement between the managers of Catholic education and the National Society for Education of Lyon and its Professional Union of Independent Lay Education of the Lyon Region. According to its Presidents, it was the secularised Religious who prevented a member of this union being elected as a delegate of the independent teachers on the Departmental Committee on Public Education around 1905. The influence of the secularised Religious had forced their senior people to return to an intransigent attitude.

Members of Congregations also seem to have worked powerfully to maintain the catechetical tradition of Catholic education as some teachers had wanted to abandon this function to the clergy, a function they were barely at ease with. The problem would be resolved at the third Congress of the Federation of Independent Education Unions, which agreed: “1. That Christian education would have its place marked in the timetable every day [...] that under no pretext would the lesson be shortened, that this teaching may not be received by the child in a passive or routine manner.”

...

“4. That posts in schools be opened to masters and mistresses giving sufficient guarantees of a Christian spirit.”

In the lively debate between 1903 and 1908 on the nature of the new independent education, secularised Religious (and notably Marist Brothers) knew how to impose on ecclesiastical and lay authorities the type of education according to their own tradition: they were professionals and not multi-tasking auxiliaries taking on a variety of jobs²¹⁹, teaching catechism, official members of the Catholic Church. With their number and organised action, they eliminated the hypothesis of an independent lay school or of an archaic school where the master would only have been an auxiliary to the families and the clergy, a simple rehearser of the catechism, youth club supervisor...

4. Congregations’ traditions in Catholic education

When it comes to progress in schools, it is not easy to see how much education by Religious and, in particular, Marist education, survived. However, two reports by Father Vianey, Inspector of Religious Education for the Diocese of Lyon for 1908 - 1909 and 1909 - 1910 gives us an idea of catechetical practice. He remarked that, “the majority of secularised Religious have kept the customs of their Congregation”. Also, the Marist Brothers had the entire Rosary said at 13.30, as laid down in the *Schools Guide*. Church History was not taught very much. “This instruction, having been neglected at the time of secularisation, was not returned to.” He noted that the Marist Brothers’ manual has the advantage of bringing about a useful, systematic foundation.

²¹⁹ Their hesitancy over married teachers came only from concern about professionalism.

They taught catechism for half an hour at the beginning of class²²⁰ and the De la Salle Brothers taught it between 16.00 and 16.30.

Many parish priests complained that the catechism was being neglected by schoolmasters, “even by members of Congregations”, but parents often considered that there was too much of it. Vianey stated that, if the young masters had little in the way of method, “the older ones, trained in the novitiates of Religious Congregations, and especially if they had experience of young children, had better ways of going about it.”, particularly the women. At the intermediate level, catechism by the parish priest and catechism by the master were barely coordinated. Also, faced with two lessons to learn, the child got busy with the one that earned points. These reports had the resulting merit in showing that secularisation had not changed catechetical methods very much and that the Catholic school had largely retained its Congregational heritage. It was presumably the same for secular subjects since the textbooks used were still those of the Congregations.

However, the Vianey reports gave notice of a slightly different future: by means of lectures to the students of the Sainte Marie training-college and by having a programme of religious instruction organised in the diocesan training-colleges, where the first examinations took place in 1911, a new generation of catechists who were not members of Congregations, was prepared.

We might imagine that the educational practices of Religious Congregations were slowly extinguished - or more probably diluted - as the ageing Religious were replaced by lay people, who, often without realising it, were going to carry the tradition on. We can add that these educational practices had certainly not ceased to evolve under pressure from society and the regulations of the Department for Education.

This is why we can date the end of Marist education, like that of other Congregations, to 1903 because, up until that time, the *Schools Guide* constituted a clear point of reference that the Brothers learned during their formation and which enabled the Visitor to judge if a specific school was functioning according to the letter and spirit of this basic document. From that time, inspection was in the hands of lay people or ecclesiastics, who applied other criteria, and there was no longer an educational tradition.

Moreover, 1903 put a block on what constituted the basis of the *Schools Guide*: the rechristianisation of French society through the school. If many of the educational practices were retained, it was clear that it was no longer possible to live according to the spirit of the *Guide* in a France where the Catholic school had no more than defensive aims and in an international

²²⁰ The *Guide* allows for catechism twice per day. The Marist Brothers had therefore changed their practice on this point prior to secularisation.

atmosphere which was opened up to extremely diverse perspectives. Perhaps we can risk the hypothesis that we moved from Marist education to various types of Marist education.

CONCLUSION

Finally, it seems to us that we have described less a form of education than an educational system in which theory and practice are so intimately mixed that it is impossible to separate them. This system was, moreover, only a subset of *dévote* education coming from the Council of Trent and of which Jean-Baptiste De la Salle was one of the prime promoters. This *dévote* education was itself dependent on a veritable Catholic utopia of Modern Christianity in which the Jesuits played a key role and which in two centuries succeeded in constituting, inside Catholicism, a real religious modernity by means of the awakening of the masses.

The Marist Brothers came on the scene just at the time when this powerful current was, at the same time, triumphant and approaching its limits. Triumphant because the main phase of development of Religious Congregations, of whom the Marist Brothers were a notable element, was the first 60 years of the 19th century. In a society where there was more and more demand for education, in a Church in which the pastors were attached in great numbers to this utopia of Modern Christianity, in a State incapable of alone responding to that demand, the Marist Brothers were able to give a high-quality response. However, this current was also strongly resisted, no longer just by certain elements of Catholicism as in the *Ancien Régime*, but by the State and increasingly large parts of society which adhered to a concurrent, more dynamic utopia.

The Marist educational system was codified in 1853, just at the time when it began to be restricted to the defensive because the world in which it was installed was increasingly moving forward from stability to progress, from a rural, communitarian civilisation to an urban, individualistic civilisation. The State, richer, benefitting from technical progress, with an eventually adequate administration, was imposing its control on private and local collective enterprises. Religion, at other times seen as the cornerstone of society, was seen as an obstacle to change. Also, forced right from its beginnings to come to terms with the State, the Marist system had then to submit itself to its demands before being rejected by it in the private domain and ending up seeing itself forbidden to exist at all.

However, the Marist Brothers had themselves moved on more than they thought. Founded for remote country-areas, they quickly concentrated their efforts on villages and county-towns. Specialists in elementary education, they moved little by little into secondary education. They adapted remarkably to society's evolution, but at the price of a distortion of their objectives:

founded to be catechist/elementary-school teachers, they became elementary-school teachers/catechists or secondary-school teachers.

However, this evolution was resisted: clergy and intransigent Catholics did not understand these Religious, who were little different from lay teachers while the inspectors, supporting secularisation, and, for stronger reasons, those who supported Church-State separation, thought of them as practitioners of an educational model which had had its time. Democratic and liberal Catholics found them outdated while clergy, anxious for a renewed apostolate, preferred youth-clubs and post-school ministries.

In fact, the Religious of the end of the nineteenth century lived through the exhaustion of the utopia which had supported them and the seeking of a way towards the concurrent modernity without giving up those things which had been fundamental for them. They would find the way partially, first of all by becoming more professional, then accidentally, and paradoxically thanks to the State, through secularisation as lay teachers capable of founding Catholic schools on renewed bases. By succeeding in living with their twofold professional and religious fidelity and favouring the creation of a Catholic education progressively in the hands of the laity, Religious knew they had to hold onto their tradition and, at the same time, prepare for the future. Yet it would be a future which progressively would pass them by. Those who left for abroad continued with the idea of an intangible Catholic Modernity, but they were caught by lay Modernity in its violent form (Spain, Mexico, China...), or the more accommodating form, as in the anglo-saxon countries.

By the end of the century, the movement to this other Modernity was complete. However, there remained one question: were Congregations tied to a specific historical phase of Catholicism of which Vatican II marked the end or were they the future in a new Christian utopia where the traits took shape in the context of postmodernity?

It still remains that the Marist Brothers of the 19th century made a significant contribution to the history of education. By replacing in rural areas schoolmasters who practised the archaic individual method, they enabled the introduction into this hitherto abandoned world of modern educational practice based on the triad: a clear educational practice backed up by a minimum of training; a profound motivation generating commitment and dignity; attachment to a body guaranteeing continuity, supervision and a common spirit. By publishing school books in France and abroad they were - and still are - actors in an educational setting which has still to be more precisely evaluated.

Our objective, as we stated in the opening pages of this work, was not only to write the history of one of the numerous religious organisations which worked in the field of education between the 17th and 20th centuries. It also aimed at showing that, confronted since the 17th century with the

still relevant problems of ignorance, violence, lack of civility...the founders of Congregations, such as Marcellin, were able to respond from original starting-points: initiative, disinterest, sense of a mission to be undertaken, concern for long-term collective action. The result was not negligible: it was they and their disciples who created in France the first educational networks, the first educational practices. It was they who established, before lay teachers, the dignity of a teacher's work. Their activity merits more than oblivion and contempt because the Congregational movement definitively set up the three fundamental principles of any collective educational activity: deep conviction, a method, action by a homogeneous body. It was on this tripod, invented by others that the lay school was invented.

A spirit of violent ideological competition had prevented the Catholic and secular supporters of an educational utopia from seeing that they were fundamentally closer to each other than they believed since they equally wanted to awaken the masses by similar means. However, time did its work: today the Congregational school and the anti-religious lay school are dead and it becomes possible, it seems to me, to attempt a reinterpretation of their respective histories. An antagonistic approach is replaced by a more complex view which delivers justice to the various personalities in this history. The aim of this work is to set out a similar path for the history of education and teaching.
