

man with
a mission

Jules Chevalier

E.J. Cuskelly, M.S.C.

E.J. Cuskelly, M.S.C.

JULES CHEVALIER

MAN WITH A MISSION

1824-1907

CASA GENERALIZIA
MISSIONARI DEL SACRO CUORE
ROMA

Contents

INTRODUCTION

CHAPTER I. PERSON AND PLACE

1. Issoudun.
2. Jules Chevalier.

CHAPTER II. THE FIRST THREE WORKS

1. Missionaries of the Sacred Heart.
2. Our Lady of the Sacred Heart.
3. Secular Priests of the Sacred Heart.

CHAPTER III. SHOW ME YOUR FRIENDS

1. Charles Piperon.
2. Jean-Marie Vandel.
3. Victor Jouët.

CHAPTER IV. AMETUR UBIQUE

1. Consolidation.
2. Expulsion and expansion.
3. Foreign Missions and further expansion.

CHAPTER V. SPIRITUALITY, CHARISM, MISSION

CHAPTER VI. A SPIRIT SHARED

1. Daughters of Our Lady of the Sacred Heart.
2. MSC Sisters.
3. The Third Order.

CHAPTER VII. WORTHY OF SPECIAL MENTION

1. The Reluctant Novice-Master.
2. Scholar and Gentleman.
3. MSC Brothers.
4. A Multiplicity of Founders.
5. Lucien Cattin.
6. Jean Captier.
7. Quito - a Dream of Eldorado.

CHAPTER VIII. MSC CRISIS

1. General Considerations.
2. A partial Analysis.

CHAPTER IX. THE HUMAN DRAMA

1. The Crisis of Victor Jouët.
2. A Father and his Sons.

CHAPTER X. MISSION ACCOMPLISHED

1. Life in the Local Church.
2. The Laws of the Land.
3. Facts and Figures.

CHAPTER XI. JULES CHEVALIER - PERSONALITY AND PROFILE

Introduction

If this book had a sub-title, it would be « Introduction to Fr. Jules Chevalier ». It is meant to be just that, no less and no more. The members of the General Council thought that some of our prospective and younger members needed such an introduction. Since I had a short history of authorship behind me, they suggested that I undertake the work.

My aim has been to try to portray something of the spirit and personality of the Founder. I had to resist the temptation of trying to write a history of the Missionaries of the Sacred Heart (M.S.C.) and the further temptation of spending too much time on particular events, interesting as they may be. Someday someone more qualified and with more time at his disposal, will write such a history. However, since Fr. Chevalier did so many things and lived through interesting years and events, there is the danger that the man remains hidden behind his works and behind the events. That is as he would have wanted it to be.

However, for us who belong to Societies which he founded, there is a desire to know what manner of man he was. And, as I hope these pages will show, there is inspiration indeed in the knowledge. There were some difficult times in the history of the MSC Society. Since these times were not long gone, a desire to avoid hurt to living persons cast a veil of secrecy over certain events. An unfortunate result of this was

that the personality of Fr. Chevalier was likewise obscured in the secrecy. This is a pity. For he was a fine and very extraordinary person. It has been a very rewarding experience, searching through the Archives, to discover something of the personal charm and spiritual strength of the man whose charism it is our privilege to share.

I hope that those who read these pages may have some of the same pleasure of discovery.

If this book had a dedication, it would be to the members of the MSC Community of the General House, Rome. Had some of them not pushed me, the book would never have been begun. Without their support, it could not have been continued. Without their advice and assistance (particularly that of Fr. J. Bertolini, « archivist extraordinary ») it would not have been finished.

Rome, 1975.

E.J. Cuskelly, MSC.
(Superior General)

Person and place

1. ISSOUDUN.

If you go south from Paris through the city of Orleans, you will come after a few hours (or less if a Frenchman is driving you) to the town of Issoudun. In most days it is a quiet town, 300 kilometres from Paris and off the tourist track, out in the rolling farmlands of the Department of Indre. On other days it comes surprisingly alive, for it is a centre of pilgrimage from all over France. If you do not know its history, you will wonder why this should be. You will also wonder why, for thousands of priests, brothers and nuns scattered over 30 countries of the world, Issoudun should be thought of as the place of their origins and in a sense as home.

The answer to these unspoken questions is suggested by the fact that in the crypt of the Basilica of the Sacred Heart is the tomb of Fr. Jules Chevalier, who here worked out his life's dream - over a period of more than 50 years. We ask then what his dream was and why it was *here* that he chose to work it out.

Fr. Jules Chevalier came to Issoudun in 1854, aged 30, ordained 3 years, appointed curate to the parish. And he knew that here, in this unlikely place, his true life's work could really begin.

It is wrong perhaps to speak of his « dream »; for he was a young man with a sense of mission. His view of his mission can be simply stated - although its accomplishment followed an arduous and winding path. It can be simply stated, for it was always simply and clearly seen. Man's greatest need, if he is to find meaning and happiness in his life, is to learn to believe in God's love for him, and to let it transform his life. Christ's whole work — for which he was sent by the Father — was to bring man to this belief. Jules Chevalier was convinced that he was called to share in this mission of making God's love known to the world. He saw that in his day, devotion to the Sacred Heart was the most effective means of declaring this message loud and clear. With the companions of his seminary days he talked of forming a band of priests to be the missionaries of Christ's love, dissipating the religious indifference that lay heavy on parts of the earth - in France itself and in foreign lands. When he wondered where to begin, he thought naturally enough of the regions of indifference he actually knew - the region of the Berry, and in this area: « Issoudun came at once to my mind »¹.

This was the vision that took shape in his mind in the latter years of his studies for the priesthood in the Major Seminary of Bourges. As far as we know there were no Crusaders among his ancestors; he was only a baker's son. In the years before he entered the Minor Seminary at the relatively late age of 17, he himself was an apprentice shoe-maker. But there was something of the crusading spirit in his make-up; and like a tent-maker long before him, he had an infectious enthusiasm for the cause of Christ. He had, too, a certain quality which would get others to accept his leadership.

In those seminary days he set up an association among the more fervent students which was called the association of the « Knights of the Sacred Heart » (*Chevaliers du Sacré-Cœur*). This was more than a pun on the name « Chevalier » - it was an indication of what his association was all about. It pointed up the high ideals and the enthusiasm of the young men who were ready to go out into the world to do battle

for the cause of Christ: «streaming the ensign of the Christian cross against black pagans, Turks and Saracens»². However *their* ensign bore the symbol of the Heart of Christ; *their* enemies were «the ills of our time, indifferentism, incredulity, abuses»³. They would go out into the world as priests to fight against all that was evil and unchristian and they would do this in dedication and self-forgetfulness.

There was a deal of romanticism in all this, it can not be denied. But there was realism, too, as later years would show. And there was the conviction and enthusiasm which is needed if one is to do anything worthwhile. Chevalier was convinced of three things:

1. Parts of France and of the world, were suffering from a lack of living faith, from indifferentism. Moral ills came in the train of this lack of faith.
2. The doctrine and devotion of the Sacred Heart was a wonderfully efficacious means to preach the Gospel message of God's love and care for men and to rouse up in human hearts a religious response. This response could only result in man's greater happiness and a greater human good.
3. A band of «missionary priests», fervent and well-formed in their own spiritual lives could be a most effective force in bringing about the results he hoped for.

«Reflecting one day on the sickness that consumes our world», he was to write later, «I got the idea — or rather God inspired the thought — of founding a community of missionary priests who would cure it... The further I went on, the more I was possessed by this thought... But where should this community begin? Issoudun with its 14,000 souls and its 3 priests came to my mind immediately»⁴. It came to his mind because it had a reputation for religious indifference even in the old Province of the Berry which at that time, was not noted for religious fervour.

The members of the seminary association all shared its general aim: to grow spiritually through the practice of devo-

tion to the Sacred Heart. But Chevalier's particular plan — that of founding a group of missionary priests — while generally taken to be an interesting flight of imagination, was not regarded as being very practical.

However, in the mind of Jules Chevalier, it was more than a flight of imagination and he had already marked out in his mind two young men whom he would like to have with him in his enterprise. Nevertheless, he did not have the courage to speak to them about this. One was Emile Maugenest; the other was Charles Piperon. Maugenest was a gifted young man, with a pleasing personality, zealous and dedicated. « He had a prodigious memory, and was an uncommonly good speaker. His words were simple and often eloquent. In his discourses he avoided the faults of banality and over emphasis. Generally he spoke more to the heart than to the mind. He had the rare talent of making little things count; of captivating his audience and of always leaving them favourably impressed »⁵.

Charles Piperon had neither the eloquence nor the personality of Maugenest, yet Fr. Chevalier saw in him the qualities of dedication and loyalty which were to shape his whole life. Time went by. The young men dreamed their dreams and went their various ways. Maugenest went to continue his studies at St. Sulpice with the idea of entering that community. Piperon, in need of a rest, took time out from his studies at home. Jules Chevalier was ordained priest on June 14th, 1851. He then devoted the first few years of his priesthood to assisting sick or elderly parish priests in their declining years. He had three appointments in quick succession: Ivoy-le-Pré, Châtillon-sur-Indre, Aubigny-sur-Nère. Then in October 1854, he was transferred as curate to Issoudun.

Issoudun! At this nomination memories of his seminary dreams came flooding back into his mind and heart. Was this then a sign that he had seen clearly all along? Had he, after his wanderings, come finally to his own land to which the Lord had called him? As he turned these questions over

in his mind, he came to Issoudun, and there met the other curate, appointed some months previously: Sebastien Emile Maugenest! At St. Sulpice Maugenest's confessor had felt that it was God's will that he should return to work in the archdiocese of Bourges and had advised him accordingly.

To Chevalier this coincidence of finding himself and Maugenest together as curates in Issoudun seemed a sure sign that it was God's will that he put into practice his long-cherished plan to form a group of « missionaries of the Sacred Heart ». After a month's thought, he broached the subject to Fr. Maugenest and was delighted to find that the latter shared his enthusiasm for the idea. This enthusiasm, in fact, dated from the days when it had been talked of in the circle of the Knights of the Sacred Heart.

However, the enthusiastic young men could do nothing without the consent of their parish priest, Fr. Crozat, to whom they had to confide their plans. Fr. Crozat was an elderly man who had long desired and prayed for the conversion of the people of Issoudun. His health was not robust. This, together with a certain timidity of character, meant that he lacked the particular type of energy which would have been needed to bring about any large-scale and significant changes among an indifferent people. When his two young and enthusiastic curates told him of their plans, he felt that their eagerness and youthful energy might mean that there was yet hope for Issoudun. « Not only do I share your feelings », he said, « but I will help you all I can to establish a house of Missionaries of the Sacred Heart at Issoudun; if you succeed in founding it, I can sing my *Nunc Dimittis* »⁶.

Even with the backing of their esteemed parish priest, they felt their poverty and their powerlessness. They felt the need of assurance that God indeed willed their work. This was the end of November 1854 and the Catholic Church throughout the world was preparing for the Papal definition of the doctrine of Mary's Immaculate Conception on December 8th. They decided therefore that they would make a Novena

to conclude on 8th December. They would ask Mary to obtain from her Divine Son a sign that their work was according to His will, and that He would give them the means to succeed in it. The Novena was concluded in the parish church with a certain enthusiasm and originality. Fr. Mauge-
nest painted a special picture for the occasion - which drew this wry comment from an expert: « If Our Lady heard their prayers, it was certainly not from love of art! ».

« If our prayer is heard », they promised, « we will call ourselves the missionaries of the Sacred Heart. Our particular mission will be to render to the Heart of Jesus, throne of wisdom, of love and mercy, a particular cult of adoration, homage and reparation; to spread this devotion everywhere; to make known to men, as much as we can, the treasures of sanctification which it contains; also to make Mary known and honoured in a special way - by every possible means »⁷. Their prayer was heard - and ever since, December 8th 1854 has been regarded as the day that the Society of the Missionaries of the Sacred Heart came into being. After he had finished the celebration of High Mass in the Church, Fr. Chevalier was approached by a Mr. Petit, one of the few fervent parishioners, with a letter from a Mr. Philip de Bengy. Its message was: an anonymous benefactor wants to give 20.000 francs for a work for the spiritual good of the people of Berry; a house of missionaries would have his preference. The only condition was that the work had to have the approval of the Cardinal Archbishop of Bourges.

The two young curates were practically delirious with happiness, and sang their hymns of gratitude. Their older parish priest shared their faith and their gratitude, but set about thinking out practical plans to get the Cardinal's approval. He let a month go by before he sent Fr. Chevalier to see the Cardinal, bearing a letter which he had worked out long and carefully. Cardinal Dupont declared that he was disposed to accept their idea of a missionary foundation. But he thought that they should have more tangible resources than their Mass stipends and their trust in Providence. He would authorize the work when they were assured of sufficient

financial support. « And », he added, « you might ask the Blessed Virgin to bring to perfection what she has already begun »⁸. Fr. Chevalier returned home and he and Fr. Maugenest decided to begin a second Novena, to finish on January 28th, 1855.

Fr. Crozat did not disbelieve in Novenas - after all he had just witnessed the surprising response to their first one. However, this time he decided to take a little insurance on the side. He went begging. On January 28th, he informed his curates that another anonymous benefactor (who in fact was a well-known member of the French nobility, the Vicomtesse du Quesne) had promised to give them a yearly amount of a thousand francs. This would enable them to live. The Cardinal was convinced that « the finger of God is here ». In spite of the opposition of his diocesan Council, he approved the work of Frs. Chevalier and Maugenest. « I promised these two priests », he said, « that should they bring me a new sign of the will of God by finding resources, I would approve their project. This they have done, and so I am bound. I authorize the two curates of Issoudun to get together and begin their work. So let us name their replacements »⁹.

Let us now look behind the scenes a little. We have seen the story as Frs. Chevalier and Maugenest lived it. To them it was all providential. But divine Providence uses human instruments and it does not take anything away from Providence to look for the human instruments behind the extraordinary coincidences and the money falling from heaven.

In this whole scene there were, in fact, two main instruments of Providence (over and above the Vicomtesse du Quesne, and the practical old parish priest who went to ask her help). They were Fr. Pierre Gasnier, and Fr. Ferdinand de Champgrand. The former, Fr. Gasnier, came on the scene as Superior of the Major Seminary of Bourges, and as adviser to the Cardinal as a member of his Diocesan Council. When Jules Chevalier was at the Seminary, Gasnier had been Professor of Moral Theology. It would seem most likely that he

knew of Fr. Chevalier's idea of starting a group of missionaries for the Berry. Certainly he favoured the idea. It would seem probable that he was then instrumental in having appointed to Issoudun two young men he knew to be likewise favourable to the idea.

Fr. Gasnier knew Fr. de Champgrand, at that time Professor at the Major Seminary of Bordeaux. They were both Sulpicians and good friends. Fr. de Champgrand was of a very well-to-do family of the Berry and a generous man. Many were the religious and charitable foundations which he contributed to in his lifetime. He responded with keen interest when Gasnier approached him about his idea of missionary priests for the Berry. Mr. Philip de Bengy, whose letter to Fr. Chevalier announced the gift of 20,000 francs, was Fr. de Champgrand's brother-in-law. Since he lived at Issoudun, it was natural that he should be charged with conveying the news of a gift from an « anonymous benefactor » who was, in fact, his own brother-in-law.

There were then two pairs of priests (Chevalier and Maugenest, Gasnier and de Champgrand) who, in different ways, had come up with the same idea: that of forming a group of priests, who would be missionaries to the poor and religiously ignorant people of the Berry countryside. De Champgrand had promised the money to start the work if the Cardinal approved. Chevalier and Maugenest had offered to do the work. It seemed a happy coincidence. But then it became clear that the thinking of the two groups did not coincide exactly. In fact, it contrasted sharply on a very fundamental point. Fr. de Champgrand had been thinking of a group of diocesan priests who would unite to do a particular work. Fr. Chevalier felt the work could not be done effectively except by a religious congregation; his idea was to found a religious society of missionaries. De Champgrand was strongly opposed to the idea of founding new religious congregations, and even talked of withdrawing the offer of financial aid, since this was not what he had in mind.

Here, Fr. Crozat the humble and practical parish priest of

Issoudun, took a hand again. He reminded de Champgrand that a promise was a promise; he suggested that the amount should be increased from 20,000 to 25,000 francs; he pointed out that the one condition laid down had been fulfilled - the Cardinal had approved. He also suggested a practical way in which Fr. de Champgrand could insure his investment: he, de Champgrand, would be the owner of the property bought with his money for the missionary group. If it succeeded, he could then make it over to the new congregation in the clear knowledge that he was helping a good and stable work. Should it not succeed, the property could be sold - and he would have retained his money which he could then put to better use.

De Champgrand eventually agreed to keep his promise and to help the new group with the money, even though he disapproved of some aspects of the undertaking.

So Frs. Chevalier and Maugenest were now in a position to put their plan into practice. This was in 1855. Looking ahead a little, let us note that by June 1856, a third member had come to join their community. He was Fr. Charles Piperon.

2. JULES CHEVALIER.

« He inspired confidence, a confidence that commanded respect. He was of medium height, well built, with an upright stance and plenty of hair. He had a pleasing appearance, a warm voice and spoke rather slowly. His modesty, his zeal, his careful attention to duty, his affable piety, and his prudence in his relations with others were things one noted »¹⁰.

This was the Chevalier whom Issoudun saw in 1854. But by what routes had he come? And in what ways had he become the sort of person who inspired confidence; who was himself confident that, under God, he would succeed in the enterprise he had taken on?

The young man who came as curate to Issoudun in 1854 had already come a long hard road. Along the way he learned a number of things that made him what he was. He had learned that determined and persevering effort, even in the face of obstacles and opposition, will pay off eventually. He had learned that if the effort is made selflessly, in an attitude of readiness to seek and accept God's will, then God will make things possible, even if he does not make them easy. But, since *selflessly* is a key-word here, an ascetic effort to be selfless is continually called for.

Chevalier was born in Touraine in the little town of Richelieu (Pop. 2,500) some distance to the west of Issoudun. His parents were poor, and his father at least was not very pious. Piety in fact was a rather rare thing among the men in that part of France in those days. For, in the troubled times after the French revolution, religious education had been rather rudimentary. However, Jean-Charles Chevalier was a good man, a baptized Catholic, who was to receive the sacraments when he was dying. He married Louise Ory on January 22nd, 1811; he was aged 28 years, she was 18. Their first two children were Charles and Louise. The third, Jules, was born on March 15th, 1824.

His mother was more pious, as mothers tend to be, and she trained him well in christian and human values. For instance she taught him not to steal - and that very effectively. Once when he was very young, he had accompanied his mother to the market and, while her back was turned, had helped himself to an apple from a merchant's stall. When they returned home, his mother saw him take his first bite from the stolen fruit. She made him return to the market, ask for pardon and give back the stolen apple, spoiled and all as it was. This one recorded and remembered example is indicative of pedagogical good sense which her son later appreciated.

She taught him other things as well — how to temper the rather ardent and impetuous character he had inherited from his father by the good humour he could learn from her and

by the courage and tenacity which he saw her exercise in difficult situations. She gave him a taste for the practice of his religion. Jules himself gives witness to this fact in a poem he wrote in later years:

« Heart of Jesus, I was still very young
When my childish voice learned to say your name;
I had barely reached the age of reason
When I learned to bless and love you.
... my good and tender mother said to me:
My child, let the Heart of Jesus always be
Your support, your treasure, your light.
Then often she loved to take me to your Temple... »¹¹.

For the rest, Jules passed his childhood in that special world where children live, with its mixture of accidents and practical jokes, its moments of hysterical giggling and its times of childish tragedy, the seriousness of being an altar-boy, and the irresponsibility of being a child at play. To recount any particular incident, would take away from the wonder and the ordinariness of that childhood world.

At the age of twelve, Jules was asked to leave his childhood world behind. His family was poor. His father had really been destined for a liberal profession, but because of impoverished circumstances was forced to take up a trade. First of all he started a grain business, and then became a baker. His business was not all that successful, and the family had little more than the bare necessities of life. Then shortly after Jules made his First Communion on May 29th, 1836, he made known his decision (which he had thought about for some time) to become a priest. He asked his parents to take him to the Minor Seminary of Tours where some of his cousins and friends had already gone. His mother had to explain to him that the family could not afford to pay for his studies. She advised him to take up a trade and to leave the future in the hands of God who, should it be his will, would somehow make it possible for Jules to become a priest. Jules cried with disappointment, but added: « All right; I'll take up a trade since I must. But when I have

saved up enough I'll go and knock on the door of some religious house, asking to be taken in so that I can finish my studies and be a priest »¹². His mother smiled and friends who heard the story often asked him teasingly, through the next few years, when he was going off to this religious house.

Jules took up a trade - since he must. He became apprenticed to a shoe-maker; more interested in saving money for his studies, than he was in making and repairing shoes. It has been noted that Jules became rather serious at this stage of his life - as well he might. He brought a child's earnestness to a man's task, and bore the double burden of learning a trade and yet trying to prepare himself for the priesthood. As part of this preparation he felt that he should not take part in the « worldly amusements » of his fellows, such as drinking wine in the cafés. He spent much of his time at the presbytery and helping the poor. And he began to study Latin, getting up early and staying up late to do so, and devoting his free time on Sunday to this task. He was teased by the other boys for this, naturally, but took it all with extraordinary good humour and composure.

He faced up to this difficult phase of his life with the determination and temperament of a fighter. It should help our appreciation of his character if we see a couple of the recorded instances of how his fighter's temperament came out in other ways. One of the servant lads in the establishment of Mr. Delamotte (to whom he was apprenticed) was particularly unpleasant towards Jules - so much so that the neighbours complained and Delamotte advised Jules to give him a good punch. Jules did not take any notice until one evening, he had all that he could stand. « Listen » he said, « all I would have to do would be to lift a finger and you would call for help, saying you were being killed. » « Is that so, » said the other, « I'll teach you a thing or two »; and with that he struck Jules whose reactions were quick and reflexes good. The lad received a solid blow in the face and began to bleed: « Help, I'm being murdered », he cried. A few days later (the pattern is still the same all over the world), the lad who lost the fight invited Jules to come along and

meet his big brother who had a few things to say to him. To which Jules replied that he was not scared of either brother - big or little. Then the little brother invited him along to the café for a drink!

At this point let us go ahead a few years to look at the only other pugilistic incident on record. It was in the minor seminary, and in the chapel of all places. Jules was kneeling in the chapel; behind him were a couple of his fellow seminarians who liked to tease the newcomers. They pushed him a couple of times, so that he lost balance and fell forward on his hands. Then one of them did it a third time. As Jules wrote later: « Instead of getting up and going out, as I should have done, I turned around and gave him such a slap on the cheek that he remembered it forever after, and never tried the same trick again »¹³.

In his seminary days, Jules saw this tendency to react to provocation as a defect that he would have to master if he were to be a good priest. It was against this characteristic that he fought when he imposed a severe discipline on himself as a seminarian. He did not think that severity had any special merit; he knew that *he* needed special discipline to bring his temperament under control. In later life he was judged at times to be hard. Possibly he was - for to that his strength and weakness would have inclined him. At other times it was a recurrence of what happened here - there was a limit to the amount of unreasonable action he felt obliged to endure.

In early 1841 a man called Mr. Juste passed through Richelieu. He did not normally come this way, since the town was off the beaten track. This time he came by chance. However, if you believe that Providence rules chance choices, you will see something providential here. Among other things, Mr. Juste was administrator of a tract of forests situated near Vatan, 21 kilometres to the north of Issoudun. At that time, he let it be known, he was looking for a man who would work for him as caretaker of the forests. At Richelieu the man recommended to him — and accepted for the job — was

Jean Charles Chevalier. In offering him the position, Mr. Juste said: « I believe that you have a son who wants to be a priest; if you wish, I shall be happy to take care of his entry into the seminary... »¹⁴.

If God wants something, he will make it possible, although he may not make it easy.

The Chevalier family left Richelieu and moved to Vatan in March 1841. To be more exact, they moved to a house 4 miles from this town of 3.000 people. They lived in the house reserved for the caretaker of the forests. Jules walked the 4 miles to town and back each day, so that under the tuition of Fr. Deldevèse, the curate, he could continue his latin lessons. In October that year, at the age of 17, he entered the Minor Seminary of Saint-Gaultier.

It had been made possible for him to begin his seminary course but the beginnings were not easy. He was a seventeen-year old among children four to five years younger. He had come from Richelieu and not from the Berry: he was an outsider by origin and age. There is little variety in seminary life; it can be deadly dull, especially if you have no companions of your age or interest. Chevalier later confessed that this was the one time that he had serious doubts about his vocation; he was strongly tempted to leave the seminary and go home. But with some good counselling from the Superior he saw the crisis through and finished his studies, passing in 1846 to the Major Seminary of Bourges.

We have already seen something of the more momentous things that he was to discover at Bourges. He was universally regarded as a very good seminarian, virtuous, sincere and hard-working. It is interesting to read the different reports. They all point out that although he might not be the most brilliant of students he worked extremely hard and had very fine qualities of character. Even the longer reports really say no more than this one says - great eloquence in its very brevity - « Excellent in piety, average in intelligence »¹⁵.

In ten years in the seminary, a man of piety, determination

and generosity can come a long way. A man of study and prayer can grow very close to Christ. Jules Chevalier was that sort of a man. To try to give an account of all phases of his spiritual growth would be to go through all the aspects of the spiritual life. Let it be simply said that Jules Chevalier was the kind of a man who came a long way in his dedicated seminary years, a man who, in that time, grew ever closer to Christ. He became, through his whole heart and soul, what he was soon to become in name and in fact: a missionary of the Sacred Heart ¹⁶.

*Notes Chapter 1 **

¹ Fr. Chevalier makes frequent reference to Issoudun when he recalls his seminary days, and his years as a young curate.

² Shakespeare, Richard II.

³ In the 'Formula Instituti' and early Constitutions, the « ills of the world » are mentioned in some detail. The crusading spirit comes out in this text: « Ipsum Societatis nomen satis indicat quo sub signo militare appetat Societas ».

⁴ From an early Chevalier Ms, written about 1859; quoted by Vermin (= Vermin, « Le Père Jules Chevalier », Rome, Maison Générale MSC, 1957), p. 68.

⁵ Chevalier, Ms Notes intimes (1902), pp. 32-33.

⁶ *ib.*, p. 35.

⁷ Chevalier, Ms Annales de la Petite Société (1901) pp. 3-4.

⁸ Chevalier, Ms Notes intimes, p. 37.

⁹ *ib.*, p. 40.

¹⁰ Sadouet, Ms Souvenirs personnels; and Piperon, Ms Notice sur les origines (1899), pp. 31-32, quoted by Vermin, p. 108.

¹¹ Chevalier, Ms Plans divers pour un carême, quoted by Vermin, p. 6.

¹² Chevalier, Ms Notes intimes, p. 8.

¹³ *ib.*, p. 18.

¹⁴ *ib.*, p. 12.

¹⁵ Quoted by Vermin, p. 44.

¹⁶ There were some specific and important occasions in his life during the seminary years. These will be mentioned in Ch. V., in the context of the development of Chevalier's spirituality.

* Only titles of *published* material are printed with quotation marks.

The first three works

1. MISSIONARIES OF THE SACRED HEART.

In the year 1855, « On Sunday, September 9th, feast of the Holy Name of Mary, the missionaries were installed by His Eminence, Cardinal Dupont, Archbishop of Bourges, and received the name of Missionaries of the Sacred Heart »¹.

Fr. Chevalier's account is correct, but it leaves some things unsaid. Firstly, the Cardinal being ill, the Vicar General installed them in his stead. Secondly, they were installed in a barn! Admittedly the barn had been disguised as a chapel - but their material beginnings were humble indeed. With limited funds their choice of properties was limited, too. They bought a house which had been abandoned for years, together with a barn or store-room, both buildings situated in a garden with an adjoining vineyard. They set about transforming this property into the first house of their religious community.

The transformation was not easy. All the money the young priests had, had been used up in the purchase of the property. They were helped by a man of the parish, a Mr. Voisin. His son had studied in the seminary with Fr. Chevalier and his brother was a priest too. He had helped Fr. Chevalier find and acquire the property, even lending him 5,000 francs. They had to make some necessary repairs and adjustments. He also helped them in this work, for he was a good car-

penter. With his help they made repairs to the buildings, removed some of the dividing walls in the barn to make one larger building and 'disguised the age of the walls with red and white paint'². And when all this was done, Fr. Chevalier had to admit that « this improvised chapel had the privilege of an extreme poverty and a wretched appearance »³.

The group of Missionaries was launched; it would need a lot of effort if it were to stay afloat. We have previously mentioned Chevalier's fighting qualities and his determined perseverance. He was going to need them now. About a month after his installation, his 'wretched chapel' threatened to fall down about his ears. In fact it started to fall down around the statue of St. Joseph. The dividing walls which had been removed had been retaining walls as well; and one of the side walls began to collapse. Mr. Voisin, as good a neighbour as his name implies, came to the rescue once more. He summoned workmen to arrest the collapse and repaired the crumbling wall. Some sympathetic benefactors paid for the repairs. However, it was clear that the old building did not have many years ahead of it and that a new chapel would have to be built.

It did last a few years more. But in 1858, the Cardinal Archbishop of Bourges temporarily condemned it and ordered it closed. He had been told that it was a public danger, likely to collapse at any moment. Therefore he ordered it to be closed. He would allow it to be re-opened for public worship only after a conscientious architect had declared that it would not fall down. Consequently an architect was called in, further repairs were effected and it was declared safe to be opened once more to the public.

One good result of this last incident was that a decision was made to get to work on building a real church. For this it was first necessary to buy an adjoining piece of ground as a site for the new church. An appeal was made to Fr. de Champgrand, the original benefactor. He helped them buy the new property. Then the fathers set about collecting funds for the building. Some money came as gifts, some from the sale

of images of the Sacred Heart. The total result was sufficiently encouraging for them to begin the foundations in March, 1859. The foundation-stone was blessed on June 26th of that year. Fr. Piperon preached appeals throughout the diocese and beyond. He also went as far as the Midi and Savoy to collect funds for the church. The new Archbishop of Bourges, de La Tour d'Auvergne, appointed in 1861, encouraged the work. In fact he was to be a life-long friend and supporter of the MSC community. On July 2nd, 1864, the Archbishop solemnly consecrated the church which today is the Basilica of the Sacred Heart.

All their efforts were not taken up with material building: they were « missionaries » and dedicated to their work. The poverty of their first chapel caused them no concern - especially since it was well frequented. But they were concerned about the fact that very few men came to worship. Therefore Fr. Chevalier decided to institute a « Men's League of the Sacred Heart ». Starting in October 1856, he visited the homes of the people, and made many personal contacts. After a few months he had 30 men inscribed in his League. He announced a Men's Mass on one Sunday of the month. It was quite an event to have 30 men attend - men of the people, winegrowers, farmers, workmen, etc. At Easter 1857, fifty or so men went to communion - it was the first public communion of men at Issoudun since the beginning of the century. By the end of that year 300 men were listed as members of the League of the Sacred Heart.

Fr. Maugenest was much appreciated as a preacher and was much in demand. Together, he and Fr. Chevalier were making a definite contribution to the christian life of Issoudun and nearby parishes. At the same time they were intent on building up their own religious community. They wanted their first year to be a Novitiate year, so they devoted a good deal of time to meditation and study. Manual labour also had its place in their lives, for they could not afford to pay anyone to work for them. They did their own housekeeping and their own cooking. Any religious Congregation has its Constitutions or Rules, and Fr. Chevalier, in what he called

a 'Provisional Essay', drew up the « Rules of the Missionaries of the Sacred Heart ». He was the religious superior and rector of the public chapel, taking care of the services there, while Maugenest looked after the preaching in the surrounding churches.

Towards the end of 1856 they could consider their Novitiate completed and on Christmas day of that year, they took their religious vows. These were private vows, since their group had not yet been officially approved as a religious congregation. But of course this « public approval » was not needed for them to feel bound in conscience by the vows they made. For their taking of vows they had one witness: Fr. Charles Piperon, a friend from seminary days who had come to join them. He had been ordained on June 10th, 1854, and later appointed to Bourges as chaplain to the hospice and to the prison. Within the small community he looked after the finance - what there was of it. He also acted as hospital chaplain.

The young missionary religious community was taking shape nicely, when it, too, was threatened with collapse. Agent of the threat was the Cardinal Archbishop of Bourges. As we have seen, he had shown himself favourable to the enterprise. But when faced with the difficulty of finding a priest for an important position in the diocese, his decision was ruled by the immediate need. He was having some difficulty in finding a priest to be archpriest of the cathedral parish and dean of the city of Bourges. While he was looking for a solution to his difficulty, Fr. Maugenest came to Bourges to preach the Advent sermons in the church of St. Peter. Here, as always, his preaching made a deep impression. The Archbishop, knowing his many qualities as priest and preacher, but believing him at least five years older than his 28 years, told him that he was going to appoint him archpriest of the Cathedral.

« Fr. Maugenest, objected, wept, made other suggestions. He spoke of the work at Issoudun which his departure could jeopardise. It was all to no avail. The Cardinal said authoritatively: I am your Archbishop, and as such, your superior;

you owe me obedience »⁴. Fr. Chevalier, when he, too, came to plead with the Archbishop to leave Fr. Maugenest with him, met with the same inflexible attitude. If this was a bitter blow for Fr. Maugenest, for Fr. Chevalier it was even more bitter. The Cardinal had not only reduced his little community to two - he had taken away the most gifted member of the group. Fr. Maugenest, because of his personal charm, his gift of eloquence which made so much impression, and at the same time his humble and unassuming personality, was the one who gave Chevalier and Piperon great hopes that their community would amount to something. It is easy to understand that Fr. Chevalier should be bitterly disappointed and that Fr. Piperon could write; « they had taken from him the only one on whom he could count. What could he do from now on with one subject only and that one of so little value? »⁵.

What they both did was to go to the Trappist monastery of Fongombault to make a retreat. They came back from this retreat resigned to their loss, but convinced that it was the will of God that they continue with their work.

In that last quotation Fr. Piperon reveals much of what he always was: a genuinely humble man intensely devoted to Fr. Chevalier and his work. He was to be, in many ways through word and writing, the best interpreter of Fr. Chevalier's ideas and spirit; he was to work loyally with him all his life. He was a perfect « second », never aspiring to lead - but always to help; ever convinced that he had little to give, but always ready to give it all. But what he had to give he wanted to give within a religious community and not out in a permanent parochial ministry. In fact when Fr. Chevalier suggested that, after Fr. Maugenest, the Archbishop might send them, too, to work in parishes, Piperon replied: « In that case I shall look for a religious congregation that will have me. I'll go to the ends of the earth rather than accept a parish »⁶.

Fr. Chevalier later wrote of him as « the dear and venerated

Fr. Piperon... . Pious, good, zealous, charitable and devoted, fearing neither work nor fatigue, nor privations »⁷.

In 1859 Fr. Chevalier began to show signs of fatigue. He lived poorly and worked hard. The efforts — and the trials — of the last few years had drained much of his physical energy. Having lost Fr. Maugenest and having had his troubles with the Archbishop, he felt himself somewhat alone and « unsupported » in his efforts. He was living another moment like that of his early days in the seminary when he felt very much alone.

Then encouragement came to him from a number of quarters.

A priest friend took him on a vacation for the first two weeks of July. On July 14th he had the privilege of an interview with the saintly Curé of Ars, John Vianney. This holy man told him that, although he had further trials ahead of him, his new society would be blessed by God and would do much good in the Church. Encouraged by these words and by the fact that the Curé promised to make a Novena of Prayer joined in spirit with the community of Issoudun, Fr. Chevalier went back home. Later in the year, a visit to Paray-le-Monial, shrine of the Sacred Heart, gave him further confirmation in his vocation.

On his return from Paray, says Fr. Piperon, he was « a new man ». Gone were his worries, to be replaced by a calm acceptance of whatever God's will might be. At the same time, he had a greater confidence than ever that his work would succeed. His conversations and his sermons showed that at Paray he had drawn further inspiration and further confirmation in his spirituality of the Heart of Christ.

In August 1860 another priest friend took him to Rome with him where he had a private audience with Pope Pius IX to whom he spoke of his religious congregation and the work he envisaged for it. The Pope listened kindly, praising his efforts to spread devotion to the Sacred Heart and giving his blessing to Fr. Chevalier's work.

With the appointment of Archbishop de La Tour d'Auvergne to Bourges as Coadjutor, and then his taking over the Archdiocese on December 10th, 1861, Fr. Chevalier knew that he had a staunch friend and supporter at home. With new hope, he devoted himself to carrying on his work. He mounted the pulpit that Fr. Maugenest had left vacant, even if he could not preach as well. Fr. Piperon, who has a delightful way of saying things in a way he does not quite mean, wrote: « Often, ...he was truly eloquent ». And even at the times when he was not so eloquent, he had a strong and pleasant voice and carried his audience along with him because of his zeal and sincerity, especially when he spoke of « the infinite mercy of the Heart of Jesus, and the greatness of Mary »⁸.

Of his own preaching, Fr. Piperon does not give an account, although he, too, preached far and wide, appealing for money for the new Church of the Sacred Heart and spreading devotion to Our Lady.

2. OUR LADY OF THE SACRED HEART.

Looking back over more than a century one might be tempted to judge that Fr. Chevalier and his missionaries spent a disproportionate amount of time on propagating devotion to Our Lady. One might also be inclined to think that much effort was diverted from « missionary work » into building up the Archconfraternity of Our Lady of the Sacred Heart. Before drawing these conclusions and in order to understand the growth of Fr. Chevalier's work, we need to see things in the perspective of 19th century Catholic piety. It was in this perspective that his own spiritual life developed and that his work was done. It was an age of Marian piety. « To Jesus through Mary » was an old Christian adage that had entered into the life of the people, who responded more readily to popular devotions in honour of the Madonna than they would have done to practices which today might be considered more « theological and more liturgical ». Jesus and Mary were closely associated in any prayer - and in many a christian practice of piety.

« Shortly after I was baptized, she (my mother) took me to the Church and consecrated me to the Blessed Virgin and to the Sacred Heart of Jesus. Often, especially in later years, she loved to recount this touching scene to which her mind and heart gave a very poetic colouring. » Jules Chevalier wrote this memory of a consecration which he considered very real⁹. When he formed his special group in the seminary it was called the association of « the knights of the Sacred Heart and of Mary ».

Later when at Issoudun he sought a sign that it was God's will that he should begin his group of missionaries, he and Fr. Maugenest decided to make a Novena to Our Lady. They promised, that should their prayer be heard they would spread devotion to the Heart of Christ, and would « make Mary loved and known in a special way, by all possible means ». We have already seen how, on two occasions, just as the two young priests concluded a Novena to Mary, they received two different and generous promises of assistance which made their work possible. It was natural that he should say in later years: « Our Lady has done everything in our Congregation ».

It was natural, too, that against the general background of the times and with his own particular experiences, he should look to Mary for continued help in his work of bringing the love of the Heart of Christ to men and of bringing men to believe in and respond to that love. A further natural development was that he and his companions should begin to think and speak of Mary as « Our Lady of the Sacred Heart ». At that time new titles and special devotions played a more significant part in popular religious practice than they do today. There is a certain note of excitement running through the stories of « the discovery » of the new title and the establishment of the new devotion. Any new devotion had to have the approval of the Holy See, and wary eyes were watching for suspect innovations in doctrine and practice - as Fr. Chevalier was to learn by experience later. Therefore he seems to have given a good deal of thought and prayer to the whole idea before « launching » it.

Once during the summer of 1857, while he was relaxing with his fellow-priests, they were discussing plans and ideas for the new church they were building. Fr. Chevalier asked what were their thoughts about the title under which Mary should be honoured in the new church. Various suggestions were made - but of course he was leading up to the proposal he had had in mind for some time: that of honouring Mary under the title of Our Lady of the Sacred Heart. In explaining what he meant he said that the title Our Lady of the Sacred Heart indicates Her who was blessed among all women by the Heart of a loving God. At the same time it points to her as the Mother of men whose only desire is to lead all men to the Heart of her Son. Finally this name makes us understand that our heavenly Mother, sharing in Christ's triumph in eternal glory, is forever our powerful advocate with the Heart of her loving Son¹⁰.

The idea was simple and clear - everyone was enthusiastic about it. At the beginning of 1861, when preparations were being made for the inauguration of the first part of the church, Fr. Chevalier wanted it to include a stained-glass window of Our Lady of the Sacred Heart. The first image was (like the idea itself) the result of a simple juxtaposition of an image of Mary and an image of Christ. First he took a well-known image of Mary Immaculate, standing with her hands extended towards the earth, signifying that she makes grace rain upon the earth. In front of this statue he placed the figure of the Christ child, indicating his Heart with his left hand and pointing to his Mother with his right - as if to say: « It is through my Mother that the treasures of my Heart are poured out on earth ».

The devotion took on immediately. Certainly not all would have appreciated the full theological content which Fr. Chevalier had in mind. Many were chiefly interested in her « power of intercession ». But even this could be the beginnings of growth to a more selfless devotion and to a discovery of the unfathomable riches of the Heart of Christ. In his concern to dissipate the religious indifference of the Berry, Fr. Chevalier would of course have considered all

the possible ways and means of succeeding. Now the « Confraternity » was an old and efficacious means of nourishing the spiritual life of the laity - if one could get the laity interested in becoming members of a confraternity.

These « brotherhoods », or spiritual associations go back a long way. St. Boniface really got them going as spiritual and charitable unions. They were a way of having christian values permeate the whole life of the laity. By the acceptance of a certain 'rule of life' the members found a practical way of seeing that they prayed and kept the eternal truths in mind. In the earlier centuries much stress was put on works of charity - as in later « Catholic action ». Later the accent was put more strongly on the prayer and piety side of the spiritual life.

Marian confraternities were rare before the 13th century, when they really blossomed in Italy and then spread to other countries in Europe. All confraternities flourished insofar as they could nourish popular spiritual piety.

Obviously there was a number of things pointing towards the establishment of a « Confraternity of Our Lady of the Sacred Heart ». They pointed towards it, not as something apart from Fr. Chevalier's main work, but as an extremely efficacious means of achieving all that he wanted to do. This was an age when people came « to Jesus through Mary »; it was a time when confraternities expressed and nourished the spirituality of the laity. People showed signs of responding enthusiastically to this « new » devotion which, 'in a way they had not thought of before', linked Christ, Mary and men in the bonds of a love that was tender and compassionate. Even the fearful and the indifferent could be led to confidence and friendship with Christ, where they had not responded to the call to religious duties presented in other ways.

The missionaries of the Sacred Heart drew the obvious conclusions. They worked at spreading devotion to Our Lady of the Sacred Heart and at establishing a « Confraternity »

with the same title. It soon became clear that they found a most effective way of carrying out their mission of bringing men to the Heart of Christ in faith and love.

Fr. Charles Piperon played a large part in the early publicising of the devotion. In 1862 and 1863 he travelled a lot to preach appeals for the new church at Issoudun. To priests whom he met on his trips he spoke of the new devotion, explaining it with the help of images which he gave out. One of the priests he met was a famous Jesuit, Fr. Ramière, editor of the review « The Messenger of the Sacred Heart ». A short article on the devotion — given him by Fr. Piperon — was published as a study in his review. In this way it became known throughout France and beyond.

The spread of the devotion was really extraordinary. In almost every place that the MSC were to go in subsequent years they found that the devotion had preceded them. To some extent this was due to Fr. Ramière's publications and to the fact that the Jesuits made the devotion known in many places where they had missions.

The local Archbishop, de La Tour d'Auvergne, was also keenly interested in the devotion and was anxious to see an association or confraternity established, asking Fr. Chevalier to write statutes for such an association. These Statutes were approved by the Archbishop on January 29th 1864, and on April 6th, 1864 the Confraternity was solemnly proclaimed in the church of the Sacred Heart. The Archbishop had his own name inscribed as the first member of the Confraternity. There were thousands of others even in the first few weeks. So many were the demands to admit new members and to set up filial branches, that a request was made to Rome to have the association made an Archconfraternity. Among the filial branches was one at Sittard in Holland, a number in Belgium (e.g. at Antwerp), others in Italy. This spread of the devotion to Our Lady of the Sacred Heart was one of the factors which led to a number of young people from outside France asking later to be admitted to the MSC Society.

3. SECULAR PRIESTS OF THE SACRED HEART.

It is possible for a man to get so caught up in his particular work that he fails to see the importance of other similar efforts. It is not unknown for religious to be more concerned with the good of their own group than the good of the whole Church. Fr. Chevalier's goal was as broad as the Church and the world: 'May the Sacred Heart of Jesus be everywhere loved'! His group of missionaries, he hoped, would make an important contribution towards this end. But there were others, too, working for the same goal.

Out in the French countryside, the first field for his work, there was already a number of priests working. Often they lived alone, and always in a certain isolation from their fellow priests. They were not always as successful as they wanted to be in their efforts to foster christian fervour. At times they were disheartened and discouraged. Fr. Chevalier believed they could be helped to renew their courage and their ministry. As a means of helping them in their own spiritual lives and in their priestly apostolate he set out to form an association of Secular Priests of the Sacred Heart. This was not a new idea; there was already a number of such associations throughout France. But some of these groups obviously needed new life. Fr. Chevalier hoped to achieve this by federating the various groups and centering them on Issoudun. The heart of the wider fraternity would be the central group of religious Missionaries of the Sacred Heart. But all who shared the spirit and the aims of the MSC would make up the wider brotherhood. At the same time this brotherhood could and should extend to include lay-people who would share the same apostolic spirituality of the Sacred Heart. We find therefore that, at one stage, Fr. Chevalier sees his total Institute as embracing 3 categories: 1. Religious in the strict sense; 2. A group of affiliated Priests of the Sacred Heart; 3. Tertiaries.

If this association with the MSC were to have its desired effects, it would give spiritual help and renewed apostolic zeal to men out in the field of the apostolate. And if it did

that, it would seem a natural consequence that some priests would feel that they would receive greater spiritual support by becoming members of the religious group. This in fact was to happen. The thought of this possibility presented Fr. Chevalier with a problem. His group existed to do active missionary work in the field. Would he be justified in withdrawing men from that work, to bring them in to live in his religious group? His conclusion — as early as 1863, — was that such priests could become members of his religious congregation while remaining in their parishes as long as pastoral necessity demanded. This was the case very soon for Fr. Guyot, parish priest of St. Paul's at Montluçon, and Fr. Durin, parish priest of Nocq-Chambérat.

This undertaking to contribute to the spiritual good of the 'affiliated Secular Priests' was a good work and a big one. It was in fact a bit too big for the MSC group at Issoudun to handle effectively at that stage of its development. The group simply did not have enough personnel to be able to give the scattered priests the support (pastoral and spiritual) which — rightly — they expected from their Association. For this reason, and for one other, their ties with the MSC Congregation were gradually to disappear. The second reason was that it was not clear what exactly those ties were. Were the affiliated secular priests *members* of a total wider Institute or were they merely associated with it? When the basic text of the MSC religious group (the Formula Instituti) was approved in 1869, the other two « branches », Secular Priests and Tertiaries, were approved only as « works of the Society ».

For many years Fr. Chevalier and his priests carried out an apostolate of spiritual animation of the group of Secular Priests of the Sacred Heart affiliated to the MSC. They wrote letters and circulars. When Fr. Delaporte entered the MSC congregation he was made responsible for this work. He edited a review for them and drew up a set of Rules. Their number became quite large and even extended to other countries, e.g. Switzerland.

Meanwhile, other religious Congregations sought to have their own groups of affiliated secular priests. Other associations were formed under the patronage and the name of the Sacred Heart. In France and Italy today there are « Apostolic Unions » of priests of the Sacred Heart. However, the particular group once associated with the MSC Society ceased to exist as a specific association.

It must be noted, however, that Fr. Chevalier's work for these secular priests had notable, even vital, repercussions for his own Congregation.

It helped him think out the life-style that his own religious group demanded: not monastic, yet not just an association of priests. In the three-fold division mentioned above: « It is the religious who form the elect body of the society (the élite); they can be ecclesiastics or lay-people (clerics, or lay-brothers and non-clerical students), living in community or dispersed in the world, carrying out the duties belonging to them. They will bear the name Missionaries of the Sacred Heart or Religious of the Sacred Heart. They will make the vows of Obedience, Poverty, Chastity and Stability. These are annual vows for five years and then perpetual. However, nobody is obliged to take perpetual vows - although the principal office-bearers in the Society will be chosen from among those who have pronounced perpetual vows. » ¹¹

For the members who were religious in the strict sense, vows were required - which from 1869 to 1877 were made as perpetual vows at the first profession. The affiliated priests were free to take vows or not as they wished; although their taking of vows was not considered a religious profession.

Furthermore, this work for the association of Secular Priests of the Sacred Heart brought him into contact with other priests who shared his aims. It brought a number of them to enter his religious Society.

Here it may be as well to make two observations which will have to be made sometime during this work.

Firstly, note how Fr. Chevalier's vision of his work is broadening. Or note how little of his work is actually being done in and for the Berry; how much of his concern — with the Association of Secular priests and the Confraternity of Our Lady of the Sacred Heart — goes beyond the boundaries of one Province; how few of his priests even at this early stage (1860's) come from the Berry, or work there in the ministry.

We can perhaps take the year 1867 as a milestone in the history of the MSC group, since in that year the second Community was established at Chezal-Benoit with the Apostolic School beside it. By the beginning of that year the list of the MSC personnel reads like this:

1. Fr. Jules Chevalier stationed at Issoudun, and working chiefly in the Chapel of the Sacred Heart.
2. Fr. Charles Pipéron, working with Chevalier, and also going out preaching in many places.
3. Fr. Antoine Mousseaux came to Issoudun to join the MSC in 1863, and took Pipéron's place as chaplain to hospices.
4. Fr. Jean-Baptiste Guyot - parish priest at Montluçon.
5. Fr. Joseph Durin - at Nocq-Chambérat.
6. Fr. Louis Bazire (a Norman) works at Issoudun in the Office of the Association of Our Lady of the Sacred Heart.
7. From Marseilles, came Fr. Victor Jouët. While remaining in the diocese of Marseilles, he becomes editor of the *Annals*.

These last four priests all came to the MSC in 1864.

8. In 1865, came a Breton, Fr. Paulin Georgelin, who, in 1867 was professor in a clerical school at Rimont.
9. Fr. Jean-Marie Vandel, from the diocese of Lausanne. Founder of « L'Oeuvre des Campagnes », he continues this work, and travels to many parts of France.

10. Fr. Pierre Malabat - preacher and writer.
11. Fr. Celestin Laporte, from the diocese of Tours.

We spoke of a « broadening vision » not of a changing one and this brings us to our second observation. The founding of a religious congregation is not done in one day - it is a drawn-out process lasting through the active life of the Founder. Nor does the Founder have his total vision clear in all its details right from the very start. He is conscious of being urged on by his sense of mission; but how exactly this mission will work out in practice he will know only as he meets and adapts to factual situations. Fr Chevalier's original motto was « May the Sacred Heart of Jesus be *everywhere* loved. » Although for practical reasons he looked at and spoke of the Berry, he was carried beyond its boundaries by the sudden and extremely widespread interest in the devotion to Our Lady of the Sacred Heart and the Confraternity. Likewise his work for the Secular Priests of the Sacred Heart quickly took him beyond provincial boundaries.

In fact, as a student he had been counselled into limiting his vision to the Berry. He had then been very attracted to the foreign missions. We shall see this later when treating of the foreign missions as one of the chief works of the MSC society. However, he was in a *diocesan* seminary; he had entered to work in the diocese. In spite of his attraction for the foreign missions, it was quite understandable that his director should have told him to forget it and to prepare for work in the diocese where missionary work was necessary enough. He had limited his vision to the diocese for so he had been counselled. But the course of events in his life were breaking down the imposed limitations and forcing him into the broader vision of what his group might work for: that the Heart of Christ might be loved everywhere.

Notes Chapter 2

¹ Chevalier, « Notre-Dame du Sacré-Cœur », 4 éd., Issoudun, Pèlerinage, 1895, p. 4.

² Abbé Dalailler, quoted by Vermin, p. 136.

³ Chevalier, Ms Notes intimes, p. 42.

⁴ ib., p. 48; and Piperon, « Le T.R.P. Jules Chevalier, simple notice biographique », Lille, Soc. Saint Augustin, 1912, pp. 32-33.

⁵ Piperon, Ms Notice, pp. 60-61; and Piperon, Ms Le T.R.P. Chevalier (1904), pp. 73-74, quoted by Vermin, p. 160.

⁶ ib.

⁷ Chevalier, Ms Notes intimes, p. 47.

⁸ Piperon, « Le T.R.P. Jules Chevalier », 1912, p. 30.

⁹ Chevalier, Ms Notes intimes, p. 3.

¹⁰ It is possible of course to explain all Mariology in connection with the title, Our Lady of the Sacred Heart. But if a devotion is to be helpful, as a devotion, it must be both rich in content, and simply seen. Cf. Art. *Dévotion* in Dict. de Spiritualité.

¹¹ « Plan de la Société des Missionnaires du Sacré-Cœur », Bourges, Pigelet (1864), p. 11.

Show me your friends

1. CHARLES PIPERON.

We have already met Fr. Píperon. Since this is a book about Fr. Chevalier, there is no possibility of doing justice to the life and person of any of his faithful collaborators. But they must at least be introduced. If there is an MSC 'old faithful', it must surely be Fr. Charles Píperon. Born on July 26th in 1828 at Vierzon, he was ordained on June 10th, 1854. In 1856 he joined up with Fr. Chevalier as an MSC.

He would die on February 16th, 1915, after almost 60 years in the Congregation which he served devotedly in many important ways. He led the little MSC band into Holland when they were first forced to leave France. Then he was Novice Master from 1880 to 1898. He was Assistant General from 1869 to 1905.

Many things could be said about him. However, nothing that was said would do him greater justice than what was written of him by Fr. Emile Maugenest. For another reason, too, it is best to let Fr. Maugenest speak here. He was a co-founder of the MSC Society and, but for exceptional circumstances, would probably himself have been one of the life-long collaborators of Fr. Chevalier. As it was he was a life-long friend, both of Chevalier and the MSC.

On hearing of the death of Fr. Piperon at Thuin in Belgium he wrote on March 5th, 1915:

« This morning of the first Friday of the month, I come down from the altar where I celebrated holy Mass so that by the application of the infinite merits of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, the gates of heaven might be opened to dear Fr. Piperon who loved this Heart so much and served him so well and for sixty years worked so hard for his glory.

« He did so much for the Sacred Heart by his words, his prayer and by his cooperation in the foundation, the support and the progress of the great work of the Missionaries of the Sacred Heart of Issoudun. Above all it was by his example that he contributed powerfully to the establishment and continuance of the work and to the spiritual formation of its religious. The spirit of your Order was to be, in effect, the realization of the great commandment of the Sacred Heart: Learn of me, for I am gentle and humble of heart. Thanks be to God, the Missionaries of the Sacred Heart practice, in all things and in the highest degree, the virtues of this adorable heart. Above all else, this is their strength; it is this which gives edification; it is this which gains for them the admiration, the esteem and the confidence of men; it is this which draws down God's blessings on their undertakings, their works and their ministry. These abundant blessings are visible in the immense propagation of the archconfraternity of Our Lady of the Sacred Heart, in the astonishing vitality of their Apostolic Schools, in the rapidity and development of their conquests of apostolic zeal in your missions of Oceania.

« If the spirit of your Order has so much value, what more can we say to the glory of the humble Fr. Piperon than to salute, in his admirable life, the perfect example of this spirit which is none other than that of the Sacred Heart.

« Yes, if the merit and the glory of the eminent Fr. Chevalier is that he founded your order by the force of his creative genius, the merit and the glory of the humble Fr. Piperon is that he gave you your spirit by his practice of the virtues

of the Sacred Heart. For more than 60 years he was a model of these virtues, before your very eyes.

« I loved him much and admired him more. I have never known anyone who was so humble, nor anyone who to me seemed marked to the same degree with the true seal of sanctity. »

Maugenest went on to express the wish that, after the war, Fr. Piperon's body would be brought from Belgium where he had died, to be buried in the crypt of the Basilica of the Sacred Heart, beside Frs. Chevalier and Vandel.

« That is his place », he continued, « and if then I am still of this world, and as strong as I am today, the desire to kiss the relics of this venerable priest will perhaps make me travel once more, before I die, the road to Issoudun »¹.

In response to a request to elaborate further on what he had said about Fr. Piperon in this letter, Fr. Maugenest later wrote:

« One thing only in his life struck me, but it struck me so strongly and deeply that I have the full certitude of having known him well and appreciated him truly. This co-founder, with Fr. Chevalier of the Missionaries of the Sacred Heart, was the perfect exemplar of the spirit and virtues proper to your order. He was meek and humble of heart - everywhere, in all things, with everyone and always. »

His meekness

« Fr. Piperon had a strong will, a great strength of character, and he really proved it by his constancy in his vocation and his fidelity to the work of Fr. Chevalier at that time of trial at the beginnings of the foundation when all the first companions of the founder... abandoned him. In all that he did, in all the works entrusted to his devotion, in all difficulties, he always showed this moral strength. So his gentleness, or meekness, was not, in his case, a matter of temperament. It

was the result of virtue. But this gentleness enveloped and hid so completely both his force of will and strength of character that the almost universal opinion of those who knew him saw in him, rather than the virtue of meekness, the natural good nature of a peaceful temperament. How wrong they were! His gentleness was truly the virtue of meekness, from which flowed charity, goodness, devotedness, the affability which he showed in all his dealings with others: with his superiors, his equals, with the sick in the hospitals, with the boys in the Apostolic School, with the faithful entrusted to his care and to his zeal. I have never heard anyone say that they saw him angry, impatient or ill-humoured. From this viewpoint of meekness, I myself always found him constant, with never a failure even in circumstances in which contradiction tried his patience.

His humility

« In my long life which has put me in contact with so many good priests and holy religious, I have never known anyone who seemed to me to be as humble as Fr. Piperon. Only God sees the depths of the heart. But to judge from his words, acts, conduct, in short from his whole life, Fr. Piperon was truly humble of heart. His was indeed a humility of the heart — conceived inspired and produced from his heart to become the salient and characteristic feature of his life — and this to the point that this universal humility was the first thing which struck those who met him. He was humble everywhere and in all things.

« Humble in his reserved attitude, in his modest comportment, in his quickness to take the last place everywhere. « Humble in his words. He was intelligent and learned, knowing well what he knew, endowed with sure and solid judgment. Nevertheless, especially in conversation and discussion, he appeared diffident and reserved.

« Humble in his hidden monastic life during the first years of the foundation. The 'monastery' at the Sacred Heart was so poor that the Fathers themselves had to take care of all

the chores, even the most menial. You would have had to have seen him to have an idea of the joyful and charitable eagerness with which he took on himself all that was most difficult and least dignified. He was sacristan, gardener, cook, all at the same time, and seemed happiest when he was sweeping the house and washing the dishes.

« Humble in his public life and ministry. He had a good grasp of doctrine and he spoke easily. But it was so often his turn to speak and, moreover in the early years he had so much to do, that he often mounted the pulpit with insufficient preparation and had to improvise. But the simplicity with which he consented to speak in these circumstances, with no preoccupation about the opinion of the congregation, showed that his humility, in the ministry of preaching, was not inferior to his zeal.

« Humble in humiliations. To undergo humiliations without being troubled or preoccupied, without sadness, revolt, or bitterness against those who cause them is perhaps the best proof of true and sincere humility. In a marked degree, Fr. Piperon had this quality of humility.

« Earlier I mentioned his improvising in the pulpit. These improvisations often resulted in failures in oratory - and he accepted the humiliation with perfect serenity. Also he had external natural defects which did not lessen his affability, but did render his conversation less pleasant than it might have been - and led to criticism, teasing and jokes from his confreres, especially among the secular clergy. His was the same good humour and the same readiness to forgive which characterizes the humility of children. This is the most perfect humility, which Jesus gave us as the model of ours... »². This was Fr. Chevalier's « dear and venerated Fr. Piperon ».

2. JEAN-MARIE VANDEL.

The devotion to Our Lady of the Sacred Heart was to be an influence in later bringing young men to join the Society.

The work for the Secular Priests of the Sacred Heart brought a number of men already priests to become members of the Congregation. One of these, in fact, was also to bring with him the idea and the initiative which made possible the acceptance and formation of the younger men. This was Fr. Jean-Marie Vandel.

It was their common interest in the priests of the country parishes which brought Frs. Chevalier and Vandel together. Fr. Vandel had, in fact, been the founder of « l'Oeuvre des Campagnes »: the Work for the Country areas, in 1857. A book which he wrote on this subject had been given to Fr. Chevalier by Fr. Henry Leblanc, S.J., who had also acquainted Vandel with the work being done by Chevalier. The 'Work for the Country areas' involved a number of the French nobility and the well-to-do in assisting the priests in the poorer country parishes. Fr. Vandel desired to extend his work by founding a group of « Missionaries for the Countryside ». His idea was that these missionaries would be supported by l'Oeuvre. The Superior Council of l'Oeuvre however, did not accept his idea as part of their program. Vandel was then favourably predisposed towards the missionary group which Fr. Chevalier was founding, and when the two men met in 1865, they found they had much in common. Fr. Chevalier, by spoken word and written letter, made every effort to get Vandel to join his group. For he was impressed deeply — as others were too — by Vandel's zeal, his holiness, wisdom and experience. He had in fact a good deal more experience than Fr. Chevalier. Born in November 1808 in the village of Nernier in Savoy, he had been ordained in 1846 as a priest in the diocese of Lausanne across the Swiss border from his native village. Prior to his ordination he had passed a number of years as « prefect » in the Jesuit boarding-schools at Chambéry in France and Fribourg in Switzerland. He had also spent 2 years with the Jesuits at Avignon.

Being forced to leave Switzerland because of the political troubles with the Church there, he had been given refuge at Lyons by Pauline Jaricot famous for her work of obtaining

material support for the foreign missions with the « Work for the Propagation of the Faith ». For a while Vandel thought of devoting his life to this apostolate. However, since he could get back into Switzerland while other priests could not, he felt that duty called him back there, where he was made parish priest of Nyon (1848-1856). Ill health forced him to relinquish his parish and « retire » to France. His « retirement » was rather active for in 1857 he got involved in the work for the country priests.

Eight years later ill-health brought the two men together. Fr. Chevalier had been working too hard and living too poorly and his health had suffered in consequence. In 1865, suffering from persistent laryngitis, he had been ordered to go to one of the « baths », then so often prescribed for physical ailments, to « take the waters ». At one of these watering-places, Mont-Doré, he met Vandel. Together they forgot their ailments and spent long hours discussing their ideas for the work that both were trying to do.

In the following year, 1866, Fr. Vandel came to Issoudun to join the young MSC community. The members of the « Oeuvre des Campagnes » did all they could to keep him in Paris. They feared that his leaving would mean the ruin of the work. However, he could assure them that he would be able to do as much as he had done for them, and perhaps more, as a Missionary of the Sacred Heart. And indeed he did.

As well as his knowledge of the work for priests in poor parishes, Fr. Vandel brought with him two other items of knowledge which were to enable him to make a most important contribution to the young congregation which he joined. Firstly, having worked with the Jesuits at Avignon, and knowing many of them from his Fribourg days, he now knew of the work the Jesuit priest Fr. de Foresta was beginning at Avignon. This was the work of setting up an « apostolic school ». Aware that much was being done to get money for the foreign missions, de Foresta felt that more could be done to get men for the missions. He therefore set

about working out a way to train young men for the missionary priesthood. So, side by side with the existing Jesuit College at Avignon, he set up a school for boys who expressed an interest in the missionary priesthood. It opened in the autumn of 1865, and naturally enough was called an « apostolic » school.

He had worked with Pauline Jaricot. Vandel then knew quite well that she had thought out the idea that, if you had a lot of people giving a small amount of money for the missions, you would finish up with a lot of money. This was the « sou par an » (penny a year) idea.

Fr. Vandel simply put the two ideas together: firstly, set up a school for boys who are interested in going on for the missionary priesthood in the society of the MSC; secondly, in order to meet the cost of this work, make an appeal to the people to give a penny a year. The idea was accepted by Fr. Chevalier and launched. Because of the small amount asked for, the whole plan was known as the « Petite Oeuvre » (the Little Work). In a number of languages the resulting minor seminary was called « Petite Oeuvre »; in others it was « the Apostolic School ».

The first apostolic school for the MSC got under way in October 1867. The place was Chezal-Benoît quite close to Issoudun. As « Benoit » suggests, it had once been a Benedictine Abbey. Closed during the French revolution, it had been turned into a college or high school which had a very good reputation in the late 1840's and early 50's. (As a point of interest, it may be noted that Fr. Maugenest had gone to school there as a boy.). The Archdiocese of Bourges acquired the property in 1860 in order to keep it going as a catholic school. Staffing was a continual problem, and approaches were made to the MSC priests to help out. In 1867 the Archbishop and Fr. Chevalier came to an agreement which was mutually beneficial. The MSC community would provide some of the teaching staff; the students of the MSC apostolic school could follow the courses while living in a part of the secondary buildings of the establishment. Appli-

cations that year for the apostolic school were not lacking - there were 150. Naturally only relatively few could be accepted. The school opened with 14 on October 10th, 1867; by the end of the first school-year, there were 27 who had come, and some who had gone. One of those who came and stayed was a boy from Issoudun, aged 12 years, and named Arthur Lanctin. He was to become the second Superior General of the MSC Society, first successor of Fr. Chevalier.

Meanwhile, for the upkeep of these boys, the penny-a-year program was under way. Fr. Vandel had published the plan; the Bulletin of the « Oeuvre des Campagnes » had given it publicity and a number of the friends and benefactors of this work gave their support to the new project of Fr. Vandel whom they regarded highly. The « Annals of Our Lady of the Sacred Heart », only recently published, also helped spread the idea which appealed to a wide number of people. Among those who appeared in the first list of benefactors were the director and students of the Apostolic School of Avignon!

The program for supporting the apostolic school was so well received by the people, and the money so well administered by Fr. Vandel that, during Vandel's lifetime, no other money was needed to keep the venture going. In fact, he could and did lend a helping hand to the MSC society from time to time.

Fr. Vandel did not live at the school, but at Issoudun. At Chezal-Benoît, a young priest named Fr. Remy Ledoux had charge of the boys. One of the « supervisors » was a young man called Théophile Cramaille. Although not actually a student, he was later spoken of as the « first priest from the Apostolic School ». Of the boys themselves in that first year, 8 became priests: 3 outside the MSC Congregation, and 5 MSC. For the next century, in the different provinces of the congregation, the Apostolic Schools would provide the majority of vocations to the ranks of the priesthood.

On the morning of April 26th, 1877, Fr. Vandel was found dead in his room. He had given just over 10 years of his priestly life to the Congregation of the Missionaries of the Sacred Heart. In that time he had contributed considerably to its stability and its life by the success of his plan for the apostolic school. He had given the group the support of his own wise advice - had, in fact, been named one of the first Assistants General. Fr. Chevalier felt his loss very deeply indeed. Very close ties of friendship had existed between them and he relied on Fr. Vandel with complete confidence in his judgment and vision. When he wrote or spoke of him in later years it was always « the good Fr. Vandel » or « the holy Fr. Vandel » as of a man whose memory was forever held in veneration and love.

Fr. Vandel was 57 years of age when he joined the MSC society. At that age, it seems a bit surprising that he should join at all - especially since he was well 'established', as founder of the Oeuvre des Campagnes. Furthermore, the little group he joined had very few priests. There were five at Issoudun, all of them a good deal younger than he. Yet he joined this group and was immediately completely at home. He helped build up their numbers by the Apostolic School that he founded. (At his funeral Mass celebrated by Fr. Chevalier, two priests from the Apostolic School assisted as ministers).

He was frequently spoken of as « the second founder » of the society. This was not only because of what he did - but also because of what he was in his own life and person. In his private notes he wrote:

« I am a Missionary of the Sacred Heart in everything, in body, soul, heart, thoughts words, actions, in my sufferings, my manner, my relations with others... May God be blessed »³.

In a very real sense, when Jean-Marie Vandel became a Missionary of the Sacred Heart, he was only putting an official name on what he already was. And this obviously explains the ease with which he fitted into the little group

of Issoudun, finding himself at home. It explains too, how he won the immediate respect and affection of the priests and boys among whom he worked.

His personal spiritual life had long since been centred on the Heart of Christ, and devotion to Mary had become an essential part of his life. The same missionary zeal, the same concern for people (affected by indifferentism and lack of faith) that inspired the MSC had inspired his work of the « Oeuvre des Campagnes ». But now, while the zeal and concern were strong within him, advancing age and illness had lessened his physical strength. The priests he found at Issoudun were animated by a similar missionary zeal. They were younger than he, and in their energy and strength he found support, while in their spirit he found brotherhood. And while he found here a spirit and a spirituality which harmonized so well with his, they found in his person the sort of priest that they aspired to be. He seemed to have worked into his own life and attitudes and actions a certain incarnation of « the kindness of God », the « hesed » which the Heart of Christ symbolized and suggested.

What this was can best be shown by quoting his own words. For when he is setting forth what he hopes for from the priests of the Oeuvre des Campagnes, he unconsciously (in the opinion of those who knew him) describes himself - although, in his humility he would have thought he was far from this ideal.

The characteristic virtues of the priests of l'Oeuvre des Campagnes will be:

« A childlike *humility*, which is always simple and joyful: 'Nisi efficiamini.....'.

« A *compassionate kindness* which opens out into happiness at the sight of a child, a poor man, a sick man, an old man, an unhappy traveller...

« A *spirit of piety* which sanctifies one's relations of charity and which takes the place of austerities and long exercises

of prayer, through the habitual sentiment of the presence of God Our Father, of Mary our good Mother... of the angels guardian. The Our Father, short ejaculatory prayers, some beads of the rosary while coming and going will become part of our missionary's breathing.

« A frank and natural *modesty* like that of a father and a mother who fear God and who will not tolerate in themselves nor in others anything which could offend the ears and eyes of their children. From this aspect, the missionary's prudence should render his conduct irreproachable as was that of Our Lord, coming, going, eating, conversing in public and in private, among the Jews. He went into houses, stopped by the wayside, visited, cured, consoled the sick, spoke to everyone, ate with the rich and the poor, stayed with his friends, listened to requests and questions, conversed with the sinful woman, the Chanaanite, the Samaritan, Martha and Mary, curing St. Peter's mother-in-law, the daughter of Jairus... but never a word of blame was uttered against him for his conduct... except by the Pharisees. There is our Model, our Rule, our life.

« A *patience* which knows how to wait, which can appear to do nothing, which can always hope, which is not disconcerted, which can put up with innumerable inconveniences, which can appreciate as a worthwhile result that of simply having given out some objects of piety, of having got some children to pray, some people to enter the church... finally a patience which can be resigned to having done nothing. Our Lord was not always fortunate in his mission »⁴.

A further characteristic note of Fr. Vandel was his gratitude, which is the mark of a certain fineness of character. Those who, in later years, recorded their memories of him point out that he was always grateful for any kindness, moved almost to tears by the generosity of people who helped him in his work.

Just after his death, a person who had known him for 24 years wrote: « His simplicity, his humility, his delicate tact

made him the sort of person who impressed everyone. Grown-ups felt his sanctity; little ones were captivated by his charity »⁵.

Author Louis de Wohl wrote books on St. Augustine and St. Thomas Aquinas. The former he called « The Living Flame », the latter « The Quiet Light ». It is easier to write about a living flame - the movement and colour catch the eye and hold the interest. The quiet light may have more value, even more merit, by its steadiness and consistency, but it is harder to write about at length. In this line of thinking, Fr. Jouët whom we shall consider in the next section would be the living flame, while Jean-Marie Vandel is the quiet light. In his quietness he gave confidence, and the steadiness of his strength upheld many who knew him. The light of his example, his faith, charity and patient kindness inspired many and gave them unforgettable memories of « the holy Fr. Vandel » « second founder of the MSC Society ».

3. VICTOR JOUËT.

If the young MSC group was to receive its stabilizer in Jean-Marie Vandel, in Victor Jouët it was to receive its dynamo. It could be debated who contributed more, for both gave much, although they had different things to give. With quite different personalities but with the same generosity, they came to the young community in different ways. Victor Jouët was the first to come. On a cold December day in 1864 he blew into Issoudun like a warm Provençal breeze. He was a son of the South, a priest in the diocese of Marseilles. He came from the land of the troubadours, and something of the troubadour went forever with him. This is clear, too, in the account of his coming. You can read his own version of it in an ex-voto testimony in the Basilica of Issoudun:

« A traveller for one day only,
It is here that I learned your glorious title

O Sovereign of the Heart of Jesus.
 I fell at the feet of your beautiful image,
 And I rose up your missionary for life.
 In one second - what a grace! What a vocation!!

28 December 1864. V.J. Miss. of Sac. Heart »⁶.

This is his own poetic account. But, in fact, no account of Fr. Victor Jouët can be prosaic. Born in Corsica of a French father and a Spanish mother, he was exuberant, enthusiastic, highly intelligent and of great personal charm. He was ordained a priest for the diocese of Marseilles in June, 1862, at the age of 23. It was the « Secular Priests of the Sacred Heart » which brought him into contact with the MSC. It was devotion to Our Lady of the Sacred Heart which kept him. His Bishop, Mgr Cruice, having heard of the new Congregation at Issoudun thought that they might have something to offer to the re-vivification of the association of the « Priests of the Sacred Heart » in Marseilles. So he sent Fr. Jouët to Issoudun to find out.

His coming to Issoudun is best described in the words of Fr. Piperon: ... « ... Fr. Jouët arrived on the day after Christmas, at four o'clock in the morning of a freezing day. He had come direct from Marseilles dressed for the southern climate and having taken no precautions against the winter cold. As soon as he arrived we hastened to take him to the best room and to light a fire for him. In this room was a statue of Our Lady of the Sacred Heart. As soon as he saw it, quite excited he asked what Madonna this was. 'It's Our Lady of the Sacred Heart', we told him. 'And what does Our Lady of the Sacred Heart mean?' he asked. 'Well, we honour the Blessed Virgin under this title and we have an association in her honour'. 'How long has this association been going?' 'It began in April this year and has about two thousand members'. 'Have you an altar of Our Lady of the Sacred Heart?' 'Yes, in the church where I'll take you later'. 'Can I say Mass there?' 'Certainly'. 'Can I say Mass there straight away?' 'Well, just wait a little. Let me light a fire, and when you have got warm, I shall go and prepare the altar'. 'But, I'd like to say Mass immediately'.

« With these words we left our guest in order to get wood to light the fire. When we returned some minutes later, we found him on his knees, in tears, in a state of exaltation. Mary had conquered this ardent soul; he had consecrated himself to her without reserve. From then on, as he himself loved to say, he was 'the plaything (le jouet) of Our Lady of the Sacred Heart'. He did not want to wait any longer. 'I'm no longer cold', he said, 'take me to the church, I want to say Mass at the altar of Our Lady of the Sacred Heart'. We had to yield to his insistence. Quickly we prepared the altar and the sacred vestments and he began the holy sacrifice. I have never forgotten the deep emotion with which he pronounced the words of the sacred liturgy, nor the prayerful accents of his voice. When he had finished his thanksgiving - which was rather lengthy, I took him back to his room so that he might get warm. He asked a lot more questions about Our Lady of the Sacred Heart and spoke of nothing else but this new devotion ».

Certainly Fr. Piperon and the other priests at Issoudun were themselves enthusiastic enough about their new devotion. But this man from Marseilles had them a bit worried: « At the time, I just did not understand this way of behaving, and I wondered whether this young priest was mentally balanced and whether this extraordinary enthusiasm was perhaps the result of some illness »⁷.

Later on Fr. Jouët told him that, at that time, he received an extraordinary light of grace and the clear knowledge that he should devote his life to the service of Our Lady.

Do not conclude from this that Jouët was a pious enthusiast. « Nobody was the equal of Fr. Jouët in conquering the most insurmountable obstacles. With fire in his soul, a spirit forever active, an energetic will, he knew when to act and when to stop and wait before later taking up again the activity he had left off. He was a man of ardent faith, of complete self-abnegation. He never thought of himself ».

« Fr. Chevalier found in him the most active worker, the

most dedicated and at the same time the most useful for all his works. It is to him that we owe their success »⁸. These further testimonies of Fr. Piperon round out the portrait of his character. This was the Victor Jouët who came to Issoudun at the end of 1864 looking for information about the work of the MSC for priests in the parishes. He went back to Marseilles with this information and with his new found enthusiasm for devotion to Our Lady of the Sacred Heart which he made known at Marseilles.

In September 1865 he made his private vows as a member of the MSC Society. For some years he could do little more, for the new Bishop of Marseilles, Mgr Place, was a declared enemy of new religious congregations and resisted Jouët's pleas to be allowed to leave the diocese to join the MSC community. Although forced to remain at a distance, this did not prevent him from working for them, especially in the area of making known devotion to Our Lady. It was his idea to begin the publication of the *Annals of Our Lady of the Sacred Heart*, the first issue of which appeared in January 1866. For seventeen years in the midst of all his other preoccupations and activities he edited these *Annals*. And in view of his many activities, this was an extraordinary feat. It was he who began what has long since drawn crowds of pilgrims to Issoudun - the procession of Our Lady of the Sacred Heart on September 8th.

Fr. Chevalier encouraged Jouët to keep trying to break down his Archbishop's opposition to his leaving the diocese. But then in 1869 Jouët became ill and had to take a year off for treatment. It was typical Jouët-style treatment. After a short while in Switzerland, he felt better and then spent some time in Issoudun. After this he set out for Spain to propagate devotion to Our Lady of the Sacred Heart. His goal was Tarragona and Barcelona where some french-speaking relatives of his were living. At the French-Spanish border he had one of those interesting experiences which happen to men like him. Not knowing much Spanish he said a prayer to St. Joseph to see him through his difficulty of finding a place to stay overnight. When he descended

from the train a coachman approached him and asked: « Are you a French missionary »? « I am ». « Then come with me, Father, your coach is waiting ». The coach pulled up before a fine house. The owner came out and said: « You are very welcome, Father... but... you are not the priest I was expecting. You saw no other priest on the train? » « There were no others ». « Oh, well, you are welcome just the same - you must be my guest for the night ». Next day a letter arrived from the intended guest saying he could not come and Fr. Jouët continued his journey to Tarragona, more than ever confident that St. Joseph was interested in his journey. At Tarragona he set up an Association of Our Lady of the Sacred Heart and began to get supporters for the devotion throughout Spain.

After his year's « treatment », he applied to his Archbishop for a year's « convalescence » — which he spent travelling to Savoy, Issoudun, Belgium and back into Spain — editing the *Annals of Our Lady* as he went. In 1871 he entered the community at Issoudun and in 1872 went with Fr. Chevalier to Rome. Here he was to appeal to the Pope Pius IX, to be allowed to leave his diocese and join the MSC Congregation. His application was supported by a letter from the Archbishop of Bourges. Since it was out of order for a bishop to put such opposition in the way of a priest wishing to join a religious community, Pope Pius IX granted Jouët's request - giving a written permission for seven years - to leave the diocese. Then in the presence of the Pope Jouët took his public vows as a missionary of the Sacred Heart and went back to Issoudun. On November 5th, 1875 he was elected Assistant General.

He then went to Rome in order to try to straighten out a question concerning the Archconfraternity of Our Lady of the Sacred Heart. A Confraternity had been set up in Rome and there was a certain confusion as to its connection with Issoudun, and which was to be the central and primary one. Jouët was not actually intended to stay in Rome. However, the business was prolonged and he was further engaged in trying to find a house for the MSC scholastics who were to

be sent to Rome for studies. When they arrived in December 1875, Jouët was asked to stay there and become superior of the MSC house. In February 1876 he was named Procurator, his task being to represent the MSC congregation in all its dealings with the Holy See. This he was to do for many years and he was also to make many friends in Rome. This latter fact is not remarkable, for Jouët had a gift for making friends wherever he went.

Fr. Piperon gives some interesting accounts of Jouët - in Rome and elsewhere:

« He took the spirit of poverty to its extreme limits. You had practically to force him to replace his old clothes... We have often seen him ask for an audience with important people, havin only an old soutane, and even that torn. Then, over his old soutane, he put an overcoat which was no more respectable. One day we had an audience with the Pope. When it was time to go to the Vatican I went to his room to find him dressed as usual. 'Well', I said, 'it's time to go and you are not yet ready'. 'I am ready!' he said, and he put on his old coat, which was torn, and his old hat, yellowed with age. 'Let's go', he said - 'we've just got time'...

— 'What! You're going to the audience in that outfit? Look at your soutane, its all torn...'

— 'That's nothing. Anyway, my coat will cover it.'

— 'But your coat's falling to bits. Look...'

Laughing happily, he said to me:

— 'Look, you don't understand. Now see whether my coat won't do.'

« He took the worst part of his coat in his hand, covered it with his battered old hat, and said to me: 'Now that's O.K. Let's go!' So off we went, and on the way he forgot his disordered appearance and in that state he was presented to the Pope.

« What he did at Rome on that day he repeated everywhere. In spite of this he was everywhere well received. His easiness of manner, his circumspection, and above all his pleasant

smile, his great wit, his savoir-faire charmed everybody he met. In his presence one quickly forgot the strange poverty of his dress, the outer man, and saw only his qualities of mind and heart.

« Here is one more fact taken from among a thousand.

« He had just come home from a long trip. I saw that his shoes were practically without soles and letting in the damp. I scolded him and said: 'Why don't you change your shoes? Do you want to get sick?'

— 'But', he said, in all simplicity, 'I have no others.'

— 'And you've said nothing about it.'

— 'And what's wrong with these shoes? I don't need to ask for any others.'

« Without any further formality, I told the cobbler to make him a new pair. Next day Fr. General decided to make a long trip and to take Jouët with him. They were to leave that morning. Forgetting the sorry state of his shoes, Jouët was all set to leave. So we got him a new pair of shoes. When he returned, he found in his room two pairs of shoes, one new and the other, his old ones, repaired. Soon I saw him coming to me with two pairs of shoes in his hands: 'They've made my room into a shoe-shop!' he said, 'what do I do with all this?' 'Keep them - it's not too much for you since you are always travelling'. 'No. It's against poverty. I need only one pair. Give the rest to someone else' »'.

On February 25th, 1877, foreseeing the possibility of a difficult political situation in France, the General Council of the MSC Society met at Issoudun. They realised that it was probable that the priests in France might well be put in prison. In order to plan wisely for the eventuality of political persecution, they drew up the following document signed by Frs. Chevalier, Pipéron, Vandel and Guyot:

« Having invoked the light of the Holy Spirit, the help of the Sacred Heart of Jesus and the intercession of Our Lady

of the Sacred Heart and St. Joseph Friend of the Sacred Heart, the Superior General explained to the Council that, to guard against serious events that could take place in France, prudence suggested that timely provision should be made for the security of the Society and its members. The care of souls to which he is bound as Archpriest of Issoudun makes it impossible for him to withdraw to a safe place in the eventuality of violent persecution. Therefore it has been agreed that if death or imprisonment (quod Deus avertat) should deprive the Institute of its venerated Head, and a General Chapter be unable to meet according to the Rule, the government of the Society will pass immediately, and ipso facto, to *Fr. Victor Jouët*, Procurator General of the Society, as Vicar General... »¹⁰.

This is a very interesting document; it shows the serious nature of the apprehensions of the MSC priests in France. It also might give rise to a question: Why *Fr. Jouët*? To that the obvious answer is: Why not? For one reason, living in Rome he was safe from any persecution in France. Another reason is found in the words of *Fr. Piperon*:

« *Fr. Chevalier* found in him a most active worker, the most dedicated, and at the same time the most useful for all his works. It is to him that we owe their success. In my humble opinion, of all of us, it was he who was the man of Divine Providence, the right arm of our venerated Founder »¹¹.

We shall meet *Victor Jouët* often in the course of this story.

Conclusion.

Piperon, *Vandel*, *Jouët* - these were *Fr. Chevalier's* most faithful and constructive collaborators during those vital years. They were also his oldest and most trusted friends. There is an adage which says: Show me your friends and I will tell you what you are. It says much for *Jules Chevalier* that he could enlist and keep the friendship of men such as these. And when we speak of friendship, *Maugenest* must

take his rightful place with the rest. For, although he would go a different way, all of them knew and acknowledged that in so doing he was but going where God called him. He remained attached to them all by the bonds of a deep friendship. To Fr. Chevalier, all of them gave a life-long loyalty and love.

Notes Chapter 3

- ¹ Letter Maugenest to Meyer MSC, La Rose, March 5th, 1915.
- ² Letter Maugenest to Meyer MSC, La Rose, August 27th, 1915.
- ³ Written in his Carnet Messes IV, Ms, 27 Sept. 1869.
- ⁴ Vandell, Ms for the priests of l'Oeuvre des Campagnes.
- ⁵ Letter De Fresne, May 6th, 1877, quoted in Annales Issoudun, 1877, p. 138.
- ⁶ Quoted by Vermin, pp. 277-278.
- ⁷ Piperon, Ms Notice, p. 98-101, quoted by Vermin, pp. 274-278.
- ⁸ Piperon, Ms Notice, p. 113 f.
- ⁹ *ib.*
- ¹⁰ Document, Archives MSC, Rome.
- ¹¹ Piperon, Ms Notice, p. 113 f.

Ametur ubique

1. CONSOLIDATION.

It is people who make a Society and give it its spirit: men like Chevalier, Piperon, Vandel, Jouët and the rest. These men had taken as their motto May the Sacred Heart of Jesus be everywhere loved (*Ametur ubique terrarum Cor Iesu Sacratissimum*).

However, before they could work effectively 'everywhere', they had to consolidate on the home front. The consolidation of the MSC group itself was closely linked with developments in two other areas:

- the position of the MSC at Issoudun, and
- devotion to Our Lady of the Sacred Heart.

We need to consider briefly these two developments.

a. *The MSC at Issoudun.*

As we have seen, when Frs. Chevalier and Maugenest began the work of founding their group of missionaries, they left the parish of St. Cyr and set up their own centre which became known as « the Sacred Heart ». It was not a parish centre - although it became a centre of devotion for many of the parishioners of Issoudun. With the secular clergy at St. Cyr, and the missionaries at « the Sacred Heart », there was the possibility of a certain division in the parish. It could have been argued that both the work of the parish and the

apostolate of the missionaries would be helped by giving St. Cyr to the MSC. It could be argued the other way, too: that the missionaries would be freer to devote themselves to their missionary apostolate if they were not tied down to the care of the parish.

In 1861, what looked like the ideal arrangement was made. Fr. Maugenest came back to Issoudun. He had long been asking to be permitted to do this. Now he was appointed as parish priest of St. Cyr. Fr. Chevalier was delighted since the parish had been entrusted to « one of our own ». One might have expected that Maugenest and Chevalier would have taken up where they left off, carrying on as co-founders of the new Congregation. However, for seven years the two men had gone their different ways. They could not retrace their steps.

The two chief factors at work in the life of Maugenest had been his preaching (for which he was richly endowed), and his desire for religious life. It was a consistent further step that he should feel that he was called to join the « Order of Preachers », the Dominicans. It seems certain that Fr. Vandell, as his confessor, had advised him that this was his true calling. On December 31st, 1871, he left Issoudun to enter the Novitiate of the Dominican Order. He would spend the rest of his life as a Dominican. Before leaving Issoudun, he made a gift of his personal library to the MSC Community and remained in friendly contact with the MSC until his death in 1918. From time to time he returned to Issoudun to preach both at St. Cyr and at the Sacred Heart. In 1904, he was at Chevalier's side to celebrate the Golden Jubilee of the MSC Congregation.

It is further interesting to note that before he himself had been appointed parish priest of St. Cyr he had strongly urged the Abbé Crozat to resign his parish in favour of the MSC. Now with his own departure for the Dominican Novitiate, there was no Archpriest of the parish of Issoudun; the way was open for what he had himself proposed.

The Archbishop then proposed that the MSC take over the parish. In the discussions of the General Council, they argued the reasons for and against. When Fr. Chevalier hesitated, the Archbishop insisted. He pointed out that troubled times were coming in France, in which, a parish priest approved by the government might be in a more stable position than a religious. In that case, he said, it could well be that the parish of Issoudun would serve as « a plank of salvation » for the young religious congregation. Seeing the wisdom of this thinking, and grateful for the Archbishop's interest in the welfare of his MSC Society, Fr. Chevalier accepted, and was named Archpriest of St. Cyr, Issoudun, in March 1872. He had tried hard to get Fr. Piperon to accept the position. But Piperon had refused and kept on refusing. He could not accept in conscience, he said, for he was simply not made for responsibility. Nevertheless, Fr. Chevalier appointed him as assistant pastor, and he took care of much of the pastoral work in the parish.

Meanwhile, « the Sacred Heart » was becoming well known throughout France. When the church was erected as a minor basilica in 1874, this action on the part of the Pope gave the final stamp of approval and respectability. Owing to the enthusiasm and enterprise of Fr. Jouët, Issoudun was fast becoming a centre of pilgrimage. Here had come the national pilgrimage of October 17th, 1872, and the Catholic Pilgrimage of September 8th, 1873, with 30,000 pilgrims, many bishops and priests, even from outside France. This pilgrimage of September 8th was to become, and to remain, the most important yearly event at Issoudun.

b. Our Lady of the Sacred Heart.

These pilgrimages were, for the most part, in honour of Our Lady of the Sacred Heart. To a large extent, as already mentioned, the growth of the MSC Society was connected with the spread of this new devotion. Obviously, then, anything that affected the devotion, favourably or unfavourably, would have similar repercussions on the new Society. And if at times — to us who look backwards (with a dif-

ferent mentality) from a different point in time — there seem to have been some petty rivalries, let us remember that the devotion and its connection with Issoudun and the MSC was seen as far more important then, even for the very development of the Society. If the devotion were suspect - then so were the MSC. If the devotion, its propagation and its Associations, passed into the hands of other congregations - then the young MSC community would lose one of its important works and one of its reasons for existence. One of the early high-lights was the solemn crowning of the statue of Our Lady of the Sacred Heart at Issoudun in 1869, September 8th. In those days this was a solemn ceremony - especially when carried out with the special delegation of the Pope himself. It was solemnly setting a seal on the value of the devotion with the approval of the Pope himself. That September 8th, the Archbishop of Bourges had been delegated by the Pope to carry out the ceremony of the solemn crowning of Our Lady of the Sacred Heart. There were thousands of pilgrims. Fifteen bishops were present; the ceremonies were carried out in pomp and splendour.

But even then, there was the beginning of the trouble that Fr. Chevalier had to contend with for some time - objections from the Holy Office or at least demands for an explanation. Although the historical chain of events is somewhat complicated, the main facts involved are fairly simple. Those were the days when, in prayers, preaching and hymns, and in spiritual writings, pious exaggerations abounded. They were also the days when the Holy Office kept a careful eye out for doctrinal aberrations. And when the careful orthodox eye meets with the pious exaggerations, misunderstandings and conflicts are a fairly predictable outcome. This is exactly what happened with regard to devotion to Our Lady of the Sacred Heart which, in popular expression at least, gave a certain emphasis to Mary's maternal power of intercession. Theologically this presents no problem. But the pious exaggerations did. Terms like « Queen of the Sacred Heart », « Sovereign of the Sacred Heart », « Sovereign mistress of the Sacred Heart » aroused suspicions. And when suspicions

are aroused, they are hard to dislodge; and they spread. In this instance, they spread to the design of the statue itself. We have seen the very simplicity of Fr. Chevalier's idea of juxtaposing the statues of Jesus and Mary, the Child standing before his Mother. However, once the cloud of suspicion had fallen, even the statue appeared ominous: for did it not show a large Madonna standing over a small Christ?!!

While the outward festivities of the Crowning of the statue of Our Lady of the Sacred Heart were going on (Sept. 8th, 1869), Fr. Chevalier was in quite a turmoil. That very morning, he had received a « please explain » from the Holy Office. The Archbishop had informed him that in the morning's mail he had received a request to send to the Holy Office a full account of all that had been written about the new devotion. This and other like ones later were worrying moments for Fr. Chevalier, for, as we have indicated, a condemnation of the devotion would most likely be a fatal blow to the young Society.

Fortunately, the devotion was never condemned. But Fr. Chevalier and other members of the Society had to spend a lot of time over the years allaying Roman suspicions - or suspicions relayed to Rome by others. They also had to observe detailed instructions as to which formulae could not be used when speaking or writing of the devotion. They had to follow norms about the images of Our Lady. All this had a certain nuisance value, and caused the early MSC an amount of worry and apprehension. But the details need not concern us here ¹.

In these years since the establishment of the Confraternity of Our Lady of the Sacred Heart at Issoudun, Associations of Our Lady of the Sacred Heart had sprung up in a number of places. Several of these were in Italy - at Osimo, Anagni, Bologna, Florence, etc. In 1872 a Confraternity was erected in Rome. Fr. Chevalier had given his support to the petition for this establishment. However, when the Confraternity was set up, the image was different from that of Issoudun, and

was being run independently of Issoudun. Fr. Chevalier was disturbed at this and sent Fr. Jouët to Rome to look into the matter. As mentioned previously, in the circumstances of those times, it seemed particularly important to the MSC that all Confraternities of Our Lady of the Sacred Heart be connected with the MSC and related to Issoudun. They did not want two distinct and different Confraternities of Our Lady of the Sacred Heart. The Roman Confraternity became an Archconfraternity in 1873. So there was a period of polemic and rivalry and much diplomacy by Fr. Jouët in Rome. This all concluded in 1879 when a decree of union was issued and the universal Archconfraternity of Our Lady of the Sacred Heart with its seat at Rome, was entrusted to the care of the Missionaries of the Sacred Heart.

This was made easier by the acquisition of a church at Piazza Navona, in the centre of Rome, which became a church of Our Lady of the Sacred Heart. It was an old church known as « St. James of the Spaniards », in a state of disrepair. The Spanish government in Madrid was no longer interested in keeping it going for the Spanish Catholics in Rome and wished to sell it. The City of Rome thought to buy it to use for profane purposes. A group of Protestants also thought of buying it, so that they would have a protestant church in the heart of Rome. Pope Leo XIII, newly elected Pontiff, did not favour either the profane purpose, or the protestant enterprise. Having heard that the MSC were looking for a place in Rome, he urged them to save this building for the Catholic Church. The MSC were thus under double pressure - that of their own desire to set up a sanctuary of Our Lady of the Sacred Heart in Rome, to be the centre of the universal Archconfraternity; and that of the Holy Father, urging them to acquire this property. He even offered to lend them 100,000 francs.

The MSC bought the church on July 13th, 1878, with the help of the Pope's loan. It was restored and opened on May 23rd, 1879 when it was consecrated to Our Lady of the Sacred Heart. At the time of the restoration of the church,

an upper story was built to serve as a residence for an MSC community in Rome.

c. The MSC Congregation.

In 1860 Fr. Chevalier had paid his first visit to Rome. There he spoke with Pope Pius IX of the new group of missionaries of the Sacred Heart which he had begun at Issoudun. The Pope said to him «...increase and multiply, and preach devotion to the Sacred Heart everywhere. I hope that, before I die, I will have the opportunity of giving canonical approval to your Congregation.»²

That opportunity came in 1869. Over the years Fr. Chevalier had worked at drawing up a Rule, or Constitutions, for his Religious Society. In this he consulted many priests and was helped by the Jesuits, in particular by Fr. Ramière. In 1868 he had these 'constitutions' ready under the title of «Formula Instituti». In presenting them to Rome for approval he had to present also an exposition of the state of the Society - its numbers and material possessions as well as testimonial letters from Bishops. When he sent his petition (dated December 25th, 1868), to Rome for approval, it was accompanied by testimonial letters of 28 bishops, with a few more to follow. In February 1869, he was received by the Pope, having given his documentation to the Sacred Congregation for Bishops and Regulars. This Congregation gave its «Decretum Laudis», or Decree of Praise to the MSC Congregation on March 8th. The Constitutions were later approved for a period of experimentation.³ Therefore the Society of the Missionaries of the Sacred Heart was now a religious congregation «of Pontifical right». Juridically, therefore, they were no longer subject to the Archbishop of Bourges but directly subject to the Holy See. Although Fr. Chevalier had presented a plan for his society with its three branches, the reply concerned only the religious congregation strictly so called. The vows were stressed as essential.

It was agreed that, later that year, all the members of the

MSC community who could would get together to make a retreat. This they did in September, at Issoudun, under the direction of Fr. H. Ramière S.J. Towards the end of the retreat, September 26th they elected a Superior General and Assistants. They also made their public perpetual profession. Some of those who could not be present participated in the elections with a postal vote. Fr. Chevalier was elected Superior General, with Fr. Piperon as First Assistant. The other assistants were Frs. Vandel, Bazire and Guyot.

As we have indicated, there was a certain provisional character about this Decree of Praise which pointed out that, after some experimentation and further study of the Constitutions, definitive approval would be given to the new Congregation. This definitive approval came from Rome on 20th June, 1874.

But, of course, for a new Congregation to develop it needs to receive recruits and to form them well. The MSC Congregation had already set up its minor seminary or 'apostolic school' at Chezal-Benoit. This was the great work of Fr. Vandel. Although it went into recess during the Franco-German war of 1870-1871, it reopened soon afterwards. Among the post-war (1872-1874) students were names to recur in the later history of the congregation: Henri Verjus, F.X. Klotz, Emil Merg, F. Barral, E. Meyer from France, while others gave it an international character. There was Fora from Spain, Ilge from Germany, Peeters from Holland. There were others, one from Italy and two from Ireland, whose MSC careers were to be short. In France and elsewhere the Apostolic School was to be a source of vocations to the Society for more than a century.

After the Apostolic School the young aspirants would have to do a year's Novitiate. Before obtaining the *Decretum Laudis*, especially since most of those who joined were already priests, they had been satisfied with a year's probation, usually at Issoudun. But now it was necessary to do things more systematically and to set up a regular Novitiate under the direction of a Master of Novices. The first

Novitiate was erected at Montluçon, and the first official Novice Master was Fr. Guyot who was pastor of the parish there. Fr. Guyot always seems to have been far more interested in the parish ministry than in being Novice Master. From the very beginning he was given an assistant, a « Socius », who practically did all the work of training the Novices in the principles and practice of religious life. The first of these was Fr. Remy Ledoux. The Novitiate was blessed in August 1869 and opened on 12th September. It was suspended by the war and reopened in 1871. This time Fr. Miniot was the new Socius. In the summer of 1873 the Novitiate was transferred to St-Gérand-le-Puy. In 1875 the third Socius was appointed: Fr. Ramot. He was later appointed as successor to Fr. Guyot as Novice Master in name as well as in practical fact.

At the end of the Novitiate, the young men made their religious profession. Those who were going on for the priesthood would then have to do their philosophical and theological studies. The first arrangements made for these studies (for the six young men professed in the autumn of 1874) were very haphazard indeed. Three of them, Grom, Lanctin and Berthon, went to Chezal-Benoit where they worked as teachers and supervisors. At the same time they were given some classes themselves by Frs. Marie and Captier. The other three, Barral, Postal and De Mondion were provisionally put up at Issoudun where they were given lessons by some of the priests in the community. Little by little a scholasticate was organized at Issoudun with a special rule and a special body of professors. This was pretty well set up by 1879.

At the same time some scholastics were being sent to Rome. We have seen that the MSC authorities were concerned about the Confraternity of Our Lady of the Sacred Heart there. The General Council thought that the interests of the Society would be best served by having some of its members permanently in Rome - especially since at that time the Holy Office was having (and causing) further worries about the orthodoxy of the devotion to Our Lady of the Sacred

Heart. This time they were caused by some exaggerations in Poland. Fr. Jouët was sent to Rome in order to try to clear up the problems about Our Lady of the Sacred Heart and also to investigate the possibilities of sending students there. After a preliminary approach to the French Seminary, it seemed more advisable to send the students to Propaganda Fide College, in view of the fact that many of them would one day be foreign missionaries. In August of that year, 1875, the General Council decided to set up a community in Rome, including five students. The students went to Rome in December of that year.

However, as yet Fr. Jouët had not found an available residence suitable for the foundation. A temporary solution which Fr. Chevalier accepted, was proposed by Fr. Jouët: to accept the hospitality offered by Fr. Régis, Procurator General of the Trappists in Rome. Fr. Jouët wrote: « Fr. Régis willingly offers us the hospitality of his Procure, which is between St. John and the Colosseum, near St. Clement. He lives there with his secretary, one brother and a retired bishop. He has two chapels and would give us the use of one of them. There is an immense dormitory where we could take the cells needed; we would have ample space in the refectory; the brother who does his cooking would do ours. We would have a large heated room which would be reserved for us to work in... But since Trappist beds are a bit hard, we would need to buy others... Fr. Régis likes us well, knowing our history thoroughly and also our devotion and its image and he has had our statue kept at St. Pauls, Tre Fontane... »⁴.

Frs. Chevalier and Jouët found it easier to agree on the house than on the superior of the community. Fr. Chevalier had proposed Fr. Ariëns, the first Dutch MSC. Fr. Jouët opposed the choice. He wanted Fr. Ramot or Fr. Miniot. Fr. Chevalier did not think Miniot suitable, 'with his ideas of a community that can't be found anywhere'⁵; Fr. Guyot wanted Ramot to succeed him as Novice Master. Finally another solution was found: Fr. Jouët, while remaining Assistant General, would be named Superior of the House

in Rome, and Procurator 'for the time-being' (the time-being was to last for 17 years). Fr. Miniot was to be sent to be second in charge and to look after the scholastics. This solution was a great relief to Jouët. For he had been given an instruction from Fr. Chevalier which he found it difficult to carry out:

« ...You will take the students to Propaganda Seminary and bring them home. You can ask the Superior for a little room in which to work while they are in class... »⁶. No, sitting still all day, and playing nursemaid to five scholastics was not for Victor Jouët! He therefore was all the more pleased to welcome Fr. Miniot on his arrival in April 1876.

Later on when they had acquired their new quarters in Piazza Navona, the MSC moved community, scholastics, and Confraternity to this one central house. It later became apostolic school and scholasticate for the Italian students of the Society.

1879 was the Silver Jubilee (25 years) of the MSC Congregation. It was also the year of the first General Chapter, which will be mentioned again later. The MSC Congregation had acquired a certain character and a certain stability. Outside of France it had houses in Rome and in Watertown (U.S.A.).⁷ It may be of interest to note the names of the members of the Society at that time.

PRIESTS:

		<i>Year of birth</i>	<i>Profession</i>	<i>Priest-hood</i>
<i>Issoudun (St. Cyr)</i> from 1872	Chevalier	1824	1856/69	1851
	Pipéron	1828	1864/69	1854
	Hamel	1828	1874	1860
	Hériault	1851	1872	1877
	Vatan	1853	1877	1878
<i>Issoudun (S. C.)</i> from 1855	Morisseau (sup.)	1829	1873	1854
	Marie (Thorey)	1836	1871	?
	Cramaille	1843	1871	1875
	Postal	1855	1874	1878

		<i>birth Year of</i>	<i>Profession</i>	<i>Priest- hood</i>
	Papin	1856	1879	?
	Bâtard	1847	1871	1873
	Baltzer	1820	1877	1878
	Lavialle	1840	1873	1854
<i>Chezal-Benoît</i>	Lanctin (sup.)	1855	1874	1878
from 1867	Maillard	1851	1875	1878
	Berthon	1855	1874	1878
	Barral P.	1855	1874	1879
<i>Rome</i>	Jouët	1839	1865/72	1862
from 1875	Miniot	1830	1868/69	1854
	Casas	1851	1877	1878
<i>St-Gérard-le-Puy</i>	Guyot	1827	1865/69	1850
from 1873	Ramot	1846	1874	1870
<i>Arles</i>	Deidier	1836	1878	1859
from 1878	Albert	1831	1869	1866
	Chappel	1817	1870	?
	Navarre	1836	1878	1872
<i>Watertown</i>	Durin	1836	1865/71	1859
from 1876	Ariëns	1817	1875	1845
	Grom Ign.	1855	1874	1878

SCHOLASTICS:

<i>Name</i>	<i>Year of birth</i>	<i>Profession</i>	<i>Residence</i>
Grom Benjamin	1857	1875	Watertown
Bizeuil	1856	1875	Issoudun
Carrière	1857	1875	Rome
Thomas	1854	1876	Issoudun
Letonnellier	1846	1876	Issoudun
Giroux	1854	1876	St-Gérard
Klotz	1858	1877	Rome
Hartzer Ferd.	1858	1877	Issoudun
Tréand	1856	1877	Issoudun
Thévenot	1857	1877	Watertown
Van den Bosch	1858	1877	Issoudun

<i>Name</i>	<i>Year of birth</i>	<i>Profession</i>	<i>Residence</i>
Brunet	1845	1877	Chezal-Benoît
Ceyssat	1854	1877	Issoudun
Legros	1853	1878	Issoudun
Verjus	1860	1878	Issoudun
Peeters H.	1860	1878	Issoudun
Merg E.	1860	1878	Issoudun
Fora	1859	1878	Rome
Meyer	1861	1878	Rome
Védère	1859	1878	Rome
Ilge	1860	1878	Issoudun
Hartzer Leop.	1860	1878	Arles
Chétail	1859	1878	Chezal-Benoît
Vandel Jules	1860	1878	Rome
Sahut	1854	1878	Chezal-Benoît
Véron	1849	1878	Chezal-Benoît
O'Mahony Corn.	1859	1878	Chezal-Benoît
Neenan Will.	1862	1878	Chezal-Benoît
Roux	1855	1878	Issoudun

BROTHERS:

Barbier	1814	1872/79	Issoudun
Delimoges	1858	1875	Issoudun
Bono Charles	1831	1876	Watertown
Romain Alexandre	1852	1876	Chezal-Benoît
Fromm Mesmin	1860	1878	Rome

The whole Congregation, in September 1879 numbered 29 priests 29 scholastics and 5 brothers, totaling 63 professed members.

Already deceased were 4 priests: Sauret, Jean-Marie Vandel, J.M. Neenan and Georgelin; and two scholastics: Georges Mayer and Stanislas Lecorre.

d. *Why Watertown?*

Watertown is not one of the truly famous cities of the U.S.A. like New York, Chicago or Los Angeles. In fact,

many an American can not tell you where it is. Yet it is the site of the first MSC foundation outside of Europe - and it is worth visiting. One may naturally ask why we picked on Watertown, and what were the facts of history which led the MSC Society to begin here its first foundation in the new world.

The beginnings of the answer to these questions lie in the quick spread of devotion to Our Lady of the Sacred Heart to Canada and the United States. Knowledge of the devotion led to a knowledge of its source: Issoudun and the MSC Community. In 1864, Mgr Charbonnel, former bishop of Toronto and then a preacher of sermons and retreats, came to Issoudun, and was asked to preach a special sermon on Our Lady of the Sacred Heart. He preached on it outside Issoudun thereafter, and came back for frequent visits to the MSC community, to whom he spoke much of Canada, no doubt generating a keen interest in that part of the world. We know that in 1870 tentative arrangements were being made with the Bishop of Ottawa to send three « missionaries » to his diocese. Before final arrangements could be made, the Franco-German war intervened. After the war, an application was received from Archbishop Lynch of Toronto to send men there. His application is supported by a certain Mr. L. Gibra who seems to have been a former fellow-seminarian of Frs. Chevalier and Píperon. He was rather exuberant in his promises of how well Toronto could serve as a springboard for the works of the MSC Society in the New World.

In 1873 the General Council decided to send someone to Toronto to see what the possibilities really were and what were the future hopes for expansion. Fr. Chappel, a priest of 55 years, with very little knowledge of English left for Toronto on July 21st, 1873. He was accompanied by a brother, Brother Henri Dechâtre. Because of his lack of knowledge of English, he was not too clear on what sort of permanent work he should engage in - and it would seem that the Archbishop shared his uncertainty. Even a visit of Archbishop Lynch to Issoudun on his way to Rome and on

his return journey, did little to clarify the situation. Consequently Fr. Chappel, growing impatient, went to Montreal and sent Bro. Henri back to France. At Montreal he worked for a while as curate in a parish.

At the end of 1875, the Bishop of Ogdensburg in the U.S.A. asked for help from the Archbishop of Montreal. Did he know of any group of french-speaking priests who might look after the French-Canadian catholics of Watertown? Immediately Fr. Chappel's name was suggested, and towards the final days of 1875, he was already in Watertown. From there he wrote to Fr. Chevalier of the definite possibility of setting up a centre for the MSC and their works at Watertown in the state of New York.

The General Council accepted his recommendation, and on April 20th, 1876, a « missionary-sending » celebration was held at Issoudun for the first group of MSC who were to depart as 'missionaries' for the New World. Fr. Durin, named as Superior of the new foundation and two scholastics, Benjamin Grom and J.B. Métayer, set out for Watertown. There are, however, a couple of facts which should be mentioned, since they connect with other parts of this account. Watertown has a number of 'firsts' to its credit. It was the first MSC house outside of Europe. Its first Superior, Fr. Durin was, in 1881, to become the superior of the first group of MSC missionaries to Oceania. He was succeeded at Watertown by Fr. Ramot; to the Watertown community came also the first Dutch MSC, Fr. T. Ariëns, and the first Irish MSC priest, Fr. J.M. Neenan. The former was soon to leave the Congregation. The latter, after a few months, was the first MSC to die in the Americas.

2. EXPULSION AND EXPANSION.

By the year 1879 the MSC community had been in existence for 25 years. And in 1879 the Republicans came to power in France. This meant trouble for the Church. « The offensive against 'clericalism' would, on two different occasions

— (1879-1886 and 1898-1907) — take on such a blind fury that catholics would have the impression of an effort at de-christianization inspired by the spirit of the Revolution »⁸.

1879-1886 is the period we are about to consider, and 1898-1907 were the last years of Fr. Chevalier's life.

Since, the MSC Society was seriously affected by these attacks on the Church, we should try summarily to explain what they were all about. Relations between the Church and the Republicans in 1879 were not at all good - « through the fault of believers and their adversaries alike »⁹. First of all the adversaries had among their most powerful people (like Jules Ferry, minister for public instruction), men who were secularists in the sense that they wanted to do away with religion. Ferry, in fact, had declared that his aim was « to organize humanity without God »¹⁰. Many of these men were free-masons, and french free-masonry at that time was atheistic, strongly opposed to the Church. Therefore the « anticlericalism » of many of these men was something deep and deadly. It was not merely an opposition to too much interference on the part of Bishops and priests - it was a real hostility to the Church as religion¹¹. It was that « esprit laïc » that « in theory and in practice rejects the faith and all that proceeds from it ». Therefore they attacked the forces of instruction in the faith, seeing here the most powerful influence against them. They attacked religious congregations, especially the Jesuits, and recruitment for the clergy.

The fault was 'also of believers'. In their fear of and opposition to these « laicizing tendencies », Catholics failed to appreciate that in the Republican movement there were many things that were inevitable and a lot of things that were good. State governments had to come of age without interference from the Church; many of the poorer classes had no hope of social justice except in a new political regime. Failing to appreciate these things, many catholics, and most bishops, aligned themselves very strongly with the political party of the monarchists. Those bishops were rare who

warned that « it is foolish to entail religion to a political party » (Mgr. Guibert) or who, like Mgr. Besson, would declare « We are not men of a party, we are ministers of Jesus Christ. »¹² Most catholics were aggressively monar-chistic, even going so far as to boycott Republicans, reporting people to the authorities for singing the Marseillaise and other bits of petty persecution. It was clear that, if the Republicans came to power, the Church would reap the harvest of reaction.

The Republicans did come to power in 1879 and Jules Ferry set about organizing his 'humanity without God'. As minister for public instruction, he could and did bring in laws that struck at the teaching orders and recruitment of the clergy. These laws forced the MSC, along with other religious congregations, to take their students elsewhere if they wished to continue educating them for the priesthood and religious life.

On the 5th of November, 1880 (First Friday of the month, for good measure) Fr. Chevalier « saw, in one day, all of his religious thrown out of their houses of France by the police and the armed forces; ignoble seals were placed on the doors of the Basilica of Issoudun and the other chapels of our houses... »¹³. The doors of the Basilica were closed and barred to all entry. In the beautiful chapel of Our Lady of the Sacred Heart, the votive lamps went untended; the flames flickered and died. It would not have been strange if, in this situation, Fr. Chevalier's own faith had wavered, or if he had given up hope for the future. Numbers of Religious Orders which then had Provinces in France, today have none. In France the MSC had one house left - that of the parish of Issoudun which was left untouched because it was less obviously a 'religious' house. They were dependent on France for what limited finance they had; they hardly had a foothold in Spain and the house of Watertown was small and far away. Rome with the students was more a house to be supported than one which could help the rest of the Society.

Fr. Chevalier had begun his enterprise with one companion; he now had about sixty. He began in a barn which he had replaced by a beautiful basilica; this they had taken away from him. But they could not take from him the courage and the determination which was so much part of his character; nor could they take the devotion and the loyalty of a Piperon, a Jouët or most of the other men who had joined him. In fact he had foreseen the likelihood of these unhappy events; he had foreseen and, insofar as his meagre resources permitted, he had planned for this eventuality. If he had doubts, no one ever knew. He had begun in a barn; if necessary, 26 years later, he and his companions could do the same again.

If we look ahead just 2 years in time and north a few hundred kilometers in distance, we shall find the MSC in full production again - this time in a factory! In Tilburg, Holland an old cloth factory had been bought and turned into a place for producing MSC. In later years and in better quarters, it would turn out almost exclusively Dutch MSC for the Province which was to become the biggest in the Society, and one worthy of praise for its contribution to the local Church as well as for its missionary achievement. However, in those days it had French MSC as well, German and Swiss, Irish and Belgian. Big and all as the factory was, it was soon filled to overflowing — with Novices and apostolic school-boys, with scholastics and with trainees for the MSC brotherhood — and with an Office for the Dutch Annals of Our Lady of the Sacred Heart. There were, of course, too, the priests needed to carry on these various activities. And at the head of this busy and complicated enterprise, responsible for all the different sections was - « the man who was simply not built for responsibility », Fr. Charles Piperon!

If we look back two years, we will find Fr. Chevalier writing to the Archbishop of Bourges in February 1876:

« The last elections must make us religious rather apprehensive... Humanly speaking, at a time more or less distant, we shall be defenceless. Allow me to explain to Your Excel-

lency the measures of prudence which the circumstances seem to suggest... Forseeing the possibility that our Apostolic School, our Novitiate and our Scholasticate will no longer be permitted in France, we think that, during the troubled times, we should transport these works to England, Belgium or Holland where we have many associates and some good benefactors. To that end, I intend to send Fr. Durin — a man of order, virtue and intelligence — before he leaves for America, to visit these different countries in order to ensure us refuge in case of need »¹⁴.

After the fateful events of November 5th, 1880, Fr. Chevalier put his plans into effect. For the scholastics the immediate solution was relatively easy. They went to Rome where they were welcomed by the other MSC scholastics already there. In Issoudun itself a number of families had offered to house the priests whom Fr. Chevalier would want to stay with him at this time. The boys from the Apostolic School at Chezal-Benoît were brought to Issoudun and divided into small groups. In different parts of the town dormitories had been prepared for them and during the day they carried on with their classes in other quarters.

« Our fathers expected to be driven out of their cells on Friday, November 5th; and that is exactly what happened. The Sacred Heart permitted that his missionaries should be expelled on the day consecrated to him. All noted this coincidence and were happy to suffer something for the Sacred Heart...

« Early in the morning when the boys were in the crypt... making meditation, Fr. Chevalier came to warn them all to withdraw into the study hall of the day-school. The police were already knocking at the main door of the house... While the fathers were being evicted, the scholastics of Issoudun and Chezal, dressed in lay clothes, were seated beside us in the study as if they belonged to our group... The police passed back and forth before our door without stopping... The Basilica was closed and sealed off at all doors but nobody noticed the crypt! Fr. Chevalier had taken care

to position himself in front of the stairs leading to the crypt, thus hiding the entrance... He was as calm as usual, even smiling...

« The fathers went to take refuge in the town. With the boys there remained only Fr. Laviale and the other fathers who had been at Chezal. Nevertheless the existence of the Apostolic School was not unknown at Issoudun. The authorities could have caused trouble; therefore it was decided that we would be regarded as *day-students*. Accordingly we had to think about evacuating the house of the Sacred Heart, and going to sleep and take our meals in the town. That Friday evening, we slept at the Sacred Heart for the last time.

« Saturday 6th, November 1880. The whole morning was spent carrying beds into the town to three different houses: Madame Du Quesne put an entire house at our disposal; the Des Meloises family; and Madame de Verneuil whom the good Fr. Vandel used to call 'the grandmother of the Apostolic School'. Other families had offered their homes but so that the boys would not be too scattered, we limited ourselves to these three families...

« For our meals, the *Sisters of Our Lady of the Sacred Heart* gave us part of their house... »¹⁵.

In this way the boys of the Apostolic School could carry on at Issoudun. The Novices and students could not remain in France. They had to leave and there was no point in their leaving unless a number of priests went with them to continue their MSC formation elsewhere.

While his confreres « took the road into exile », Fr. Chevalier remained behind at Issoudun to work and pray that, in spite of this severe blow, the young congregation might yet be saved. « I went often to throw myself at the feet of Our Lord », he wrote, « and I said to him: My divine Saviour it is I and I alone who, by my sins, am the cause of this disorder. Strike me; I deserve it, but have pity on

my brothers and save from shipwreck this little congregation completely devoted to your divine Heart...

With the grace of God I did my best to develop our works and make them prosper, to procure some resources and provide for the needs of all our exiled brethren. How many worries and how much work by day and night!! »¹⁶.

HOLLAND.

The Novices were to set out for Holland and it would not be too long before part of the Apostolic School would follow.

As events were to prove, Holland was a good choice. At that time the MSC community had already a number of links with Holland. First of all there was the Shrine of Our Lady of the Sacred Heart at Sittard, where at the Ursuline Convent chapel an Association of Our Lady of the Sacred Heart had been begun in 1866 and become very well known. Fr. Chevalier had preached there in December 1873 when the bishop of Roermond crowned the statue in the name of Pope Pius IX. There were already some Dutch scholastics and students in the Apostolic School. Fr. T. Ariëns, former professor at the Minor Seminary of s'Hertogenbosch, was professed as an MSC in April 1875. Although by this time he had left the Society, he did furnish an extra link with the diocese to which the MSC Novitiate was transferred from France. Fr. Jouët was called in as usual for these affairs of public relations.

He had been sent to Holland once before, to Sittard, in August 1871. It had been a very sudden departure from Issoudun with a last-minute notification which ruined some plans that Jouët had made. « And so », he wrote, « I'm sent to do a few days retreat in a Dutch cheese... O holy obedience, how lovable you are!! »¹⁷. Closer acquaintance with the cheese and the people of Holland made him write far more enthusiastically on 10th October 1880:

« All goes well in this part of the world... The rat of the fable which withdrew one day into a Dutch cheese must have been very intelligent, for he could not have found a more delicious spot, nor one more favourable to peace and the well-being of religion. Since we have been here, we have found the greatest good-will towards our Society »¹⁸.

He found the bishop of s'Hertogenbosch very cordial and generous. Not only would he welcome the MSC to the diocese, he would even let them have a house belonging to his seminary, called Huize Gerra. So Fr. Piperon took his Novices there at the end of 1880.

They had a house; but they had little else. They had no heating and they suffered from the cold and the dampness. Their poverty was somewhat alleviated by the generosity of the professors of the Seminary and their friends but it was grim none the less. The health of more than one of those early novices was permanently impaired. But they had a spirit which kept them going.

November 1881 saw the profession of the first novices formed outside of France. Among them were some names later to become famous in the Society and beyond: Bontemps founder of the mission in the Gilbert Islands; Couppé, first Bishop of New Britain; Linckens, founder of the German Province, and of the MSC Sisters; Reyn whom we shall see in later chapters. It was quite a collection of « founders »! This profession immediately presented a further problem in planning. Would the young students join the MSC scholastics in Rome or should other arrangements be made for them? Perhaps it was felt that the faith and generosity of the Catholic community in Holland held real promise for the future of the MSC. Anyway it was decided that the students would stay there. This decision was helped by the offer made by the Director of the Seminary, that the MSC students would be welcome to follow the course of studies at the seminary.

The house at Gerra was small and the community was

growing. And Fr. Chevalier wrote from France: « The Apostolic School is no longer safe at Issoudun. At any moment we could receive orders to send the boys home to their families. So will you please look for a house which could take the boys as well as the Novices and the Scholastics. And please hurry - there is no time to lose »¹⁹.

Fr. Piperon therefore bought the factory at Tilburg. Today, if you visit Tilburg, a Dutch MSC will show you the place where the old factory stood. The site is occupied by a bank, and a book and stationery shop. For sentimental reasons it was later purchased by Jan Brocken, brother of the first Dutch Superior General of the MSC Society, so that it would always have some connection with the MSC. But time marches on and sentimental reasons weaken with the years, to give way to hard business realism and our factory is gone for good.

In 1882 Tilburg was under way as an MSC foundation, with apostolic schoolboys, Novices, and students and a very promising group of young men who aspired to be brothers in the Congregation. It was here that the MSC brotherhood got its first really vital boost. Tilburg was under way and it would grow and prosper until it was the central house of a flourishing Dutch Province.

After the students and the Novices came the Annals of Our Lady of the Sacred Heart. In those days there was the feeling that, in every country, the MSC were not really established until, by means of the Annals they were making known Our Lady of the Sacred Heart. The Annals were already being published in France, Spain, Rome, Watertown. At Tilburg it was Fr. P. Barral who got the Annals launched. He was an intelligent young man full of energy and free from all inhibitions. The fact that he was from Savoy and the local language was Dutch presented no problem for him. He wrote the Annals in French and got some teaching brothers to translate it for him. He even went further afield and with the authorization of the bishop of Cologne was also editing a German Annals by 1884. In this way the

Congregation of the MSC became better known, gathering friends and supporters in different lands.

It was thus that the damage done to the MSC Society in France was compensated for in a relatively short time. The stability of the foundation which had been threatened by the French persecutions was restored and the future was full of promise.

SPAIN.

At this stage the MSC community was well established in Rome, as we have already seen, and Italy in its own time would become a separate Province. Through Fr. Jouët's early journeys into Spain, an Association of Our Lady of the Sacred Heart had been established at Tarragona and an opening provided for the MSC should they decide to make a foundation in Spain. For Fr. Jouët, our public relations man, had taken good care that most of the bishops would know about the Society. And in setting up the Association of Our Lady of the Sacred Heart, he had seen to it that an agreement was signed that the centre of this association would be transferred to the MSC house when the Society should decide to open a house in Spain.

With the persecutions of 1880, it was decided that the time had now come to have a solid base in Spain. At that date, there was only one Spanish MSC, Fr. Casas, ordained two years and living in Rome. There he got instructions from Fr. Jouët and set out to bring the MSC Society back to his native country, beginning a foundation at Barcelona. Temporarily he lodged with the Presentation Sisters, looked after the editing of the Annals and waited to be joined by a group of french confreres. These arrived on 10th November. There was the superior Fr. Deidier who had to leave the house of Arles when it was closed by force. He was accompanied by two young scholastics, *Henry Verius* and *William Neenan*. They obtained a house to live in and the scholastics went to the Major Seminary to continue their studies. In a

modest chapel which they set up in the house, they also ministered to the spiritual needs of some French migrants. Later they acquired an old hospice of St. John of God, with a public chapel which became the sanctuary of Our Lady of the Sacred Heart. However, this foundation did not make the same progress as that in the north. It stagnated for some years under superiors who lacked drive and dynamism. It began to thrive after 1901, and later developed into the Spanish Province.

There was, of course, a certain initial expansion outside of France which preceded the expulsion of the religious orders. In this early growth we have seen the foundation of the MSC house in Rome, and we have mentioned Watertown, the first MSC foundation outside Europe.

ENGLAND AND IRELAND.

Fr. John Mary Neenan, the man who was to die as a young priest at Watertown, had come to the MSC Society from the diocese of Cork in Ireland. He was already ordained when in 1876 he entered the Novitiate to become a dedicated member of the MSC community. So enthusiastic was he for the Society that he got two of his brothers to leave Ireland and follow him, William first of all and later Daniel. On his way to Watertown, he did some more recruiting for the MSC in Ireland and England and obtained five more candidates for the Society - three from Ireland and two from England. It seemed to be a quality of those early Irish MSC that they became ardent recruiters for the Society. In 1881 Michael Tierney, a professed scholastic went home for holidays and when he returned brought more candidates with him.

This flow of vocations from across the Channel and the Irish sea — at a time when the position in France was most unpromising — encouraged Fr. Chevalier to look in this direction for a further foundation. Looking back we might regret that a foundation was not immediately made at Cork,

Ireland, from where many of those early vocations came, and where today the Provincial House of the Irish Province stands. An initial attempt to open a house in Ireland did not succeed. Or rather, while the initial MSC overtures were being met with typical Irish caution, some definite offers were being made from England; one of these was accepted. And so it came about that the first MSC foundation across the Channel was made in England, and not in Ireland. For some time, Issoudun had correspondence with dioceses in England regarding devotion to Our Lady of the Sacred Heart. The devotion had spread quickly to England and Archbishop Manning had approved it for the Archdiocese of Westminster. Then in 1876 the Duke of Norfolk, head of that staunchly Catholic English ducal family, had written to Issoudun in view of a possible foundation in England. Fr. Jouët was sent to England to examine this and other offers, while Fr. Chevalier himself made a trip across the Channel in 1882.

Following on Fr. Chevalier's visit, a beginning was made at Madeley in Shropshire. Fr. Deidier came from Spain to start the work, with James Lynch who would be cook and factotum for some time. At Madeley there was a large presbytery, a fine sanctuary of Our Lady - but very few Catholics. Since there were very few possible candidates in the immediate vicinity, it was decided to look for them further afield. Michael Tierney, who had already proved his recruiting ability, was sent to Ireland to look for vocations. Then he too came to Madeley and an Apostolic School was set up as well as a centre for the confraternity of Our Lady of the Sacred Heart and an editorial office for the *Annals* in English.

There were soon 16 boys in the Apostolic School; there was great enthusiasm for devotion to Our Lady of the Sacred Heart. In 1886, the foundation was moved to Glastonbury where the school would have more space to expand. This it did under Fr. Peter Treand who replaced Fr. Deidier... and the future was full of promise.

However, the promise faded for a while. Fr. Treand was called to Sydney in 1891 where he was to do a fine work in building up the Australian Province. But Australia's gain was Glastonbury's loss and after his departure the work declined. The early promise never died; it would come to strong life, however, only after a house was opened at Cork in 1909.

3. FOREIGN MISSIONS AND FURTHER EXPANSION.

The 1st September 1881 was an historic and eventful day in the life of the MSC Congregation. For it was the day of the first departure of a group of missionaries for the « lands of the infidels ». That morning in their little chapel at Barcelona, there had been a moving ceremony of farewell. In the evening they boarded the ship the « Barcelona » and set out for the south seas, for « the mission of Melanesia and Micronesia », particularly for New Guinea. A telegram from Rome brought them a cheering farewell message:

« His Holiness Pope Leo XIII cordially blesses Fr. Durin, his companions, his benefactors, and all Melanesia and Micronesia consecrated to the Sacred Heart »²⁰.

Fr. Durin's companions, as he led out this first missionary group, were Frs. Louis-André Navarre, Théophile Cramaille, Br. Mesmin Fromm, and George Durin. Their field of labour was a vast area of Oceania; although in fact the MSC would later be concentrated particularly in Papua and New Guinea and the Gilbert Islands. On the Feast of the Sacred Heart, June 24th, 1881 a decree from Rome had officially entrusted to the care of the Missionaries of the Sacred Heart the 'Vicariate of Melanesia and Micronesia'.

This was the beginnings of many glorious pages of our mission history, of difficult journeys, of suffering and sacrifice, of men dying far too young from fever and the effects of poverty. But the dedicated effort of the long line of men

who sailed south and east from Europe was to build up the Church in many lands: in Papua New Guinea, Gilbert Islands, Indonesia and the Philippines.

That September 1st was an historic and eventful day, for it saw practical realization being given to the spirit that had long breathed in the MSC Congregation. This spirit was first stirred in the soul of Jules Chevalier, seminarian:

« Reading the Annals of the Propagation of the Faith, I felt the desire for the foreign missions born within me. I felt ready to make any sacrifice to carry the light of the Gospel to the unbelievers »²¹.

This desire had to be held in check for a long time; firstly because the Rector of the seminary told him not to talk about it any more; secondly because, in the early days of his founding the MSC, the benefactor on whom his work depended thought exclusively in terms of missionary work within France itself. However, the « everywhere » of the Society's motto was always taken seriously: « May the Sacred Heart of Jesus be *everywhere* loved ». And, as we have already seen, the MSC Apostolic Schools were inspired in part by the idea of Fr. Foresta S.J. whose 'apostolic school' was founded to provide priests for the foreign missions. Even in the first year of the MSC Apostolic School, the foreign missionary spirit and intention breathes through the letters of the boys, v.g.: « I left my parents... principally to acquire the knowledge and the piety needed by boys destined as we are to propagate the faith and the whole of christianity in distant wild and underdeveloped lands ». « As we talk about the future... some say: I want to be a missionary in China, others in Japan, others in Australia, etc. »²². « Work among the infidels » was early written into the Constitutions (or Formula Instituti) as one of the works for which the young Society existed. And even though some may feel that it was not quite the real thing, or hardly a « work among the infidels », when the small MSC group left for Watertown, they were given a real missionary farewell. When the students went to Rome to study, they declined the offer to go to the French Seminary in favour of Propa-

ganda College since, at Propaganda, as future missionaries they would be better prepared.

To a group animated by this spirit then, the question was not whether they would go to the missions, but *when* they would be in a position to undertake such a work knowing that they had sufficient resources to make the work succeed. There was naturally much excitement throughout the Society when, early in 1879 it was proposed that the MSC take on the mission of Auckland in New Zealand. Cardinal Simeoni Prefect of Propaganda Fide had approached Fr. Jouët, MSC Procurator in Rome asking him to write to Fr. Chevalier about it. Chevalier wanted so much to accept. Even Fr. Pipéron wrote: « If I were young I would ask for the honour of being among the first to go »²³. Novenas were made, opinions were asked, possibilities and personalities were discussed at length. The big doubt was whether those men who might ensure the success of the mission could be spared from the works at home. In spite of the definite « No » of some, especially Fr. Guyot member of the General Council, Fr. Chevalier could not bring himself to refuse. But he did ask that Rome give them time to study the whole situation and work things out carefully. But, in very little time Propaganda found another solution and to this day, there is no MSC foundation in New Zealand.

In the year 1880, with the expulsion from France, Fr. Chevalier had many other things to think about. But persecutions could not stifle his missionary zeal. In February 1881, noting that the elderly Mgr. Steins who had been appointed bishop of Auckland, had died, Fr. Chevalier wrote to Fr. Jouët: « Do you think they will offer us this mission again »? ²⁴ However, a group of Benedictines had gone to Auckland with Mgr Steins, and Fr. Jouët replied: « The Prefect of Propaganda desires very much that we accept the large and beautiful mission of New Guinea and the surrounding islands... We can begin slowly... and God will give the increase... » ²⁵.

So discussions would resume, and novenas would start again

but this time to decide whether the small MSC Congregation would accept the mission to New Guinea or « Melanesia and Micronesia ». Two things Fr. Chevalier knew quite clearly: one was that Fr. Guyot would oppose their acceptance of the mission; the other was that he was not going to let this opposition stop him.

Fr. Guyot's opposition is tied up with a number of personal factors of the man's character and relations with Fr. Chevalier. These will have to be considered in a later chapter. For the time being let us note that the opposition of Guyot, member of the General Council, threatened to put this missionary project in danger. So Fr. Chevalier set about circumventing the danger. He wrote to his trusted ally, Fr. Jouët in Rome:

« We've got to accept this beautiful and important mission. Circumstances will never be more favourable... And the announcement of this mission will bring great blessings and numerous vocations to our Congregation. This is my conviction... ».

Then he set about ensuring the acceptance of the members of the Council:

« This is what you must do. You must write me a letter which I can show to the Archbishop of Bourges (who evidently will not be in favour of this mission) and to the priests of our Council. You should tell me in this letter that the Holy Father has made it known through Cardinal Simeoni that he wants us to accept the Mission of New Guinea... that we would please him, that it is a new service that he asks of us, that he will protect us, etc. etc. Cardinal Simeoni too should write me a letter in which he says more or less the same things. But let him say clearly that the Holy See confides this mission to us.

« In this way, there will be no further opposition on the part of the Archbishop, nor on the part of our fathers, who will bow before the sovereign will of the Holy Father... »²⁶.
And later:

« The more I reflect, the more I am convinced that we *must* accept... All the fathers think as we do except the fathers on the Council... If the Pope expresses a real desire and if he makes this known in writing, I believe the cause is gained... »²⁷.

When a Founder finds that his Council has less vision and less courage than he, he is sometimes reduced to this sort of manoeuvring!! When the request came from Rome, he piously said that they must repeat the words of Peter, in spite of the difficulties: « At thy word, we shall let down the net. » Here he felt that he was using his right, as Founder, to interpret the meaning of his own charism and the desires of the greater number of the members of the Congregation.

And Guyot? He gave a rather grudging 'placet':

« This morning after Mass the thought came to me that from the human point of view we have committed quite a few follies which, however, have served to glorify the Sacred Heart, and our acceptance of the mission in New Guinea could well have the same result... »²⁸. The others were more gracious in their acceptance and the mission was taken on. However, the nomination of Fr. Durin as superior of the mission re-kindled Guyot's smouldering resentment and he wrote to Rome giving all the reasons why the MSC should not be entrusted with this mission. Some good public-relations work by Fr. Jouët was needed and the Holy See, in spite of Guyot's submission, went ahead with the plan. As events were to prove, Guyot need not have worried about Fr. Durin for the latter became ill on the long journey to New Guinea and returned home leaving Fr. Navarre to replace him as Superior of the mission.

The day came which Fr. Chevalier had so longed for: a group of Missionaries of the Sacred Heart sailed for the missions of Oceania. He himself felt very deeply the fact that he could not be at Barcelona to give them his blessing and say goodbye. In those difficult days of persecution of religious orders, he had to act as if he were « a simple secular priest of the

diocese of Bourges ». He wrote: « It is impossible for me to be present at the departure of our beloved and heroic confreres who are going to carry the love of the Sacred Heart and Our Lady to Oceania! O how I envy them! What a sacrifice for me not to be able to bless and embrace them at this solemn hour! Please present my excuses to these privileged men... Ah! how I suffer at not being able to be present at Barcelona at this solemn hour! »²⁹

This letter was written from the Seminary of Bourges where Fr. Chevalier was taking part in 'la retraite pastorale'.

All through the years he would give his missionaries the utmost support, sending men and money as generously as he could, encouraging admonishing, cherishing, and writing often letters such as this:

« Look after your health! Moderate your zeal! Don't expose yourself unnecessarily to danger, nor to extreme fatigue... »³⁰
(to Mgr Verjus).

The history of these missions has many heroic chapters. They have been written lovingly and with admiration in more than one account, in the Annals, in books and articles. They are still being written in the daily lives of hundreds of MSC who live and work in « Melanesia and Micronesia », in Indonesia, the Philippines, in Africa, Latin America and Japan.

Further expansion.

AUSTRALIA.

This missionary effort in Oceania was to be the occasion of further development of the MSC Society. First of all it was necessary for them to have a base in Australia. The Cardinal Archbishop of Sydney, Cardinal Moran, himself keenly interested in the evangelization of the islands gave the missionaries support and encouragement. A base for the missions was set up in Sydney and as a further help the Cardinal gave the MSC the parish of Botany Bay and

Randwick. From these beginnings in 1884 and 1885, especially due to the influence of Fr. Peter Tréand, an Australian Province developed, to be officially erected in 1905.

In 1885 Cardinal Moran was on a visit to Rome when Fr. Jouët invited him to visit the MSC community at Piazza Navona. Together the two men discussed the missions and they discussed the possibility of setting up a « seminary for the missions » somewhere in Europe. This would be similar to the seminary which the Scheut Fathers had recently set up for the African missions. The Cardinal wrote a letter to Fr. Chevalier suggesting the idea and Fr. Jouët publicised the venture in various editions of the *Annals*. Fr. Chevalier and the General Council approved the idea.

The question remained as to where this seminary should be set up. France was obviously out of the question, because of the political situation there. Meanwhile, a further factor had come into play which affected missionary planning. This was that in 1884 Germany had done some colonizing in the south Pacific, annexing New Britain and the northern part of New Guinea. Now while Germany was not averse to missionaries coming into her colonies, she would not, at that time, be very favourable to French missionaries. Consequently, Fr. Chevalier thought in terms of a foundation which would provide his Society with German recruits. However, Bismarck was no more favourable to religious foundations than was the French regime.

BELGIUM.

It was finally decided that the missionary seminary should be opened at Antwerp. With its important sea-port it was an international centre where French as well as Belgians, Germans and Dutch would to some extent feel at home. In January 1886 the Archbishop of Malines (Mechlin) gave permission to transfer part of the MSC community from Tilburg to Antwerp. A property was obtained at Borgerhout and Fr. Piperon came there with his Novices

in 1886. A young priest Fr. Klotz took his place as superior of Tilburg. (His name should be noted, for he will play an important part in a later chapter of the Society's history). Since the purpose of this foundation at Antwerp was to gain more recruits for the young missionary Society, the Apostolic School was set up there at the beginning of the school-year 1887-1888. Right from the start there were some students from Germany.

AUSTRIA.

However, since a very particular reason for this foundation was to gain students from Germany, it was a natural development to think of making a German foundation within German territory. Two years before two priests had been sent to investigate the possibilities of such a foundation: Fr. J. Ilge, German, and Fr. J. Baltzer, Alsatian. They had settled in Berlin but under Bismarck prospects were not bright and it seemed wiser to look for a more friendly climate. This they found in Austria. Frs. Ilge and Peter Barral were sent to investigate and found a property at Liefering on the outskirts of Salzburg.

Negotiations having succeeded, in spite of certain misgivings that the Society might be taking on too many foundations, the house of Salzburg was officially established in 1888. Fr. Klotz was named Superior and in two years there were 25 students in the Apostolic School, while the Novitiate for the brothers was going well.

From these beginnings would develop the two German MSC Provinces - one in the North, and the other including Austria and Bavaria.

The years from 1881 - 1888 saw much movement within the Society: serious missionary involvement and a number of new foundations. To take such steps supposed a solid faith in the future expansion of the Congregation, for they demanded a supply of men and money. Fr. Chevalier, of course,

always thought positively and believed in following the rays of hope wherever they shone. He believed that, given serious thought and planning, one could ensure future success by courageous action and trust in Providence. Not all of his companions could share his confidence. Many of them were more cautious and calculating and perhaps a little afraid of the greater demands that wider growth would bring. They were somewhat apprehensive as to whether the Congregation could really cope with all that it was taking on. As a consequence they were not always happy about the decisions made.

However, history shows that the courage of the Founder was to be well rewarded, for all these steps had very positive results for the life and work of his Society.

Notes Chapter 4

¹ This first trouble came from some of the Bishops of France, among them Bishop Place of Marseilles, and the better known Dupanloup.

² Chevalier, *Ms Notes intimes*, p. 56.

³ When a Congregation, already existing in several dioceses wishes to become of Pontifical right (and thus, in many things not subject to the local bishop), it has to apply to Rome, sending its own petition, testimonies from the bishops, a statement on the situation and hopes of the Society, and its Rules. The Decree of Praise elevates the Institute to the status of Pontifical right. It praises the zeal of the Founder, the aims of the Institute, the spirit, etc. The Rules are not usually approved until some time later - and then usually after some suggested changes have been made. The MSC Formula Instituti was approved on June 20th, 1874.

⁴ This, as other letters of Jouët, are in the General MSC Archives, Rome.

⁵ Letter of Chevalier, November 28th, 1875.

⁶ *ib.*, December 11th, 1875.

⁷ No mention has been made of some foundations which have little bearing on the chief purpose of this book: v.g. Tournus, Arles, Paris; MSC foundations which were of limited duration.

⁸ A. Latreille et R. Rémond, « Histoire du Catholicisme en France », vol. III, Paris, Ed. Spes, 1962, p. 419.

⁹ Daniel Rops, « Un combat pour Dieu », Paris, Fayard, 1963, p. 160.

¹⁰ *ib.*, p. 21.

¹¹ *ib.*, p. 15.

¹² *ib.*, p. 162.

¹³ Piperon, « Le T.R.P. Jules Chevalier », p. 146.

¹⁴ Letter of Chevalier, February 1876.

¹⁵ Cf. Dossier Barral and *Annales Petit Oeuvre*, p. 183 ss.

¹⁶ Chevalier, *Ms Notes intimes*, pp. 58-59.

¹⁷ Letters of Jouët, MSC Archives, Rome.

¹⁸ *ib.*

¹⁹ Letter of Chevalier, quoted by Piperon, « Le T.R.P. Jules Chevalier », p. 167.

²⁰ Cf. *Annales Issoudun*, 1881, p. 225.

²¹ Chevalier, *Ms Notes intimes*, p. 22.

²² Dossier Vandiel and *Annales Petite Oeuvre*, MSC Paris.

- ²³ Letter Piperon to Jouët, February 18th, 1879.
- ²⁴ Letter of Chevalier, February 21th, 1881.
- ²⁵ Letters of Jouët, MSC Archives, Rome.
- ²⁶ Letter of Chevalier, March 24th, 1881.
- ²⁷ *ib.*, March 24th, 1881.
- ²⁸ Letter of Guyot.
- ²⁹ Letter of Chevalier, Bourges August 30th, 1881.
- ³⁰ Letter of Chevalier, October 29th, 1890.

Spirituality, charism, mission

Jules Chevalier was more than a man of action. He was certainly a very active man and any account of his life must be largely concerned with what he did. There can be a danger that in seeing his works, we lose sight of the man and we do not want to do that. To understand what his work was all about, we have to try to understand something of his inner motivation and spiritual strength. Only these deeper realities will explain what appears on the surface in a very striking way. What appears is firstly a serenity in his faith that, no matter what happens, God will be forever with him¹ and secondly a calm confidence that he is called to a special mission in the Church.

Occasionally only, very occasionally and under severe stress, would this confidence waver and even then his serenity would be undisturbed. For he knew that while he could be mistaken in his ideas about what God's will was for him, his trust in God could never be misplaced. Furthermore, his confidence in his mission was unshaken by great external difficulties such as the French persecutions. On two occasions only do we see any hesitancy: firstly in the long years when Fr. Piperon was his sole companion and others did not join him; secondly in the later period of internal crisis in his MSC Society.

No man can get to this steadiness in faith and fidelity to God's will without many gifts of grace and without his own

generous cooperation. Certainly, in his own temperament, Jules Chevalier had received a large quantity of determination. But here we see a man who has gone far beyond his own natural qualities, to be totally given to Christ in a spirituality which was strong and self-less. If we see how that spirituality was forged, we will better understand the spirit he tried to breathe into the various groups which came into being as the result of his inspiration.

SPIRITUALITY.

One can say that a spirituality is formed. One might say more truly that the spiritual man is forged under the different influences which are brought to bear on him, so that he is fashioned into an instrument of God's will. We shall consider briefly this forging process in the life of Jules Chevalier. Firstly, however, let us note that a « spirituality » is never worked out coolly and calmly at a desk, putting nice spiritual patterns together. Personal experience is a decisive factor — what a man lives — so that a central intuition and a lived experience take hold of his mind and heart, transforming his life.

When this happens, nothing essential to christianity is excluded from the 'spiritual way'. The essentials are common to all spiritualities or schools of spirituality. Different schools result from a special accent given to one or other of the common elements - as for instance, St. Francis' stress on the imitation of Christ in his poverty.

Then, when a personal experience or central intuition comes into a man's life, it transforms, under its special light, all things else that make up the whole of his spiritual life. Nothing is taken away that was of value, but the value of other things is now relative to the principal and dominating value in his life. Rarely is a man's spiritual experience an isolated event in his life, disconnected from other factors. It builds onto what has gone before; and what has gone before is, under God's providence, by way of preparation.

The whole process is like that of kindling a fire. The spark, or the flame, is the energising and characteristic element. But it is not lit in a vacuum; it is applied to materials already gathered and built up. Once it comes alight the flame creeps back, transforming and diffusing its light and energy over the whole.

The transforming spark came into Fr. Chevalier's life with his discovery of devotion to the Sacred Heart. However, this discovery should be seen, not as something isolated from his previous spiritual experiences, but as taking up and transforming much that was already there.

Already there, in the life of Chevalier, was a quality of fidelity to God's demands and to his own vocation, in a measure which was certainly out of the ordinary. This comes out in his generous response to all that he considered as demanded by his vocation to be a priest - a vocation which, in spite of obstacles, he never doubted. He was resolute in the practice of prayer - not because of any great light received therein but because he believed it was something he should do. For what must have seemed a very long time he worked as an apprentice, studying in his spare time and waiting for God to provide the occasions which he felt must come. He kept himself apart from his comrades and their good fun, despite their insistences, for he judged that he was thus more sure of being faithful to his vocation.

Fidelity, generosity, single-mindedness: these are fine qualities when they are put whole-heartedly at the service of Christ. That they were is clear from his own statement to his relatives when he was a seminarian: « I am becoming a priest to be in the service of God and not of my family; to gain souls for Jesus Christ and not to enrich my relatives »². His seminary companions also testified to this dedication.

In classical spiritual literature, it is customary to speak of the forging into a solid spiritual way as « a second conversion ». The process is so called from its parallel with the

first conversion to the faith. It is a renewed self-giving to God and his will. To merit the name it must be generous, decisive, firm and constant. Whether it comes about suddenly or gradually, there are certain factors which, together or singly, are usually present in the process. Three of these factors mentioned in treatises on spirituality³ find their particular application to the life of Fr. Chevalier. It will be therefore useful to mention them and then to see how they were verified in his life. These are:

a) A sudden revelation of the nothingness of human things, together with the accompanying realization that God is all. Such, for example, was the experience of St. Francis Borgia at the grave of Isabella; and it can bring about the decision to give one's life totally to God.

b) Similarly, a conversion to God can come after a more difficult victory over self - a victory which is sometimes accompanied by a strong light and movement of grace. A striking example of this is St. Francis of Assisi. It is not hard to see why this should be: a generous self-renunciation for God's sake is a gift of self to God and can involve the soul in a very deep way.

c) A retreat, with its time of silent and serious reflection and prayer is also (as S. Ignatius insisted) often a time of grace and conversion.

Now, either Chevalier was a more difficult man to « convert » than most, or his was a slow conversion not quite corresponding to the approved theories - for all three of these experiences featured in his spiritual life in his seminary days. The first — a sort of revelation of the nothingness of human things before God — came to him after a fall down a cliff. Other seminarians have fallen down cliffs before and since. But if the annals of seminarians' cliff-falls were written, that of Chevalier would certainly feature among the most interesting.

It was a day in winter, probably 1842 when Chevalier was still at the seminary of Saint-Gaultier and the students went

for a walk along the banks of the river Creuse, near the chateau of Conives. Three of 'the more audacious' decided to take the steepest way down a mountain. Their feet slipped on the snow; two managed to save themselves by clinging to some bushes about thirty or forty metres above the ground. Chevalier kept on going, and when they picked him up at the bottom, « there was no sign of life; he had all the appearances of death, so much so that the priest who was the leader of the outing thought he could not be given absolution. Everyone thought he was a corpse. He was taken to the nearby chateau, where they lit two candles beside him, while those who watched by the 'body' said their beads for the repose of his soul »⁴. The rector of the seminary was notified of the 'death' and terribly saddened; he sent a doctor with a carriage to bring back the 'body'. But then the 'corpse' heaved a great sigh, startling the mourners, and was carried back alive to the seminary. The poor rector meanwhile had assembled the students in the study hall where they recited the « de profundis » and he read a passage about sudden death. Hearing the noise of the approaching carriage, he went out to receive the body of the student he believed dead, deeply moved by the whole affair. He was utterly startled when he heard Chevalier call out that he was not dead at all. The poor man was sick for several days; *he* was the only real casualty of the whole incident.

Such were the humorous twists of the whole affair that one would hardly have expected the experience to startle Chevalier into total conversion. Nevertheless, it was a profoundly moving experience for him and, since he had seen death so close, he became thereafter more serious, living more by faith⁵.

A further important step was that he was called to make a generous self-renunciation. Externally the incident would appear as minor, did not Chevalier himself attach great spiritual importance to the event. It was merely a question of renouncing a particular friendship with a fellow seminarian. It was an ordinary enough friendship; however, Chevalier felt that his preoccupation with his friend was pre-

venting him from being totally possessed by his effort to grow closer to Christ and to progress in the virtue required for the priesthood. And he regarded it as a grace of God that he saw it best to renounce this friendship before it became a serious obstacle to his vocation ⁶.

His next noteworthy grace he regarded as being given him during a retreat at Bourges, preached by Fr. Mollevaut of Saint-Sulpice. « His words, simple but ardent and full of faith made a profound impression on my soul. I came out of these exercises *converted* and desirous of being an exemplary seminarian » ⁷.

Prepared by these and other incidents, as well as by the graces of which they had been the occasion, Jules gave himself generously to the will of God, his soul open to the divine influence. At the same time he was formed in the *French School of spirituality* practised and taught by his director Father Ruel as well as by the other Sulpician Fathers who staffed the seminary of Bourges. This spirituality was essentially christo-centric and sacerdotal, seeing Christ the High Priest as the one who, par excellence, rendered glory to God and carried out his Father's will. A strong accent was put on the virtue of religion (Christ was even called « the perfect religious of God ») and the worship given to God. The work of a priest, as Jules was called to be, was essentially to share in and continue that work of Christ. Christ should take possession of him and live on in him. In this way a priest should forget himself, die to self, letting Christ live in him and work through him, so that his whole life and activity was directed to the glory of God. His life should be centred on the Eucharist and the sacrifice of the Mass. For it is here that Christ principally continues his work of giving glory to God and accomplishing the work of man's redemption.

Much stress was put on the effort to reproduce in oneself the « interior states of Christ » in the different mysteries of his life. Two favourite texts of Scripture were:

« I live, now no longer I, but Christ lives in me » ⁸, and

« Then I said, just as I was commanded in the scroll of the book: God, here I am! I am coming to obey your will. »⁹ If Christ is to live in us, we must die to self. In this, Christ is again our model, emptying himself in the Incarnation, sacrificing himself on the Cross and in the Eucharist.

Centred on Christ the High Priest and Mediator, this spirituality must, of necessity, consider the two-fold aspect of priesthood: Christ giving supreme glory and adoration to God, and Christ giving life and salvation to men.

Its specific method of prayer was also very Christ-centred, being summed up in three steps: Christ before our eyes - reflective meditation; adoration; Christ in our hearts - our affective response; communion; Christ in our hands - union with Christ in action.

The thrust of this method of prayer was that we might be united with Christ in his adoration of the Father and in his work for the salvation of men.

Through all his life Jules Chevalier loved those texts of the epistle to the Hebrews (12,2 and 3,1) which tell us to fix our eyes on Jesus, apostle and high-priest of our religion. We can sum up the « forging process » in the life of Jules Chevalier in this way:

- a) His own natural temperament and family training had given him a sense of duty and constancy. He showed generosity and fidelity in developing and directing his natural qualities in the service of God.
- b) The fall down the cliff had given him the perspectives of God's supremacy and the total dependence of creatures.
- c) His generous renunciation of a natural friendship had given him a great detachment, setting his heart free to be given to God.
- d) The special retreat had given him the grace of strong supernatural dedication, making him ready to respond completely to the demands of God's will.

e) Saint Sulpice had given him a Christ-centred, self-forgetful spirituality strengthening his desire to live and work with Christ for the glory of God and the salvation of man.

f) For natural and supernatural reasons, he had developed a deep concern for people afflicted by the « ills of modern society ».

g) Then he was to discover devotion to the Sacred Heart which was to be the spark giving fire to his life, transforming it and giving it unity and purpose.

CHARISM.

By means of these different influences a founder was being formed. But perhaps of more practical interest than the formative process is the founder's charism. Especially since Vatican II this has been the subject of discussion and research in view of renewal and adaptation of religious institutes¹⁰. Without going too deeply into the origins and meanings of the word « charism », we can say that, for our purposes a charism may be described as:

« A gift of the Spirit to an individual for the good of others... it brings him (the founder) to focus on some particular aspect of Jesus' life, leading him to follow Jesus and to serve others for his love in a particular way »¹¹.

Fr. Chevalier's charism was a grace that he received giving him a particular dynamic vision calling for a definite response. In trying to describe his charism as accurately as possible, we meet with a double difficulty. Firstly, — from his living for more than fifty years as a priest, and from all that he wrote — how pick out the dynamic element which constitutes his charism? Secondly, how distinguish what is essential to it from the time-bound elements and the cultural conditioning which would have affected his expression of it?

Obviously historical research and analysis is called for. This itself has an intrinsic difficulty. For « a researcher is also an historically and culturally conditioned person. He looks

with time-bound and limited eyes at the time-bound and limited work of the founder. No one today can know the exact way that the founder himself thought and felt about the vocation and the dynamics and life of his religious community »¹².

Fortunately he can check the result of his research against the experience of living communities. For « the charism of the founder of any religious community is this charism as it is lived *now*. It does not exist in the air... it is *these* individual, unique persons, and not others, who at this moment share and live the charism »¹³.

A charism is a grace given *for* others.

This does not mean that we can read history backwards, or make the founder say things which in fact he never thought of. But in the present expression of the charism of an institute, we have a control against which to examine the conclusions of our historical research. This also suggests a way to avoid getting our readers lost in a maze of textual analysis while wondering where it is all leading. We can therefore first of all look at some of the most recent official expressions of this charism as lived in existing religious institutes. We shall then try to analyse Chevalier's own experience.

There are three religious congregations which owe to Fr. Chevalier their foundation - or at least their inspiration: The Missionaries of the Sacred Heart, The Daughters of Our Lady of the Sacred Heart, and the Missionary Sisters of the Sacred Heart of Hiltrup¹⁴. If we study the latest expression of the « spirit » of these Congregations, we would expect to find certain common characteristic notes all pointing towards the charism of their Founder. Let us have a look.

In the Documents of the General Chapter of the Missionaries of the Sacred Heart, 1969, we find these texts:

1. « It (our spirit) is shaped by a love for justice and a *concern for all*, especially the very poor »¹⁵.

« To bring... a message of hope, particularly to those who search for life's meaning: to those who live in subhuman conditions: to those whose rights are disregarded »¹⁶.

« In every man who hopes, in every man who seeks to find himself and longs for unity in a world of justice and peace, in every man who is oppressed, we discover Christ »¹⁷.

2. « When he laid down his life for his friends, when his side was pierced, Christ gave us his Spirit. This Spirit puts love into our hearts and gives us the will to serve. Looking on him who was pierced on the Cross we see the new heart that God has given us, and we wish to point this out to all men. We discover the love of God made man for others, and we believe in this love. We want to proclaim it and the new life it makes possible for all »¹⁸.

3. « Ours is a family spirit, and a spirit of brotherhood. It is shaped by charity, kindness, humility, simplicity, hospitality and good humour »¹⁹.

The Daughters of Our Lady of the Sacred Heart wrote:

1. « Their *concern opens out to every man* of every race and creed and condition »²⁰.

2. « They see in his pierced and glorious heart, the symbol of God's love incarnate »²¹. « The Congregation... makes known the surpassing riches of God's love revealed in Christ »²².

« ... consecrated to a particular participation in his saving mission... As he was sent by the Father, so they are sent by the Church to make known that he is the revelation of God's infinite charity to men; that he loves them with a human heart; that he is the answer to their hopes, their questionings, their every need »²³.

3. « They seek to enter into (his) disposition of humility... They strive to manifest in their own life the charity, gentleness and kindness of the Lord who was himself meek and humble of heart »²⁴.

In these two different accounts there is a very clear coincidence on three points:

1. A deep concern for all men;
2. A belief in the love of God revealed in Christ, together with the conviction that men can find there the answer to their deepest needs. Consequent on this realization is the mission to bring this love to men.
3. This love must be revealed through the charity, the gentleness and the kindness of those who are called to share in Christ's mission of 'revealing the kindness of God' ²⁵.

The same emphases occur in the documents of the Missionary Sisters of the Sacred Heart:

They are called « to love the poor with the tenderness of the Heart of Christ » ²⁶, recognizing that « in today's world we meet poverty in many and various forms such as insecurity, suffering, loneliness, discord among nations aimlessness, injustice, oppression, frustrated hopes, despair, homelessness, hunger and other forms of want » ²⁷. They have learned to look to the Person of Christ in whom « man's longings and God's graciousness meet in redemptive incarnation » ²⁸. Theirs is a mission to declare « that God in his merciful love is ever present to the world in Christ » ²⁹ theirs is a service which « serves and instructs, encourages and consoles, helps and heals » ³⁰.

They are called to live a charity which always shows itself in kindness ³¹, which gives a genuine human affection to others, which shows at all times a respect for their dignity as persons ³². Their tradition has insisted on the virtue of meekness, and a humility which is a poverty of spirit: « All that we have and are is a gift from Him, and so we stand before God, aware of our nothingness, totally open to Him and dependent on his graciousness » ³³.

We see the converging lines of thought in these three versions. Allowing for natural differences of emphasis ³⁴, we note the three constants: concern for men; belief in the loving-kindness of God revealed in Christ; and the call to make this known through our work and through our living charity, our kindness, our 'humanity'. Now, if a Founder's charism is alive in the Congregations he has founded, we

would expect that Fr. Chevalier's charism somehow includes these three particular emphases.

In fact, historical research indicates that these were the constituents of his own vision of his vocation. We shall consider them individually, remembering that it is through the living experience of a man that his inspiration comes and his charism takes shape. It need not follow the best logical or theological order.

1. *Chevalier's concern for mankind.*

The early documents of the MSC Society reflect Fr. Chevalier's preoccupation with « the evils of our time » (*Le Mal moderne*). It was because he saw in devotion to the Sacred Heart « a remedy for the ills of our time », that he decided to form an association of priests to combat these ills³⁵. In his *Formula Instituti*, and the first Constitutions, explaining the opportuneness and the end of his new Society, he states that: « Devotion to the Sacred Heart was revealed as an efficacious remedy to cure the ills of a world growing cold and afflicted by serious ailments »³⁶.

A document printed in 1866 to publicize the Missionaries of the Sacred Heart is quite instructive. The first two and a half pages are devoted to: I. LE MAL MODERNE. This is then followed by II. LE REMEDE AU MAL. The ills of Society are here listed as Protestantism, Jansenism and Rationalism. However, it would be a mistake to suppose that Chevalier thought of these « isms » as mere impersonal systems. He saw them as affecting human persons, giving them wrong values resulting in forgetfulness of Christ and his love, leading to rigorism and unhappiness. Behind the systems he saw « souls who are so dear to Christ »³⁷.

It would also be a mistake to think that Chevalier was primarily preoccupied with the systems as such. In our ecumenical days, we would find it hard to classify Protestantism as one of the « ills of the modern world ». We would be more preoccupied with materialism than with rationalism;

and while Jansenism may linger on, it is not one of the major worries of those who want to work for the kingdom of Christ. Chevalier saw deeper than any specific system to the « egoism and indifference » which he set out to combat³⁸. This egoism and this indifference to God and the rights of man today have other external manifestations. Anyone who is « concerned for mankind » will know where to look.

The young Chevalier was concerned for people who suffered from the ills of his time. He was preoccupied by the social evils of his day³⁹. He was specially concerned for the poor, in their « double need... temporal and spiritual »⁴⁰, for these are « the privileged friends of the Heart of Christ »⁴¹. 'Privileged friends' are not the only friends and Fr. Chevalier never thought of limiting the apostolate of his congregations to those in real 'temporal or spiritual' poverty. For he felt that the lives of all could be enriched by a spirituality of the heart of Christ.

2. His discovery (in devotion to the Sacred Heart) of the 'compassionate Christ' *concerned for mankind*.

Jules Chevalier had profited by his seminary studies; he had been helped very much spiritually by the French School of spirituality. But neither the studies nor the spirituality had been able to ignite in his soul that spark which transforms an ordinary generous response to God's grace into a charismatic one. It was his living contact with devotion to the Sacred Heart which did that. Prior to this time he had conceived of religious practice as a duty of the virtue of religion. It was a sublime duty, and one which was also a privilege, calling for our gratitude and generous response. Nevertheless, the transformation of his own life and his spiritual and apostolic inspiration, came to him as he « discovered » devotion to the Sacred Heart⁴². When his professor of theology developed a thesis on the Sacred Heart « with much knowledge and piety... this doctrine went straight to my heart. The more I went into it, the more attractive I found it »⁴³.

This was much more than an emotional reaction to a 'private devotion' as some might be inclined to think, as they look back from a viewpoint of a greater theological and biblical development. For Chevalier it was a deeply spiritual experience. A few considerations can help us understand why this was so. Firstly, in those days, in many a seminary,

— catechetics was concerned with 'knowledge' of truths of the faith and teaching about religious observance;

— religious practice was shown as a duty following on the virtue of religion;

— scriptural studies were concerned more with textual exegesis than with the great biblical themes;

— dogmatic theology spoke of many truths to be believed; but *ONLY devotion to the Sacred Heart* gave a vision of the whole of religion as being God's love revealed that man might respond in love.

Jules Chevalier had learned to look constantly to « Jesus who leads us in our faith and brings it to perfection »⁴⁴. He had learned to admire this Christ as « the radiant light of God's glory and the perfect copy of his nature »⁴⁵. But it was only now that he learned that God's nature was love⁴⁶. It was only now that he learned that « this only Son, begotten from all eternity from the Heart of God the Father, is the radiance of his charity among men »⁴⁷. It was now that « the kindness and love of God our saviour for mankind were revealed »⁴⁸ to Jules Chevalier. He had learned to know Christ the Adorer of the Father; now he met the Christ who « had compassion on the crowds »⁴⁹; the Christ who is « capable of feeling our weaknesses with us »⁵⁰.

His new insights did not negate his previously acquired knowledge. They complemented it. Jesus is still the one who gives perfect adoration to God⁵¹.

« The heart is the central point of his divine humanity. It is there, on this sacred altar that Jesus offers to God his Father an adoration which is permanent and worthy of his greatness. And so it is this divine Heart which is the glorifier par

excellence of the divine majesty »⁵². Religion remains man's duty and « Jesus is Religion par excellence »⁵³. However, « if Religion is a bond, is it not a bond of love which alone can bring about a spiritual union?... and if we take the word 'religion' in the sense of a bond broken and restored, I shall ask: Is it not love which has brought this bond to be, which has bound together the two extremities which were separated.....?

This revelation to him of Christ in his love as being the 'last word in all things' came at a time when he was weighed down by his concern for men in their indifference, their coldness, their fear of God. And now he discovered a Christ who, far more than he, had been concerned for mankind: « During his mortal life, he was happy to pour out all the tenderness of his heart on the little ones, the humble, the poor, on those who suffer, on sinners - and on all the miseries of mankind. The sight of a misfortune, an unhappiness or any pain, touched his heart with compassion »⁵⁵.

And so for him the heart of Christ is full « of love and mercy »⁵⁶. « The heart of Jesus is essentially merciful »⁵⁷. The mercy of this divine Heart appears on every page of the Gospel »⁵⁸. Chevalier is particularly taken by the idea of Christ as the Good Shepherd. He devotes a number of Meditations to different aspects of this theme⁵⁹ and proposes to his missionaries the mind and example of the Good Shepherd⁶⁰.

Fr. Chevalier would have found meaningless the distinction made later between - going directly to the Person of Christ, or going to Christ through his heart. As already mentioned, he lived at a time when the Sacred Heart, and it alone, pointed up this loving compassionate Christ of the gospels. He lived, too, at a time when people were probably more sensitive to symbolism - the symbol leading immediately to the symbolised, but not in itself constituting an object which arrested the attention.

« The Heart of Jesus is the epitomized and living expression

of his divine Person... O My God! your Heart is you... So, His Heart and himself, it's all the same »⁶¹.

« This divine *charity*, taken in its full extension, i.e. in itself and in its different manifestations is the formal object... *the spiritual and primary object* of the cult of the Sacred Heart »⁶².

For him there was no problem - he thought of the Christ whose heart felt compassion for the crowds; the Christ who, because he « was gentle and lowly of heart » could ease the burdens of those who came to him to find rest for their souls. But a gentle Christ is not a weak Christ; the Heart of Jesus possesses in perfect degree the virtues of « *courage, strength, constancy and generosity* »⁶³.

Jules Chevalier had discovered his charism:

« A particular angle of looking at Jesus in the Gospels, a special stress or emphasis upon a certain way of following him and a certain way of serving him in other people »⁶⁴. We have just considered his particular way of looking at the Christ of the Gospels. We have seen how this fitted in with his concern for men. The third aspect of Chevalier's charism could be expressed as:

3. *A mission of love; manifesting the kindness of God.*

This mission is carried out *in* the work of service, and by the *way* of serving; in love and kindness.

a) *The service* - is to be missionaries of the love of Christ, to work to deliver men from the evils of their time.

In giving the reason for the existence of his Missionaries of the Sacred Heart, Fr. Chevalier proposed a double motive: « On the one hand the excellence (of devotion to the Sacred Heart) and on the other the extent and depth of the evil of which it is the remedy »⁶⁵. This double motive, he believed, demanded « the foundation of a special society, whose members, by taste and attraction and particular vocation consecrate themselves especially to the service of the Sacred Heart,

becoming its apostles in order to apply the remedy and propagate its benefits »⁶⁶.

This can be regarded as a double aim; or more truly it can be seen as seeking to incarnate the total christian message of saving love in the whole life of man, personal and social. In his book on the Sacred Heart, Chevalier gives some indications as to *how* devotion to the Sacred Heart is the remedy for the ills of his time. He quotes Mgr. Baudry: « To the egoism of our epoch and to its sensual tendencies, to its religious indifference, it opposes the cult which is the most dedicated, the purest, the most disinterested, the most tender and compassionate »⁶⁷.

Making more specific applications, Fr. Chevalier indicates how its presentation of the humble Christ helps overcome pride; the obedience of Christ, totally submitted to his Father's will challenges man's spirit of total independence; Christ's immense charity and his desire for unity overcome the spirit of division; and finally « the noble and generous strength » of Christ delivers us from a servile spirit towards the State in its unjust demands. While they must render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, Christians must have the courage to stand up for the demands of truth and justice⁶⁸.

b) *The way of serving - in love and kindness.*

The first response to our vision of Christ in his love will naturally be a love given to him in return and a sharing in his love for others. We will serve him, practising *his* virtues: « his zeal for the glory of God, his patience, his charity towards others, his kindness, his humility, his spirit of poverty... »⁶⁹.

« God, who is goodness itself (Deus charitas est) whose heart is full of love for all who weep, groan and suffer, loves to see in his children a likeness to himself. And when he meets a truly compassionate soul, he gives it abundant grace... »⁷⁰.

Since the image of Christ the Good Shepherd was one which Chevalier loved, it was natural that he would use it to indicate the way his missionaries should serve: « with the operative charity of Christ for men, and especially with that immense mercy towards the lost sheep »⁷¹. « Goodness, charity, mercy, these are the virtues which the Holy Spirit recommends to us unceasingly »⁷².

An « immense mercy », but one which expresses itself in the simplest and most human way: « a word coming from the heart, said with interest, with love, with a compassionate kindness... »⁷³.

Especially « must we practise meekness which is taught us, prescribed by Jesus Christ as being the privileged virtue of his Heart... This virtue is indispensable..... with it we have all the others. We can not, in fact, be meek without being humble, charitable, patient, mortified, master of ourselves and our passions »⁷⁴.

The one word « meekness » (especially in English) does not readily suggest the total virtue which Chevalier had in mind. It was the strength which enabled us to conquer pride, impatience, fatigue; to be possessed by the faith that every man is « my brother, in the full strength of the word »⁷⁵, and then to act towards him with unfailing kindness and total acceptance of his person. This was probably nowhere more fully expressed than in a text of his MSC Constitutions: « In order that they might truly be disciples of Him who declared himself meek and humble of heart, they will combine the greatest meekness towards their neighbour with a deep humility and complete self-forgetfulness. Their dearest desire will be to persuade christians that the yoke of their loving Saviour is sweet and his burden light. Intent on following in the footsteps of the Good Shepherd, they will attract his sheep by kindness, drawing them with the bonds of love. If necessary they will carry them on their shoulders. With every possible effort they will totally exclude the opposite spirit of fear and rigorism by which Jansenism did so much harm to the Church »⁷⁶.

Although all of these things were written later, they are no more than the expression of what he saw in essence when, as a seminarian, he experienced his charism in his own life. It is very illuminating to consider how Chevalier's character was suddenly possessed by this charism, his way of acting totally transformed by it. The doctrine of the Sacred Heart, he had said, went straight to his heart. But it did not immediately flow from his heart to penetrate his outward personality. In his effort to live the spiritual life he had become severe, « serious... stiff as a poker in his relations with others, taciturn »⁷⁷. Then he did his retreat for ordination to Subdiaconate and a minor miracle was wrought before the eyes of his fellow seminarians. « On the day of his ordination », wrote a still wondering Piperon, « he appeared completely different... a man entirely renewed, a subdeacon kind, affable and always smiling. We wondered at this sudden change, brought about by a few days of retreat and the grace of Holy Orders. The Abbé Chevalier had realized that in order to do good he had to act in the most attractive way, the way of kindness accompanied by a holy joy and pleasant conversation. Once he had taken this resolution, he carried it out with his natural strength, without one single failure. From that moment his influence grew. Those who had avoided him were drawn to him by his joyful and amiable conversations which he could always finally direct to God, for the good of his listeners »⁷⁸.

Even after fifty years, the wonder of this transformation and its unfailing continuance, had not passed from Piperon's mind: « And still today », he wrote, « after fifty years, we find him always good, compassionate, amiable towards all who approach him. He has become all things to all men in order to gain all to Jesus Christ. This is the great secret which draws souls to him from every country; nobody takes leave of him without taking away a kind and consoling word and an encouragement to do good »⁷⁹.

For nearly sixty years, Fr. Chevalier lived his « Charism of Kindness »⁸⁰.

CHEVALIER'S SPIRITUALITY.

A charism expresses itself in living the whole of christian spirituality. While it gives a special colour to one's view of the christian mystery and brings certain emphases and priorities to the practice of christian virtue, it must embrace the whole. It can not exclude anything which is vital or essential to christian spirituality. For novice-masters and educators in the spirituality of the Institute it is necessary to spell out all the details. But it is not necessary, nor is it possible, for us to do that here. Furthermore, as one spiritual author has said, there are as many spiritualities as there are men. Even within a religious congregation, each person will bring his or her own spiritual gifts to the living of the spirituality of the Institute. Therefore, any attempt here to draw out all the consequences for a spirituality resulting from Chevalier's charism would be either repetitious or restricting.

There are, however, some special points which it would seem worth treating briefly. Firstly the question of

Mission.

For his own Institute of men, Fr. Chevalier chose the title Missionaries of the Sacred Heart and it was not chosen lightly. In rejecting other possible titles, such as Priests of the Sacred Heart, he was trying to express a particular insight into his own charism. He did not use the term in the restricted sense of a mission to those who had not yet heard the gospel, or to churches in other lands. This more strictly 'missionary' work he had in mind even from his seminary days⁸¹ and it has always been regarded as a specially important apostolate of the congregations which he founded. However, he used the term missionary in the broader sense of being sent to those in need, to bring to them the « treasures of love and mercy of the Heart of Christ »⁸².

However, I refer to an insight into 'mission' which regards *Him who sends the missionary* (for 'missionary' means 'one

who is sent'). Here, I believe, Fr. Chevalier had a certain intuition of a truth which is being stressed by post-Conciliar theologians of the active religious life.

« Each apostolic community should be grounded in and patterned after Jesus' own fulfilment of the mission he received as the Father's Son »⁸³.

Apostolic religious are, like Christ, sent by the Father united with Him in prayer and action, moved by His Spirit⁸⁴.

Fr. Chevalier had written:

« He (Jesus) is the first Missionary of his Heart... He was the first to make known to men the love he had for them... Everywhere, always, in all his actions, he is concerned with the mission he has come to fulfil on earth »⁸⁵.

While considering his call to the apostolate, Fr. Chevalier looks to the origin of his mission - the mission of Christ in which he is called to share. For him this was more than a theoretical theological truth. It was a consciousness of reality into which he grew.

He began (as many of our contemporaries begin) with a deep concern for men in their need of faith, and love and christian values. But for some time he could not see how to respond effectively to their need. Then he discovered a Christ who was compassionate and who, more deeply than he, had lived a concern for mankind. And whereas he saw that his own concern for men was powerless,⁸⁶ he saw that the love of Christ was redemptive:

« His love has saved the world, his blood has purified it, his grace has changed it, and his tenderness conserves it »⁸⁷. His own feeling of powerlessness was removed by a realization that he was called to work as an instrument of Christ's saving power, to be sent as *He* was sent, in the power and love of the Father.

« This is what Jesus Christ does for the conversion of souls; he calls us all to *unite our efforts to his* so that we may *work with him* to convert the souls who have gone astray »⁸⁸. In this way we rise above merely human effort. « We strive

to reproduce in our hearts the sentiments of the Heart of Jesus... it (the interior life) forms Jesus Christ in us ever more fully; it makes us live with his spirit and his life »⁸⁹. This is not merely for the personal life of the individual, but also for the ministry of the apostle where « it is not the man, but God himself who acts, speaks and sanctifies »⁹⁰.

Most of these truths were a carry-over from what he had learned in the French School of spirituality. They gradually fell into place in his spirituality of the Heart of Christ. And thus his *human concern for mankind was transformed into mission*. This human regard for others, the desire to do something for their welfare is itself a gift of God. But easily enough it can remain a too-human preoccupation fraught with anxiety and dissatisfaction and even discouragement when we do not get results. For Chevalier, the realization of the truths we have just quoted transformed his human concern through his appreciation of the nature of the mission of Christ, in which he was called to share. He saw that if Jesus had ever ceased to live His close personal relationship with his heavenly Father, His 'apostolic work' would have been useless. His work was salvific because, united as He was with the Father in living Sonship, He drew men to the Father by drawing them to Himself. It was only through His union with the Father that He would be a giver of the Spirit. Any apostolate is a sharing in the apostolic action of Jesus, from the Father, in the strength of the Spirit. And, even active religious need whatever measure of prayer and contemplation is required to keep them in constant living contact with the source of their 'mission'. Otherwise, while they can be independent operators, they can not be missionaries in the real sense of the word.

True to his Sulpician tradition, Fr. Chevalier knew that if his Missionaries wanted Christ to work through their hands, they must, through prayer and contemplation, have Him before their eyes and in their hearts. Only then could they feel confident that they had entered into his mission, letting Him love through their human hearts, letting *His* care for mankind shine out through their human kindness.

Therefore, he would write that his missionaries must « unite themselves with this divine Heart, be penetrated by its sentiments, cooperate as docile instruments of its designs of mercy... »⁹¹. Speaking of his own mission, Christ had said: « He who sent me is with me, and he has not left me to myself... I am not alone, because the Father is with me »⁹². For Fr. Chevalier now the need not to be left alone, the need to have Christ with him, was vital to his whole idea of mission.

As he got to see the length and breadth of the redemptive love of the Father revealed in Christ, the Person of Christ (seen through the evocative biblical symbol of the heart) dominated his vision in a new way. This did not mean that people came to matter less, but that Christ came to matter more. His concern for others did not diminish; but he was less anxious, knowing that Christ's concern overshadowed his. His confidence increased, for he saw now that what he had felt, was *only a share in Christ's concern* for mankind; and what might have been a too-human preoccupation was converted into mission. For he saw it as the call to let Christ love through *his* human heart, and to work, and live and pray that others might see how God loved the world.

He was now ready to look for others to join him. For included in his Founder's charism was the urge and the ability to get others to share his vision and respond to it. He was unshakeable, even against the opposition of Fr. Champgrand his first benefactor, that his call was to found a *religious society*, not just a group of priests. Here, I believe, is contained one element of the double intuition he had in insisting that his was a society of missionaries. On the one hand (as he was to insist against complaints from one member) we « are missionaries, not contemplatives ». On the other hand (as theologians were to insist later) religious profession is a « consecration for mission ». He wanted companions who were *more than men of action*; he wanted men who would let themselves be drawn to Christ, to share in *His* concern for others, so that their own desire to help others, and their human concern could be *assumed by God*

and converted into mission. Their concern and urge to action would thus be purified and strengthened, consecrated as it was by religious profession.

« Consecrate them in truth... As you sent me into the world, I have sent them into the world, and for their sake I consecrate myself that they too may be consecrated in truth »⁹³. It is truer to say that, at religious profession, God consecrates us to him, rather than that *we* consecrate our lives to his service. Similarly, in the question of mission, while we can say that we are sent by Christ, it is more exact to say that we are made to share in His mission in love from the Father - so that our mission is real to the extent that Christ lives in us and works through us. It would seem that it was in this perspective that Fr. Chevalier saw his own mission and that of the members of his missionary society.

It appears that there were two successive stages in Chevalier's spiritual view. (Let it be noted immediately that they are complementary and not contradictory). In the first stage, it is the concern for men, the preoccupation with the 'mal moderne', which seems to dominate. In the second it is « Devotion to the Sacred Heart ». In this second stage, at times he gives the impression that he feels more compassion for the forsaken shepherd than for the lost sheep!

« The Sacred Heart of Jesus, source of Light, of Truth and of Life, is not well enough known, is not loved enough »⁹⁴. It is natural that Christ will dominate the life of any real apostle, as he dominated the life of Paul. This does not make him less an apostle. It is not that people come to matter less. It is just that Christ matters more. And the complementary character of the two stages is evident if we remember that the Christ who dominated Chevalier's vision was the Christ who had compassion on the crowds, Christ the Good Shepherd, the Christ whose Heart was filled with love and mercy for mankind. Now he is urged less by his human preoccupation - but he is urged, inexorably, by the « caritas Christi » to spend himself for the cause of Christ.

The urgency of this thrust comes out in the very choice of words, and their italicization, in this text which treats of the characteristic note of the MSC Society (words which, by reason of familiarity may have lost their force):

« *a true and sincere ever burning love of the Word Incarnate* (italicized in text); which while it will be the seal of their sanctity for the individual members, will lead them to put on the mind and virtues of this divine Heart, and will communicate to them the *operative* charity of Christ for men, and specially that *immense* mercy towards the lost sheep »⁹⁵. In a fervent response to the Gospel, any love for Christ must lead to concern for men; and any christian concern for men will bring one closer to Christ. This is why I think that one can take two views of an MSC spirituality - and eventually it will be seen that the two views are really one.

The first would begin with the text of St. John:

« We have learned to recognize the love of God in our regard and have made it our belief »⁹⁶.

The second is a response to St. Augustine's exhortation in his Confessions: Return to your own heart and find him.

From the starting point of St. John, one could set out an MSC Spirituality in four different aspects of belief in God's love:

1. We have believed in the love of God for us personally. This is a living faith-experience which has provoked the gift of our own hearts to Christ. From this flows a life of personal dedication to Christ and his Kingdom.
2. We have believed in the love of God for all men - a love which would give their lives meaning and purpose, if they would accept it. And here is the source of all missionary and apostolic effort.
3. Because we believe in this love of God for all men whom he wills to be saved and come to the knowledge of truth; because we believe that this love will work through those who consecrate their lives to him, we *are confident* that, if we work with *courage* and perseverance, God will give the increase.

4. And if we are a group that has come together because all its members « have believed in his love », a real fraternal charity will reign among us.

These truths are easily enough enunciated. They can be lived in superficial fashion; but they can be part of a strong and satisfying spirituality only if we, too, have taken the trouble to « ponder these things in our heart ». With St. Augustine we must have returned to our own heart to find God; and we must have listened to the cries of every human heart, to the deep human needs of man: the questioning, the anxiety, the desperate need for meaning, for a love that is real, ennobling and uplifting. We need to have understood how doubt and darkness can often lie heavy on the human spirit.

And when we say that we have learned to believe in the love of God manifested in Christ, we express the conviction that this love is able to give meaning and purpose to all human life; that it can answer man's deep questioning and quiet the restless human heart.

This implies that we live what I would call « a spirituality of the heart ». This means that:

- a. We have to go down to the depths of our own soul in a realization of our profound personal needs of life, of love and of meaning.
- b. We must find, through faith and reflection, the answer to our own questioning in the Heart of Christ, i.e. in the depths of his personality, where man's yearning and God's graciousness meet in redemptive incarnation.
- c. Then, fashioned by these forces, our own heart will be an understanding heart, open to, feeling for, and giving to our brothers and sisters in Christ.
- d. We will not be *dis-heartened*, or dis-couraged in the face of difficulties. We follow Christ who « loved with a human heart » as Vatican II reminds us; he shared our humanness that we might know that over us all is the everlasting love of the Father. In God's good time the omnipotent love

of God will have its way. It is *this* love in which we have learned to believe.

Courage:

« Courage, strength, constancy », these Chevalier regarded as virtues of the Heart of Christ, for they express the very qualities of love. He himself had the courage to *undertake* difficult enterprises for the cause of Christ - a courage based on 'belief in his love'. For example, invited to accept the vast mission of Micronesia and Melanesia he wrote to Fr. Jouët, replying to objections from Fr. Guyot, on June 25th, 1881:

« Our Religious... without being either eagles or saints... are far from being inferior to others in devotion, obedience... We will accept this mission... because the good God always blesses and rewards obedience and sacrifice ».

He had the courage to be *constant* and to *persevere* through the multiple difficulties met with in the course of his life.

He had the *courage to hope*, even when others did not, even when others thought there was no future for religious life, at least in France. On April 4th, 1906, he wrote to Fr. Carrière, Provincial of France. « ... the faith is not dead... Where did Fr. Meyer get the idea that the Religious Orders have had their day, or that they can not be built up again? He forgets then that the life of perfection is an essential part of the Church... ».

« Obedience and mutual charity »

This juxtaposition of ideas is rather unorthodox. Consequently, those with a passion for tidier classification have sought to improve on Chevalier's text by considering obedience under the vows, while leaving the mutual charity as part of the spirit of the congregation, or part of community living. Doing this takes away a lot of the strength of what Chevalier was trying to say. For him obedience was closely connected with his charism and 'obedience in mutual charity' a strong point in his view of religious life.

From the Ecole Française he had learned to savour that text from the epistle to the Hebrews where Christ says that he comes into the world « to do thy will, O God »⁹⁷, and Psalm 40 to which it refers: « I delight to do thy will, O my God; Thy law is within my heart »⁹⁸.

By the very wording, as well as the content, of these texts, they would have fitted easily into his vision of the heart of Christ. Obedience, as much as humility, meekness, charity, was considered a virtue characteristic of those who aspired to be Missionaries of his Heart⁹⁹. They had to keep in mind the example of Jesus who was obedient unto death¹⁰⁰.

Fr. Chevalier wrote: « Those who enter our society can very well let others surpass them in knowledge, mortification and poverty; but when it comes to *obedience and mutual charity*, they will allow nobody to do better than they »¹⁰¹. This is a noteworthy passage. First of all, it takes a text of St. Ignatius and changes it in a way which would make a Jesuit shudder (how could a Jesuit light-heartedly settle for being second-rate in knowledge?). St. Ignatius had called for obedience and denial of one's own will and judgment, two things which are obviously of a piece. Far less so are 'obedience and mutual charity'. Yet here Chevalier was not merely sewing a new patch on to a different-coloured garment received from the Jesuits. He was wanting to make a very definite point.

To appreciate what his point was we need to realize that, at this stage, he was growing away from his dependence on the Jesuits. He had looked to them for help as to how to go about founding and shaping his new religious institute. Their help had been generously given; their assistance was invaluable. Chevalier naturally went through a stage of imitating much of what they did, copying their rules and practices. But if his institute was to grow, his own charism would have to express itself more clearly, informing its documents and constitutions. Growing then to its independent consciousness of its own identity, it substituted new emphases, replaced old expressions. Particularly clear was

the elimination of all military images. The « well-disciplined army » gave way to an apostolic community vivified and unified by love. The members saw that waving a military flag would scatter the sheep rather than draw them 'by the bonds of love' ¹⁰².

It is in the light of this transition that we understand why Chevalier links obedience and mutual charity. One could interpret this as meaning, partially at least, 'obedience in mutual charity'. « We understand that Fr. Chevalier insisted on the great importance of obedience, above all in an institute in which the primary end is not service (in the specific Ignatian sense), but the love of God, *if this institute is to continue and to carry out its mission*. For if other institutes can rely not only on their spirit but on a rigid organization in the service of God, an institute like his must find its strength above all in its very spirit » ¹⁰³.

'Community', for an apostolic institute, can never be merely a grouping of people being nice to one another. It needs to be strongly united in the charity of Christ. It needs to be able to count on the generous cooperation of its members in « obedience and mutual charity ». To this they can be inspired effectively only by living for Christ who came to do not his own will, but the will of the Father.

Self-sacrifice.

« The element which has proved to be the one constituting the very essence of all spirituality is the vital rhythm made up of renunciation and positive union... No spirituality can become real outside of this rhythm (manifested by these words of Christ: « If anyone wants to be a follower of mine, let him renounce himself and take up his cross », which constitutes the negative side, « and follow me » in which the positive side consists) » ¹⁰⁴.

We have seen the positive elements in Fr. Chevalier's charism. They can be made very attractive. They can also be utterly demanding; and this the negative side of self-renunciation

must not be forgotten. Otherwise we make of Chevalier's teaching a sort of spiritual fairy-floss, which is all sweetness and no substance.

His was to be a congregation built on charity and on an obedience modeled on that of Christ, obedient unto death. He had a keen concern for men which would be translated into a total availability in the constant daily self-giving of the apostolate.

He was fascinated by the love of Christ but it was only through considering the depth of the wound in the side of Christ that one could appreciate this love ¹⁰⁵.

His was a charism of kindness. This demanded far more than being nice to nice people: « There are two sorts of kindness which we must not confuse. The one comes from grace and the efforts we make to acquire it; the other proceeds from nature and is the result of temperament. This latter, if it is not perfected by serious virtue, easily develops into indifference. It makes the character soft, indolent, apathetic. The soul is without force, without energy... this so-called good nature is a fault against which we must react; it is not a virtue. The virtue which the Lord recommends is quite different: it is the fruit of prayer and generous efforts; lively and hasty characters have to do themselves violence to acquire it... This virtue is not natural to man; he needs incessant efforts to acquire it with the help of God. We are all born violent, angry, inclined to be carried away. Opposition irritates us; resistance inflames us and contradiction makes us angry. Why? Because our nature is vitiated and our heart is filled with pride... It is impossible for the proud man to be kind, or for the irascible man to be humble.

This is why Our Lord unites kindness and humility and recommends these two virtues in a special way: *Discite a me quia mitis sum et humilis corde* » ¹⁰⁶.

There is no need to spell out the details of the self-renunciation which Chevalier's spirituality demanded. But for the

sake of completeness it had to be noted that he considered it an ever-operative principle.

« Devotion to the Sacred Heart »?

We have seen that Chevalier's charism consisted in (a) a particular angle of looking at Jesus in the Gospels the compassionate Christ, the Good Shepherd, the one who revealed the love of God in our regard;

and (b) a special stress on a certain way of following him, a certain way of serving him in other people: as missionaries of his love, in charity, kindness.

The total vision and response have been indicated in the preceding pages.

For Fr. Chevalier all this was living devotion to the Heart of Christ and being an apostle of the devotion. The question remains: to what extent is « devotion to the Sacred Heart » part of his charism? To what extent is it his « historically and culturally conditioned expression, in his own language, in his own time »¹⁰⁷ of the biblical and spiritual realities which can be expressed in other ways? These are questions which can be answered only by the members of the congregations who *live* his charism now. Some of their more recent documentation and research would seem to answer the questions asked. It would, however, be a pity if discussion of these points obscured the light of Chevalier's vision, or lessened the dynamism of the charism which was so clearly his.

Reparation.

Where did Reparation find its place in Fr. Chevalier's spirituality? Prior to answering that question we must answer another: what is the place of reparation in devotion to the Sacred Heart? After the time of St. Margaret Mary, a lot of emphasis was placed on reparation. Not enough attention was given to a distinction made in spiritual theology between mystical graces and charismatic grace. The latter is given for

the good of others; the former are given to help the individual respond to a particular vocation. Every mystic is a special person with a very special, and usually very singular, vocation in the Church. Much of what Margaret Mary wrote about was no more than a record of her private mystical graces - quite different from the contents of the 'revelations' which contained a message for all. Her private, special graces were not meant for public consumption. However, a generation avid for mystical grace was not discriminating enough in publicising the message of Paray-le-Monial. Some distinctions have to be made:

1. The call to 'console the Heart of Christ', couched in a language common to the mystics, was addressed to the generosity of the Saint herself. Attempts to transpose it into 'ordinary' piety have often resulted in sentimental and complicated approaches to Christ. This aspect is certainly not a necessary part of devotion to the Sacred Heart, even as taught by St. Margaret Mary¹⁰⁸.

2. Then there is the juridical aspect: « this comes more from Jansenism than from the revelations of Paray... someone else must take the place of the sinner and merit salvation for him by prayer and suffering.. Such a conception of reparation forgets the demands and the largesse of merciful love. In order better to insist on the price to be paid... it makes sin stand out far too much »¹⁰⁹.

3. « We would be wrong then to make reparation consist in the contemplation of a sorrowful Christ, followed by particular exercises of expiation »¹¹⁰.

4. « AUTHENTIC REPARATION is our devotion itself, this gift of our person to the Heart of Jesus, in faith in his mercy, in the peace of a soul which abandons itself to him; it is, above all, the Heart of Jesus himself, victim for our sins, but also satisfaction for our sins. He, and he alone, can make reparation for us. This reparation is accomplished especially by the sacrifice of the Mass. Christ there offers himself to the Father; we offer Him; and we offer ourselves with Him »¹¹¹.

This offering will entail (always as part of 'authentic reparation') that, in our daily life, we shall live the mystery of 'the whole Christ' or the mystical Body,

- uniting our sufferings and joys with those of the Lord;
- praying in solidarity 'forgive us our sins' and
- combatting the sin in our own life and in the world around us.

It is fairly clear that it is only this « authentic reparation » which enters essentially into Chevalier's spirituality. Naturally, in his time he would quote St. Margaret Mary in his books and other writings. However, in the Paray devotion: « The essential aspect is the love of the Heart of Christ, following on the contemplation and worship of its symbolic image; and it is our life consecrated in response to that love. The aspect of reparation is added on only as a filigree in the whole devotion (that, let us repeat, for us; for St. Margaret Mary it was quite different) »¹¹². This view of the devotion coincides with the vision which inspired his desire to become an apostle of the Heart of Christ. This desire, he says, came to him after reading the life of Blessed Margaret Mary, a book written by Mgr. Languet and given to him by his confessor¹¹³. The book has a very fine introductory note on Devotion to the Sacred Heart which is still rather wonderful to read. It is full of the joyous discovery of the love of God revealed in Christ and of « the infinite tenderness for us of this God incarnate for our salvation »¹¹⁴. Every man, in expressing his thoughts, will reflect the culture of his times. And Fr. Chevalier could not always have made the distinction between Margaret Mary's mystical graces and her public message. However, the accidental things of a culture can easily be left aside. For it is clear that Fr. Chevalier's was not a « mystique of consolation »; it was a mystique of mission in love and mercy. It was also — as a continuing thrust of the French School — a mystique of worship, adoration and praise.

Note on Our Lady of the Sacred Heart.

Fr. Chevalier's devotion to Our Lady stands out in his life and his work. He wrote a book on Our Lady of the Sacred Heart and there is no need here to write another. I would merely point out how much can be deduced from two facts. Firstly, his 'vision' was that of the Sacred Heart, or Christ in his love and the world in need. Mary would find her place naturally within his total vision: close to Christ, and between him and the world in need. If consideration concentrated on Christ in the total mystery of his love « in all its manifestations », one saw Mary as touched by the splendour of all of this. If one looked at the world in need, one saw that Mary, sharing in her Son's concern for the world, would bring to the world-in-need all the grace and love that it was able to receive.

It is therefore easy to see how some would have deduced that devotion to Our Lady of the Sacred Heart was principally to Mary in her role of mediating grace and helping mankind. But it is also easy to see how this resulted from seeing only half of the picture that made up Fr. Chevalier's total vision. Within that vision, Mary is obviously the Woman « touched with the splendour » of the multiple manifestations of the love of God revealed in the Heart of Christ.

Notes Chapter 5

- ¹ See Chapter XI.
- ² Chevalier, *Ms Notes intimes*, p. 19.
- ³ Cf. art. Conversion in *Dict. de Spiritualité*.
- ⁴ Chevalier, « Histoire Religieuse d'Issoudun depuis sa fondation jusqu'à nos jours », Issoudun, Gaignault, 1899, p. 407. Cf. also *Ms Notes intimes*, pp. 14 ff.
- ⁵ Cf. Vermin, pp. 30 ff.
- ⁶ Chevalier, *Ms Notes intimes*, pp. 19-21.
- ⁷ *ib.*, p. 21.
- ⁸ Gal. 2, 20.
- ⁹ Heb. 10, 7.
- ¹⁰ An application of *Perfectae Caritatis*, especially n. 2.
- ¹¹ Futrell S.J., « Discovering the Founder's charism », in *The Way*, Supplement no. 14, 1971, p. 63.
- ¹² *ib.*, p. 65.
- ¹³ *ib.*, pp. 63 and 69.
- ¹⁴ See Chapter VI for historical details.
- ¹⁵ *Documents of Renewal*, n. 12.
- ¹⁶ *ib.*, n. 5.
- ¹⁷ *ib.*, n. 1.
- ¹⁸ *ib.*, n. 3.
- ¹⁹ *ib.*, n. 12.
- ²⁰ *Constitutions, Special General Chapter*, 1969, n. 3.
- ²¹ *ib.*, n. 9.
- ²² *ib.*, n. 8.
- ²³ *ib.*, n. 12.
- ²⁴ *ib.*, n. 14.
- ²⁵ Titus 3, 4.
- ²⁶ *General Chapter*, 1967, n. 23.
- ²⁷ *General Chapter*, 1972.
- ²⁸ *ib.*
- ²⁹ *General Chapter*, 1967, n. 7.
- ³⁰ *ib.*, n. 56.
- ³¹ *Constitutions*, 1922, n. 9.
- ³² *General Chapter*, 1967, n. 46.

³³ General Chapter, 1972.

³⁴ For instance, the Daughters of Our Lady of the Sacred Heart write: « Their particular charism is total dedication *in union with Mary* to the Heart of the Word Incarnate ». Constitutions, 1969, n. 9.

³⁵ Chevalier, Ms Annales de la Petite Société, pp. 1-2.

³⁶ Formula Instituti, n. 1; cf. Constitutions, 1877.

³⁷ Règles, 1857.

³⁸ ib.

³⁹ See Chevalier, « Le Sacré Cœur de Jésus », 4^e édition. Paris Vic et Amat, 1900, book 3, chapter 3, p. 229 ff.

⁴⁰ Chevalier, « Méditations pour tous les jours de l'année selon l'esprit du Sacré-Cœur », 4^e éd., Issoudun. Pèlerinage, 1892, Vol. I, pp. 73-74.

⁴¹ ib., p. 74.

⁴² This was not the first time that he had heard of the devotion; but it was the discovery with a real rather than notional assent.

⁴³ Chevalier, Ms Notes intimes, p. 23.

⁴⁴ Heb. 12, 2, a text he quotes often.

⁴⁵ Heb. 1, 3, quoted a number of times in « Méditations ».

⁴⁶ The « Deus Caritas est » of I John, 4, 8. 16, frequently rolls off his pen.

⁴⁷ Chevalier, « Ecole du Sacré-Cœur ou Leçons de Perfection », 6^e édition, Issoudun, Pèlerinage, 1892, p. 341.

⁴⁸ Titus 3, 4.

⁴⁹ Mt 15, 32, often quoted by Chevalier, v.g. « Méditations » Vol. II, pp. 112, 116, 128.

⁵⁰ Heb. 4, 15.

⁵¹ Chevalier, « Le Sacré Cœur de Jésus », p. 69.

⁵² ib., pp. 74-75.

⁵³ ib., p. 76.

⁵⁴ ib., p. 76.

⁵⁵ Chevalier, « Méditations », Vol. II, p. 32.

⁵⁶ An expression repeated in early Rules and Constitutions.

⁵⁷ Chevalier, « Méditations », Vol. II, p. 61.

⁵⁸ ib., p. 62.

⁵⁹ Chevalier, « Méditations », Vol. I, pp. 520-543; Vol. II, pp. 47-55

⁶⁰ In most versions of his Constitutions, and also in Directorium Commune, 1897.

⁶¹ Chevalier, « Le Sacré Cœur de Jésus », p. 132.

⁶² ib., p. 148; cf. p. 5.

⁶³ ib., p. 182.

⁶⁴ Futrell, art. cit., p. 68.

⁶⁵ « La Société des Missionnaires du Sacré-Coeur de Jésus », Issoudun, 1872, p. 14.

⁶⁶ *ib.*, p. 14.

⁶⁷ Chevalier, « Le Sacré-Coeur de Jésus », p. 235.

⁶⁸ *ib.*, pp. 238-242.

⁶⁹ Chevalier, « Méditations », Vol. II, p. 43.

⁷⁰ *ib.*, p. 115.

⁷¹ *Directorium Commune*, n. 6.

⁷² Chevalier, « Méditations », Vol. II, p. 464.

⁷³ « Méditations », Vol. I, p. 74.

⁷⁴ *ib.*, p. 525.

⁷⁵ « Méditations », Vol. II, p. 466.

⁷⁶ *Constitutions*, 1877, *Caput III*, n. 3.

⁷⁷ Pipéron, *Ms Le T.R.P. Chevalier*, pp. 34-35, quoted by Vermin, p. 74.

⁷⁸ *ib.*

⁷⁹ *ib.*, p. 74-75.

⁸⁰ See Chapter XI for a fuller development. As we have seen in Chapter III, this same charism was evidently shared by Fr. Chevalier's companions.

⁸¹ We saw this in Chapter IV.

⁸² *Règles*, 1855, n. 1.

⁸³ Malatesta S.J., « Consecration and Mission », in *The Way*, Supplement no. 13, 1971, p. 13.

⁸⁴ See the two articles by Beyer S.J. « Apostolato » and « Apostolato e Discernimento » in *Vita Consacrata*, 1973.

⁸⁵ Chevalier, manuscript, quoted by Vermin, p. 368.

⁸⁶ Chevalier, « Méditations », Vol. II, p. 120, where he quotes John 15,5: « Without me you can do nothing ».

⁸⁷ *Règles*, 1857, n. 1.

⁸⁸ Chevalier, « Méditations », Vol. II, p. 57.

⁸⁹ *ib.*, pp. 45-46.

⁹⁰ « Méditations », Vol. I, p. 515.

⁹¹ « Plan de la Société des Missionnaires du Sacré-Coeur », Bourges, Pigelet (1864), p. 2.

⁹² John 8, 29; 16, 32.

⁹³ John 17, 17-19.

⁹⁴ *Règles*, 1857, n. 1.

⁹⁵ *Directorium Commune*, n. 6.

⁹⁶ I John 4, 16.

⁹⁷ Heb. 10, 5-9.

⁹⁸ Ps. 40, 8.

⁹⁹ Règles and Constitutiones passim.

¹⁰⁰ Cf. Phil. 2, 8, often quoted.

¹⁰¹ Formula Instituti, paragraph 4, 3.

¹⁰² Vermin gives more details concerning this transition in Chapter 18 of his book.

¹⁰³ Vermin, p. 374.

¹⁰⁴ Dict. de Spiritualité, Vol. IV, 1, col. 121, quoting Mt 16, 24, in art. Ecole de Spiritualité.

¹⁰⁵ Chevalier, « Le Sacré-Coeur de Jésus », p. 15.

¹⁰⁶ Chevalier, « Méditations » - Vol. II, p. 108-110.

¹⁰⁷ Futrell, art. cit., p. 65.

¹⁰⁸ Jean Ladame has brought this out especially in his two books, « Les faits de Paray-le-Monial », Paris, Saint-Paul, 1970; and « Ce Coeur si passionné », Paris, Saint-Paul, 1974.

¹⁰⁹ Ladame, « Ce Coeur si passionné », pp. 139-140.

¹¹⁰ Ladame, « Les faits de Paray-le-Monial », p. 202.

¹¹¹ ib.

¹¹² ib., pp. 201-202.

¹¹³ Chevalier, Ms Notes intimes, p. 23.

¹¹⁴ Languet, « La vie de la vénérable Mère Marguerite-Marie », Avignon, Seguin Aîné, 1830, p. XVI.

A spirit shared

1. DAUGHTERS OF OUR LADY OF THE SACRED HEART.

In Paris, in 1865, a religious community of women detached itself from its parent body and became independent. This it did with the advice and the approval of Archbishop Darboy of Paris. The new community took the title of the Sisters of the Holy Name of Jesus, with its residence in Rue de Vanves, Paris. The reason for the move had been that the parent Institute, the Dames de Jesus Christ, had become infected with Jansenism. The new community, with Mother Marie Françoise (Francine Lefebvre-Durufilé) as Superior developed a strong devotion to Our Lady of the Sacred Heart. Fr. Victor Jouët came to preside at the erection of her statue in their garden shrine. The community became quite friendly with the MSC Fathers: they made banners for the pilgrimage to Issoudun on September 8th, and became zealous promoters of devotion to Our Lady of the Sacred Heart.

However, they found that it was easier to break with an old way of life than to find a completely new place in the church and the world. The sisters were uncertain about their future. In their quest for a more secure way, they turned over in their minds an item of information which one of their members had heard from Fr. Píperon. This was to the effect that Fr. Chevalier had hopes some day of founding a group of Sisters dedicated to Our Lady of the Sacred Heart.

Why not ask him to accept them as the first members of his new Congregation? This they eventually decided to do.

Here it seemed that Fr. Chevalier finally had a solution to a problem which had vexed him for some years. He had long wanted to see a female institute established parallel to his institute of men¹. But a man can not be a mother Superior. He has to find someone else who can; and much depends, in the difficult period of an Institute's early years, on the central figure of the Superior. To a large extent it was the failure to find such a person which brought about the collapse of earlier efforts to bring into being the Congregation which he desired. Now, in Mother Marie Françoise he seemed to have found the right person, and in her group of Sisters the ready-made nucleus of a new religious congregation.

Fr. Chevalier therefore accepted the proposal of the Paris community - but on some very clear conditions. They were to be the first members of a *new* community The Daughters of Our Lady of the Sacred Heart. They must therefore accept whatever changes were asked for in their spirit, rule and works. The sisters already professed would undergo a certain period of formation in order to adjust to the requirements of their new life-style. Postulants and Novices would begin again, 'da capo', postulancy and novitiate respectively. The sisters were so happy at being accepted and helped by Fr. Chevalier, that they gladly embraced these conditions as being the first steps in acquiring their new identity.

Among Fr. Chevalier's many talents was a gift for making friends of Counts and Countesses. One such friend was the Countess Pirinoli of Turin whom, at this time, he decided to invite to come in pilgrimage to Issoudun. When she did so, he spoke to her of the things being done there. He explained too that, while he had the nuns for his new Congregation, he had no convent. He did have a suitable house in mind, n. 10 Place de Vouet, but he had no money to buy it. As he had hoped she would, the Countess helped him solve the financial problem.

He had the nuns and the convent; and he had a suitable apostolate for his sisters. A young woman of Issoudun, Louise Baptiste wished to enter the new Congregation and to have the sisters conduct the boarding school for girls which, until then, had been in her charge.

On Sunday August 30th, 1874, the congregation at the 8.00 Mass in the Basilica was rather surprised to discover that a new religious community had come to life in their midst. Dressed in their new blue and white habits they came to the Mass in a group. Fr. Chevalier explained to the people that the Archbishop had approved the foundation of a new community of Religious of Our Lady of the Sacred Heart. The first members were being officially installed at that Mass of August 30th. Among them was the Countess Pirinoli who was a widow without family ties, and felt that she was called to join the new Society. Not all the sisters from Paris had come. Some had remained there to continue with the hostel for girls and children they had in Rue de Vanves. The Superior, Mother Marie Françoise, would spend her time between the two convents.

The new religious Society had got under way with a certain flourish. But the tide which had flowed strongly now began to ebb. The Missionaries of the Sacred Heart had their slow and difficult beginnings; later they were to go through a period of crisis. The Daughters of Our Lady of the Sacred Heart were to combine both crisis and slow growth into a shaky start lasting over a number of years. The first ebbing of the tide came when Louise Baptiste withdrew from the community. She took her boarding school with her, thus depriving the Sisters of what was to have been their principal field of apostolate at Issoudun. Consequently the former religious of the Holy Name who had looked forward to enlarging their apostolate by moving to Issoudun, found themselves restricted to caring for the retreatants and pilgrims, and looking after the altar linens of the two churches in the town.

In a previous chapter we have seen that attacks on the

orthodoxy of the devotion to Our Lady of the Sacred Heart were a blow to Fr. Chevalier. They were a rather shattering blow for the new Congregation. Having fled from the influence of Jansenism, they now found themselves suspected of being tainted with a new heresy. Some of their priest friends assured them that the MSC had indeed fallen into error.

A further complication was that the Superior, Mother Marie Françoise was not in good health. She found the Issoudun climate difficult; and her doctor advised her not to make Issoudun her habitual residence. She therefore stayed in Paris. Genuinely perturbed about adverse judgments on devotion to Our Lady of the Sacred Heart, she decided that it would be wiser for the Paris Community to disassociate itself from Issoudun, reverting to its former title. She would give the nuns at Issoudun complete freedom to make up their minds. She had prayed for light - with the Memorare of St. Bernard, not of Our Lady of the Sacred Heart.

When Mother Marie Françoise had retired to Paris, she had left the Countess Pirinoli in charge at Issoudun. The countess, known in religion as Sister Felicity, was a good woman, and one for whom the sisters had a genuine affection over the years. However, she was not suited to be the Superior of this infant community. But, because there was no one to take her place, she continued on as Superior. There were now nine nuns in all, when Fr. Chevalier spoke to them on the Feast of the Sacred Heart 1875, impressing upon them that a great work of building a new Congregation lay ahead of them.

Sister Felicity, however, seemed more intent on whittling down the group than on building it up. She became a source of particular difficulty because of her sincere convictions that, as Superior, she received privileged communications from God which she was obliged in conscience to act on. These special lights justified her non-observance of directives given by the Founder and her ecclesiastical Superior. Her state of mind is illustrated in her letters. For example:

« ... me whom, as Superior, God particularly assists »²;
« I always have a great fear of not following exactly the Will of God which never fails to manifest itself by circumstances which the Superior has the right and duty of studying before Him »³.

It was her conviction that this should be a contemplative community, and that education should not be part of its work. She tried therefore to discourage the entry of those who thought they had a vocation to the apostolate of christian education. Further, she felt — in accord with her convictions — that those nuns in the community who favoured such an apostolate would be better elsewhere. She brought pressure to bear on them, and shortly the community lost three of its very promising members. The Congregation had its basic charter, drawn up by Fr. Chevalier and approved by the Archbishop of Bourges. Sister Felicity drew up her own. In it she wrote that it seemed that « the education of girls is not assigned by Providence to this community which seems rather destined to prayer and to consecrate itself to the poor children by teaching Catechism, conducting, nursery schools, etc... »⁴. Fr. Chevalier believed in prayer; he believed in working for the poor, but he always envisaged a wider apostolate for the congregations he founded.

Sister Felicity was to stay on as Superior until 1882. During all that time, Fr. Chevalier made patient, but unsuccessful efforts to get her to work for the kind of congregation he had in mind, not against it. One may wonder why Fr. Chevalier allowed things to go on in this way for so long. Probably he reasoned that if the work collapsed now it might never start again. Without a superior it would collapse, and at the moment he had no one who could take the place of the Countess. She could at least keep the community alive until the right person came along. There is an old saying that while there is life there is hope. The life and the hope in this little community was in the loyalty and determination of a group of three lay-sisters, Sisters Madeleine, Emily and Claire. Here were the human foundations for Fr. Chevalier's hope. For through all the doubts and the many difficulties,

these three went on believing in the future of a Society of Religious of Our Lady of the Sacred Heart; even though their hopes wore thin when the total community was reduced to Sister Felicity and themselves.

He had, further, a spiritual ground for his own faith and hope. For he saw this work as one of the ways of fulfilling the promise that he had made in his pact of 1855 of seeing that Mary was specially honoured⁵.

His attitude through these years is marked by the qualities we have come to know in him: a steady faith, a patient perseverance in doing what he could, and the conviction that, in God's good time, the work would be blessed. But one must admire even more the faith of the three sisters - Madeleine, Emily and Claire. For him, important though it was, the new congregation was a work he felt called to do. For them it was the commitment of their whole life.

Finally the woman they had been waiting for came to Issoudun to join the community. She had taken the decision five years before when she had spent some time with the members of the group. She was Marie Louise Hartzer, a young widow whose two sons Leopold and Fernand were studying to be priests in the MSC. In 1881 these two would no longer be her responsibility. Fernand was to be ordained in November, and Leopold was not far away from ordination. Both of them were in Rome; her own mother had recently died. With no further family ties to hold her back she was now free to carry out her desire to become a Daughter of Our Lady of the Sacred Heart. She came to Issoudun early in September 1881. There she had some moments of doubt, when she discovered that the promising community of nine had dwindled so much. However, she decided to stay, but insisted that she remain a simple member of the community.

The community, when she entered, was provided with a « temporary superior » who, in Fr. Chevalier's mind, would soon give way to Sister Marie Louise Hartzer. In March

1882, he had decided that it was finally time to accept the resignation which Sister Felicity had offered the year before. This she had done very nicely, seeing that her hopes for a purely contemplative community could not be realized:

« The grace of preference which the heart of Jesus has accorded to your Congregation, Reverend Father, in destining it for the foreign missions, will very naturally come to be shared by the Daughters of Our Lady of the Sacred Heart whose Society is connected with yours. Since the Institute, however, lacks at present any organization to that end, allow me to ask you to be good enough to undertake this yourself. Permit me at the same time to beg you to accept my resignation from the charge of Superior. This withdrawal is indispensable in view of the circumstances from which the greater glory of God and the Sacred Heart will result.

May I also humbly beg your pardon, Reverend Father, for all the trouble that I have caused you by my inexperience and lack of religious spirit »⁶.

Her resignation accepted, Sister Felicity went back to being a Countess.

Meanwhile, the little community at Issoudun was in charge of a certain Sister Calvaire - whom we shall meet and farewell in two sentences. For Fr. Chevalier informed the community, on December 7th of that year that she wished to be relieved of her charge, and that Sister Marie Louise would be the new Superior and Novice Mistress. Reluctant as she was, she accepted. In choosing the eve of the Feast of the Immaculate Conception to make this announcement, Fr. Chevalier would certainly have had in mind the significance of that Feast for his first foundation of the MSC. In fact, because of the spiritual leadership she was to give, this appointment of Sister Marie Louise as Superior had much of the significance of a real foundation about it. And if one looks at the spiritual realities as well as the historical facts, Marie Louis Hartzler could be called the co-foundress of

the new Congregation. For it was she who saw that the spirit which Fr. Chevalier wanted this group to possess became, in reality, part of its very life and soul. He would devote much time and effort to the new community, giving frequent counsel and conferences. But it was she who would mould its members, and be mother and leader of the Daughters for many years⁷.

Since the French Government had begun its attack on religious congregations in 1880, with special attention to the teaching orders, there could be no question yet of the education of girls as envisaged by Fr. Chevalier. However, the same missionary field that opened up for the MSC in 1881, now lay open before the Daughters of Our Lady of the Sacred Heart as well. The MSC in Oceania were to ask Fr. Chevalier if sisters of the new Congregation could join them in the mission fields. The Society had its first professions in September 1884, and some of the newly professed found themselves instant missionaries. Five weeks later the first five sisters left France for Oceania in the company of five missionaries of the Sacred Heart. Members of the MSC group were future bishops, H. Verius and L. Couppé.

In the missions and in Europe, to a large extent, from now on Fr. Chevalier's two congregations would follow similar paths of expansion, and encounter similar difficulties. The purpose of this book is not to write the history of either congregation; but to illustrate the life, work and spirit of Fr. Chevalier. A very important part of that work was the foundation of the Daughters of Our Lady of the Sacred Heart. He set out to give to this new congregation the same spirit he had tried to give the MSC. He brought to this work the same desire that others should share with him the mission of spreading the love of Christ throughout the world. He worked at it with the same refusal to be discouraged by difficulties. He brought to it the same spirit of faith and patient persevering kindness. He was finally rewarded by finding other people with similar faith and courage, with

their own gifts of community building to make this dream, too, become a reality.

These sisters, too, were to be missionary, just as « Mary was the first apostle of the grace of the Word Incarnate, the first missionary of his love »⁸ Like Mary, they were to be missionaries of his love. The « like Mary » should also be underlined, for to these Daughters of Our Lady he wished to give a certain dimension of Marian devotion which would be stronger in their spirit and piety. This would be a difference of tonality only for « The Daughters of Our Lady of the Sacred Heart will regard the Missionaries of the Sacred Heart as their founders and will always be intimately united with them in spirit and in works »⁹.

Fr. Chevalier, as Founder and devoted spiritual guide, played a very big part in the early formation of the Congregation, while Mother Marie Louise Hartzler was eager to absorb what he had to teach and to hand it on to her daughters. Some of his proposals did not seem to have a great deal of personal conviction on his part; but since that was the way the Church did things then, that was the way he would do them, too. One example of this was his introduction of the distinction between lay-sisters and choir sisters.

In his revision of the Sisters' Constitutions in 1899, he proposed that the Superior General of the MSC be also the Superior General of the Sisters. Although this was a normal enough practice at the time, the sisters, understandably were « filled with apprehension »¹⁰. However, the Holy See showed itself more advanced regarding 'women's lib' than the MSC. The norms for Religious published in 1901 ruled that no new religious congregation was to follow the example of the older ones in this regard. This undoubtedly saved some headaches all round for future generations. Future Superiors General might not have limited their role to that of the kindly paternal counsellor which Fr. Chevalier always showed himself to be, never interfering in internal administration, and insisting that others be not allowed to do so.

He had an important role to play in drawing up the early Constitutions and setting the spirit of the Congregation. He wanted the same spirit to be shared by both congregations. However, this did not mean simply printing exactly similar sets of constitutions with « His » on one and « Hers » on the other. He made adaptations. The early Constitutions of the Sisters have stronger prescriptions for the practice of adoration and for reparation than the MSC.

Every spirit exists only as incarnate in a particular group. The group has its own living persons who receive and live the spirit. The same spirit will be incarnate with different emphases which go to make up the group's lived charism. Sharing a spirit does not mean uniformity. It does however, as history shows, mean a similar inspiration and a « unity in spirit and in works ». In missions and elsewhere, Fr. Chevalier contributed much to the Church by the two groups which he founded, and by the common inspiration which he gave them in their common mission of being apostles of the love of Christ to the world in need.

While much more could be written about the Sisters, it would contribute little to the main purpose of this book, which is to try to see, behind the various foundations, the spirit and personality of the man who was their Founder and ours. The rest of this book is written for them too.

2. MSC SISTERS.

Fr. Hubert Linckens M.S.C. is the official Founder of the Missionary Sisters of the Sacred Heart. He was a reluctant founder, forced by circumstances into this role. The circumstances were a combination of a need for German Sisters in the M.S.C. missions, and the German Government's attitude towards foreign religious congregations. Part of the vast territory in Oceania entrusted to the missionary care of the MSC in 1881 became, in 1885, a German Protectorate. Particularly affected from the MSC point of view was the Vicariate of New Pomerania (New Britain). The Colonial

division of the German Government requested that gradually only German missionaries be sent to the Vicariate. We have already seen how the MSC Society took steps to cope with the new situation.

In 1894 Fr. Hubert Linckens was assigned to the task of establishing a Mission House in Germany. He was, at the same time, appointed Procurator of the Sacred Heart Mission in New Britain; as such he would also represent the Mission in all transactions with the German Government. He was busy enough with cares about getting the MSC and the Mission House established in Germany when the Government approached him with a further request. This was to provide German Sisters to replace those of other nationalities in New Britain. He promised that the MSC Congregation would look into the matter in due time - when the other works were established. In 1898, the missionaries put further pressure on Fr. Linckens, writing of the urgent need for German Sisters. He finally realized that he had to accept the responsibility of trying to help the missions in this way, too.

In April 1898 he set to work on preparations. He would get the Daughters of Our Lady of the Sacred Heart to make a foundation in Germany for the training of young girls as religious missionaries. A temporary residence was bought, plans for a new convent were drawn up, and an agreement with the Daughters of Our Lady of the Sacred Heart was made. At this stage the German Government ruined his well laid plans by insisting that it would approve the foundation of a convent for missionary sisters provided that it be not the convent of any existing foundation.

He thus had no other choice but to found a new congregation. He did succeed in getting the German Government to allow two Sisters from an existing German Congregation to help with the formation of the Sisters. These were the Sisters of Divine Providence.

During all this time he was treating of the matter with the

General Council of the MSC Congregation. It is quite clear that the Council was keeping a careful eye on this new foundation. Since Fr. Chevalier was still Superior General, and since he was the Founder par excellence, it would seem certain that his was the opinion which prevailed. There is no doubt whatsoever that it was the clear intention both of Fr. Linckens and the Council that, as far as possible, the MSC spirit would pass into the new Congregation.

The Acts of the General Council of May 4th, 1899 read thus:

« In regard to a house of Sisters near the house of Hiltrup in Westphalia: having heard the explanations of Fr. Linckens, Provincial, and having considered the demands of the German Government and the Bishop, the Council permits the erection of a new house which will be in fact independent of the Superior General of the Daughters of Our Lady of the Sacred Heart at Issoudun: also a Novitiate may be formed by two Sisters of Divine Providence. However, the Council demands that, as far as is possible, the rules, constitutions and *modus vivendi* be conformed to those of the said Daughters of Our Lady of the Sacred Heart ... because these rules etc are the most conformed *to our own*. Moreover, let the Provincial see that these sisters do not easily become independent of our fathers, after these have provided everything for their establishment; consequently material dependence should also remain »¹¹.

Fr. Linckens wrote back saying that there was no need to worry about the material side of things. He went on to say: « They form then, so to speak a *part of our congregation*, like the second order, entirely at our disposal ... As regards the name, you recall no doubt my earlier correspondence ... As we are called « Missionare vom hl. Herzen Jesu », the sisters will be called « Missionsschwestern vom hl. Herzen Jesu » ... The habit will be analogous to that of the lay-sisters at Issoudun; in the missions it will be white if the climate demands it. The details I shall leave to the Superior and the Mistress of Novices, for what man knows the details of female costume? Prayers, constitutions and rules, uses

and customs are the same as ours, with what changes are necessary for the female sex. Then, I think, there will be more uniformity and resemblance between them and us than between the Daughters of Our Lady of the Sacred Heart and ourselves, at least as far as I am au courant »¹².

But one might add, what man dares to make comparisons between women?

In a later letter, he wrote:

« I have not yet any copies of the Sisters' Constitutions or anything similar. Next week the Mistress of Novices and the Superior are coming to organize everything. It will therefore be necessary to let them begin with the rules of the Sisters of Providence and then gradually adjust things along the lines desired »¹³. The letter was written to Fr. Meyer who at that time was Secretary General. In the margin in pencil one word is written NO! Fr. Chevalier had a constant habit of writing his comments in the margin of letters received. Fr. Linckens began to build a house for the new nuns. In August 1899 the first candidates gathered in a rented house where they were entrusted to the care of two Sisters of the Divine Providence, Sisters Servatia and Mechtildis. They moved into the new house in December; and the new religious community was canonically erected by the Bishop of Münster on February 6th, 1900. Fr. Linckens was to write later that « March 25th is written in letters of gold » in the history of the MSC Sisters. This was the day of the reception of the habit. There was a large number of new Novices, ten of whom would be professed. Fittingly the ceremony was presided over by Bishop Couppé, MSC Vicar Apostolic of New Pomerania (New Britain) their future mission-field. The first professions took place on March 25th, 1901.

This community was no slow starter. Nuns came quickly; and they set out quickly for the missions. In 1902, five left for the Marshall Islands and seven for New Pomerania. Four more left for the Marshalls on December 8th, 1903; and in February 1904, 6 more set out for New Pomerania.

Then, on August 13th 1904, five of these young sisters were killed by natives in the Baining Mts. New Pomerania. It was a tragic and glorious day in the Congregation's history, for they are known as « the Baining martyrs ». The five Sisters killed were: Sisters Anna Utsch, Agnes Holler, Angela Balka, Sophia Schmitt, Agatha Rath. At the same time, two MSC priests (Frs. M. Rascher and H. Rutten), two MSC brothers (Brs. E. Plaschaert and J. Schellekens) and a Trappist brother (L. Bley) were killed by the natives. Steps were taken long ago to have their cause of beatification and canonization introduced. In this process, the most difficult thing to do is to prove whether the massacre was inspired by « hatred for the faith » or for other reasons. However, it was love of their faith that took these Sisters there, ready to give their lives if necessary. The same love sent others to take their place.

The Superior, Sister Servatia (of the Divine Providence) died on April 6th, 1904. She was replaced by Sister Mechtildis until, in 1906, the first MSC Sister took over as Superior - Sister Franziska Fleige who had herself gone to the missions in 1902. The period of the foundation, said Fr. Linckens was now over.

Their Constitutions had been approved for 10 years, on March 1st, 1906. They had their own MSC Superior. By the end of that year, they had 104 'members': 14 postulants, 9 Novices, 69 Sisters temporarily professed, 12 Sisters with perpetual profession (with Sister Anna and her 4 companions praying for them in heaven). In a very few years, much had been done indeed ¹⁴.

The early years of this congregation are something of a success story. It has been said that much of the success was due to Fr. Linckens' talent of being able to adapt to circumstances. He saw immediately that the division into choir and lay-sisters would not help - and so he would not have the distinction. He would not have minded, either, if the sisters had had no specifically religious habit, so as not to stand out from the crowd - and clearly the « candidates were all

well-dressed ». However, he did like to have « beautiful sisters »¹⁵. Whether he had the same success in this wish as in the rest of his work, the Sisters are too modest to record. This practical common sense also made him see that, Founder and all as he was, there was no call for him to set out to try to find a new charism. The one he had was serving him and his Congregation well. His conferences, as well as the historical records, show that it was this spirit he was determined to share with them - which is why he called them the Missionary Sisters of the Sacred Heart.

* * *

A statistical Note:

In the *Annuario Pontificio* of 1975, the following numbers are given:

Missionaries of the Sacred Heart: 2771 members.

Daughters of Our Lady of the Sacred Heart: 1866 members.

Missionary Sisters of the Sacred Heart: 1702 members.

The women outnumber the men.

3. THE THIRD ORDER.

Fr. Chevalier's motto was that the Sacred Heart of Jesus should be loved everywhere. His desire was that as many people work in as many ways as possible to this end. Taking as a starting point the older religious Orders, with the first Order as that of the men, the second a group of religious women, and the third a group of non-religious but devout laity, Fr. Chevalier, too could speak of a « Third Order of the Sacred Heart ». In the French Annals, we find expressions such as this: « The Daughters of Our Lady of the Sacred Heart or Second Order founded by the Missionaries of the Sacred Heart ». In this thought-pattern the Third Order is « a third family, whose members share the life, merits and favours of the first two Orders to which they are united »¹⁷.

On the other hand, in his original plan, Fr. Chevalier envisaged his Society as consisting of three branches: the first that of the MSC religious, the second that of the Affiliated

diocesan Priests; and the third - the devoted group of the laity. In fact the Bull of Pope Pius IX which concedes indulgences to the Third Order, sees it precisely in this framework. This double vision makes things somewhat complicated.

The history is more complicated still. The story begins in 1864 when Fr. Chevalier met Louise-Thérèse de Montaignac de Chauvance (1820-1885). In Montluçon she had begun a certain foundation centred on devotion to the Sacred Heart and dedicated to different pious and charitable works. She had been assisted by the Jesuits, and she thought that a union with the MSC, as a Third Order (according to Chevalier's original plan) could give her work standing and strength. In 1865 this group of Montluçon and other groups connected with Miss de Montaignac became the Third Order of the MSC with herself as Superior. It was a Third Order for women only, without vows. Members were not obliged to live in community, although some did.

Progress was made, but not without difficulties, in many dioceses, also outside of France (v.g. the group of Caterina Volpicelli 1839-1894, in Naples). But the foundation of Miss de Montaignac had its own life which developed independently of the MSC. In all honesty, it must be confessed that the MSC were of little help to her or her group. The general idea was fine, the enthusiasm very nice. But the practical implementation was almost nil. She was feeling her way; and they were feeling theirs, and perhaps were hoping to receive as much as to give. The Jesuits were the ones who really helped her group effectively. Accordingly, in 1874, the union with the MSC came to an end. Her group went ahead and became « The Pious Union of the Oblates of the Sacred Heart »¹⁸. Caterina Volpicelli's group became the « Handmaids of the Sacred Heart »¹⁹. The causes of beatification of both of these ladies has been introduced, that of the latter in 1911, of the former in 1914.

However, Fr. Chevalier still thought that there were lay-people who could profit by some sort of Third Order, and

a new beginning was made after 1874. New Rules were written and some sort of new form of organization was sought for. In the new Constitutions of the MSC, the idea remains. For him, the Third Order is clearly for people of both sexes living in the world. They were to do a « novitiate » and make a « profession » (or act of consecration). When Fr. Chevalier sent a petition to Rome for indulgences for the members of the Third Order, he said: « Some years ago, with the approval of His Grace the Archbishop of Bourges, we began this work...: today it numbers about three hundred members spread through the Provinces of France, and also in Italy, in Belgium, England, Austria, Canada: every day new people join up »²⁰.

Nevertheless, he himself had to admit:

« Until recently, the progress of the Third Order of the Sacred Heart has been rather slow. On the one hand, the new Third Order was not well known, and many faithful even many associates were unaware of the spiritual favours which the Holy See had granted. On the other hand, the young Society of the Missionaries of the Sacred Heart almost crushed beneath the weight of the important and numerous works to which it had to give its attention, could not devote itself as it should have done to the propagation of its Third Order. Today careful attention is being given to this third and precious branch of the tree planted at Issoudun on December 8th, 1854 »²¹. These same words are repeated in the sixth edition of the Rules for the Tertiaries which was published in 1902.

However, the Third Order lived on and received the approval of a number of Bishops. The Annals make frequent mention of it, saying, in 1905, that it « had developed in nearly all parts of the world »²². Fr. Lanctin had been more modest in a request addressed to the Holy Father in 1904, speaking of « nearly two thousand members spread throughout most of the catholic countries of Europe ». The Norms concerning Religious published from Rome in 1901 put an end to the name. The MSC could not have a Third Order any more than a Second. And so, on October 4th, 1904 the old Third

Order became the « Sodalitium Cultorum Sacratissimi Cordis Jesu » - 'Sodality of the Devotees of the Sacred Heart'. The title was Rome's idea; and could do with some updating.

From then on its history would be too long to give here, and probably of no great interest. We shall then conclude this brief note with two texts which indicate how the Third Order, as Chevalier saw it, came under the heading of « a spirit shared »: It must have, he said:

« a spirit of kindness and humility, of zeal and of charity, of detachment and obedience, of prayer and mortification, which each will try to acquire, taking the Heart of Jesus as a model and studying it with care ». ²³

« It is a form of life which takes complete possession of the soul in order to unite it to the Heart of the Divine Master, while it aspires to christian perfection in the state of life in which Providence has placed it. » ²⁴

Notes Chapter 6

- ¹ Cf. Chevalier's letter to Fr. H. Leblanc S.J., April 9th, 1863.
- ² Letter to Fr. Jouet, March 23rd, 1877, O.L.S.H. Archives, Rome.
- ³ Letter to Fr. Jouet, December 27th, 1877.
- ⁴ In a statement drawn up for Fr. Chevalier, November 28th, 1877.
- ⁵ Cf. *Annales Issoudun*, 1887, pp. 64-65.
- ⁶ Letter to Fr. Chevalier, August 3rd, 1881.
- ⁷ For a fuller account of Sister Marie Louise Hartzler and her Congregation, cf. Sister Mary Venard F.N.D.S.C., « The Designs of His Heart », Cork, The Mercier Press, 1966.
- ⁸ Chevalier, « Notre-Dame du Sacré-Coeur », 4^e éd., Issoudun, Pèlerinage, 1895, p. 108.
- ⁹ Constitutions of The Daughters of Our Lady of the Sacred Heart, 1881.
- ¹⁰ Acts of the General Council, August 18th, 1899.
- ¹¹ MSC Archives, Rome.
- ¹² Letter to Fr. Meyer, May 30th, 1899. To distinguish them from the Cabrini Sisters, their official title is Missionary Sisters of the Sacred Heart of Hiltrup.
- ¹³ Letter to Fr. Meyer, July 8th, 1899.
- ¹⁴ Cf. Linckens MSC, « Die Missionsschwestern vom hlst. Herzen Jesu », Hiltrup, 1913, pp. 21-22; « Personalbestand der Missionsschwestern vom hlst. Herzen Jesu am 1 december 1906 ».
- ¹⁵ Schw. M. Hilsindis MSC, « Pater Hubert Linckens MSC Stifter der Ordensgemeinschaft der Missionsschwestern vom heiligsten Herzen Jesu von Hiltrup », 1967, p. 55.
- ¹⁶ *Annales Issoudun*, 1887, p. 64.
- ¹⁷ Chevalier, « Le Sacré-Coeur de Jésus », 4^e éd., Paris, Vic et Amat, 1900, p. 398.
- ¹⁸ *Decretum Laudis* 1881, definitive approval 1895.
- ¹⁹ *Decretum Laudis* 1890, definitive approval 1902.
- ²⁰ January 29th, 1878.
- ²¹ « Règle du Tiers-Ordre du Sacré-Coeur de Jésus », Issoudun, 1887, p. VI.
- ²² *Annales Issoudun*, 1905, p. 76.
- ²³ Chevalier, « Le Sacré-Coeur de Jésus », p. 401.
- ²⁴ Delaporte MSC, *Annales Issoudun*, 1887, p. 26.

Worthy of special mention

1. THE RELUCTANT NOVICE-MASTER.

Most people appointed to take charge of novices accept the appointment with some reluctance. However, there could seldom have been a man who, before, during and after his term as Novice Master, regarded the work with less enthusiasm than Fr. Guyot, first M.S.C. Master of Novices. He may even have been the only man in history who asked for, and received from his superiors, monetary compensation for fees lost through having to give conferences to his own Novices!

Despite his long membership of the MSC Society, Fr. Jean Baptiste Guyot is a hard man to get to know from the records. The more so because in his will he expressed the « absolute will » that no biographical notice should appear in the Annals about him after he died. He was born on July 23rd, 1827 at Gannat (Allier) in the diocese of Moulins, and was ordained priest for that diocese on December 21st, 1850. He followed the normal diocesan path as assistant, chaplain and parish priest until he took over the parish of Saint-Paul at Montluçon in 1861. In 1863, while assisting at a retreat preached to a reunion of associate Priests of the Sacred Heart, he felt attracted towards the religious life, with the special intention of devoting himself to the Heart of Christ. In that same year he followed a Retreat at Issoudun.

He gave very serious thought to this attraction towards the religious life, discussing it with his spiritual director, the parish priest of Arfeuilles and two Jesuit priests, Frs. Bertrand and Bieuville. The advice he received was uniformly in favour of his joining the MSC Community. He expressed this desire in a letter to Fr. Chevalier which, I believe, explains much of his life, and his attitudes for the rest of his life: I have often thought, he says, « of the advantages which your congregation offers: that of being a religious while remaining in the ministry where, in spite of myself, I am retained by circumstances which I must regard as the expression of God's will... »¹.

He was strongly attracted to being a religious. It would seem that he felt the spiritual need of the strength and the support which religious consecration would offer him. At the same time, he felt that he should stay in the parish ministry. There is no indication that he ever wavered in his fidelity to his religious profession and his wish to remain an MSC. But he did not waver, either, in his determination not to live in community!

On January 6th, 1865 he made his profession in the hands of Fr. Chevalier. He stayed on as parish priest of Saint Paul's at Montluçon. The Novitiate being canonically opened there on September 12th, 1869, Fr. Guyot reluctantly accepted the appointment as Novice-Master. But Fr. Ledoux was appointed as « socius » to help him. The Franco-German war relieved Fr. Guyot of his unwanted burden, when the novices were dispersed in September 1870.

However after peace was restored, the Novitiate was re-opened. Although not any more enthusiastic about the job than he had previously been, Fr. Guyot was again asked to take charge of the Novices in 1871. He still needs a socius to do the work for him, and this time it is Fr. Miniot. (As a point of interest it was Fr. Miniot whose initiative introduced the Cult of Perpetual worship into the Novitiate, as a practice of devotion in honour of the Sacred Heart. In

1874 it was officially approved as a practice for the whole Society).

In 1873 the Novitiate was transferred to the chateau of St-Gérand, still in the diocese of Moulins. The acts of the General Council of that year have this record:

« In spite of his insistence that he be freed from this charge, Fr. Guyot is unanimously confirmed as Master of the Novitiate which is to be transferred from Montluçon to St-Gérand »².

The next year he had a new socius; Fr. Celestin Ramot, himself just out of the Novitiate. In spite of his inexperience, he had to bear the main burden of the novices' formation, for Guyot (who really was regarded as a very fine preacher) preached sermons, retreats and missions in most places in France outside of the Novitiate. Finally the expulsions from France in 1880 brought solace to at least one man for the Novices went to Holland, while Fr. Guyot stayed in France. It is in the Acts of the General Council in 1872 that we read this interesting item: « The Council willingly grants to Fr. Guyot the indemnity of 900 francs which he claims for the loss of fees occasioned by his conferences to the Novitiate »³.

As well as that of Novice Master, there was another role which Fr. Guyot played over the years: That of 'leader of the opposition'. In 1869, when Fr. Chevalier was first elected Superior General, Fr. Guyot was elected as one of the Assistants, a post to which he was reelected until he himself resigned in 1891. However, he always found a reason for not going to live at Issoudun. In 1883 he went to Vichy where he stayed practically all the time until his death on April 14th, 1914. His qualities seem to have been highly regarded by Fr. Chevalier who made every effort to have his collaboration rather than — far too frequently — his opposition. For instance, the following is typical of what Fr. Chevalier often wrote to Fr. Jouët: « The good Fr. Guyot is not happy, and while he is discontented, everything weighs on him. He is quite mistaken, believing that the Council

takes no notice of the proposals of Fr. Guyot. He goes over the past and uses every excuse to get the Council to accept his resignation... We must all make it clear to him that he has always been and still is one of the most influential members of the Society, and that if sometimes his opinion has not prevailed that has not been for personal reasons »⁴.

Fr. Chevalier's constant efforts doubtless had some effect. However, Guyot opposed many of his plans: the purchase of the Church of St. James of the Spaniards in Rome; the Mission of Auckland, and that of Oceania, among the most important issues. It seems certain that any young MSC with a grievance would get a sympathetic hearing with Guyot. Yet no objective cause ever appears for this chronic state of opposition. In 1888 the General Council named him Visitor of all the MSC Communities. This seems to have been inspired by the desire to get him out of his isolation and into contact with the different MSC houses. If he would not live in any of them, something might be achieved by getting him to visit them all! We shall see more of Fr. Guyot in the next Chapter.

2. SCHOLAR AND GENTLEMAN.

Fr. Paulin Georgelin was the first Latinist of the Society. By the time he came to the MSC, he had a long career of the study and teaching of Latin behind him. The study he began at the age of seven years, the teaching at the age of 12 when he was explaining Latin authors to the pupils in his father's school at Quintin. At the age of 13 he took over a whole class. Paulin Georgelin was born in 1810 at Saint Brieuc (Côtes du Nord), where his father was professor of rhetoric before moving to Quintin where he became headmaster of the school. In his teaching the father was helped by his son. The father died in 1826, and the following year after passing his exams brilliantly, Paulin was asked, at the age of 17, to take his father's place as headmaster of the school. He in turn was helped by his brother Adrien, more precocious even than he; at the age of 8 he corrected the exercises of the fifteen-year old boys. When Adrien died,

aged eight and a half, Paulin had not the heart to continue. So he spent some years teaching in Universities until he went to teach school in Vannes where his mother was now living, having retired to her home-town after the death of Adrien.

In 1834 he did a retreat under Fr. Leleu, S.J. When this priest asked him if he had ever given any thought to being a priest himself, the suggestion generated a desire for the priesthood. Two years later, the Bishop of Vannes gave him permission to study theology at the seminary while he kept on with his teaching. He was asked to spend one year only in the seminary - after which he carried off all the prizes in theology. He was ordained priest in 1838, and named chaplain to the college where he had been teaching. Soon afterwards Fr. Georgelin became associated with the Faithful Companions of Jesus, and worked as chaplain and teacher in a number of their schools and orphanages. This association took him to Switzerland for some years. There he met Fr. Jean Marie Vandel. He returned to France to work with the Faithful Companions in Paris. He worked there for 15 years until, in 1865 he heard of the existence at Issoudun of the young Society of the Missionaries of the Sacred Heart. For a number of years his spiritual aspirations had been suggesting religious life to him, mixed up with ideas about missions and a strong devotion to the Sacred Heart. The total mixture led him to Issoudun, where, despite his age of 55 years, he decided that this was indeed the Congregation for him.

After entering the Society it was natural that he should be engaged in teaching. First of all he taught rhetoric and philosophy at Chezal-Benoit. However, through Fr. Vandel, the MSC became interested in a clerical school in Rimont in Burgundy and Fr. Georgelin went there at the end of 1866. Here there were high hopes of an eventual MSC community. In those days of a broad view of the Society, not very clear distinctions were always made between affiliated priests and religious properly so called. And so when the school of Rimont was merged with that of Tournus,

we find mention of the priests of Tournus as members of the Society. Georgelin had spent about a year at Rimont, returned to Issoudun and came back to Tournus for the beginning of the school-year 1868-69.

During the war of 1870-71, Garibaldi's invasion forced Fr. Georgelin to take refuge in Switzerland. He went to Carouge (in the vicinity of Geneva) where he had previously spent six years with the Faithful Companions of Jesus. These welcomed him back gladly - as did also his former altar-boy, now Bishop (and later Cardinal) Mermillod. The latter put pressure on Fr. Chevalier to leave Fr. Georgelin with him for some time; and so he stayed in Switzerland until called back to Issoudun in 1872. Since in that year the Archbishop of Bourges had insisted that the MSC take the parish of Issoudun, Fr. Chevalier needed men to assist him. Fr. Georgelin seemed an excellent choice: he could work in the parish and also assist Fr. Chevalier as secretary and latinist.

« He was one of those men who automatically bring honour to the position they occupy - and thus themselves have no need of honours. The most modest position was good enough for him. And as curate in the parish, as before chaplain, head of a college or in charge of an independent school, with zeal and piety he did what there was to be done... His favourite virtue was always that of humble and utter devotedness »⁵. Always remembered as a gentlemanly priest as well as scholarly, simple and kind, he made his own contribution to creating — in the lived reality of daily life — that MSC spirit which others were to inherit.

3. MSC BROTHERS.

There were no MSC brothers about in the very early days of the Society. Had there been, Fr. Chevalier's chapel would not have begun to fall down. In fact, he planned right from the start to have brothers in his society, not only to help build chapels in the missions and elsewhere, but to contribute in a number of ways to the Society's missionary goals. In the first years, however, Fr. Chevalier felt that the top priority

in recruitment was for priests. Nevertheless, the first Rules which he drew up in 1855 show clearly that he considered that his Congregation would quite naturally be made up of « Missionaries » and « Brothers of the Sacred Heart »:

1. « The men who ask to become Brothers of the Sacred Heart will offer the same assurances as the Missionary novices.

2. The time of probation and conditions of admission will be the same.

3. As far as possible they will follow the general rule; furthermore a particular rule will be drawn up for them (just as there were particular rules for the missionary novices)...

6. The brothers will take care of the material side of things in the community ... kitchen, door, garden, the sick, etc. ...

10. They will have the same privileges and same advantages as the missionary religious »⁶.

In the next draft of the « Rules », in 1857, the brothers are envisaged as helping the bursar in the community⁷. By the time of the Formula Instituti in 1869, *teaching* is also regarded as one of the works of the brothers. Now, too, all the members, Priests and Brothers are called « Missionaries of the Sacred Heart »; all will have a religious habit, although previously the habit was not required for the brothers by rule.

« *Members*: In the first degree will be the coadjutor brothers, who will be engaged either in primary teaching of the children, or in material services »⁸.

In those early years of the Society, if careful records were kept, they have not all survived. The first written references to the existence of brothers in the MSC community is found in the diary of Fr. Vandel: « Fr. Georgelin who has his bachelor's degree is going to leave for Rimont (the college at Tournus) *with a brother* »⁹. « Fr. Georgelin leaves tomorrow, with a brother for Paris, and the day after next for Rimont »¹⁰. This brother's name is not known.

In Fr. Chevalier's letter to the Congregation of Bishops and Regulars, dated December 25th, 1864, asking to have his MSC Society approved, he states that there are three Brothers among the members. We know that before 1869 (after which records were more carefully kept) two of the brothers were Elzéar Penasson and Henri Dechâtre. We have already met the latter on his trip to Canada. The brothers came from different walks of life; for at that time there was an aspirant Jean Pailloncy, a former student of the Apostolic School, and another who was an ex-soldier, Sergeant Laprade, known predictably as « the captain ».

Fr. Chevalier's idea was that brothers could do a variety of works. One of their early occupations was in the Issoudun Office of the Association of Our Lady of the Sacred Heart, where they did valuable work. One of them, Brother Alexandre Delimoges was a very capable office worker and became the Director of the Bureau.

We have seen that, when the MSC Society took refuge in Holland, young men from that country began to enter the Society in notable numbers, many of them asking to become brothers. The first Dutch brother was Henry Adan, born on August 30th, 1859, professed on October 17th, 1885. He was to die in Papua on November 7th, 1931; but before then he would contribute much to the missionary work in his trade as a carpenter. And by his constant good humour, he contributed considerably to community life, making light of the difficulties in the early days and helping others to do the same.

Careful readers of the Necrology would have noted that, among the brothers who died in the missions, there was a number from Volendam: J. Kras (1892), N. Kieft (1897), E. Zwarthoed (1898), C. Zwarthoed (1908), C. Hansen (1911), J. Poijer (1922). Volendam is not a big city; it is a fishing village in the Dutch province of North Holland. But it is world-famous, not by name perhaps, but as the village of clogs and Dutch bonnets, beloved of tourists. Attached to Volendam is one of the interesting stories (in sub-

stance historically true) regarding MSC brothers. In those early days of the Society, one of the priests was making a recruiting trip for brothers through Holland. Somewhere along the way in North Holland, someone who had heard of the purpose of his travels told him that he should go to Volendam, a very Catholic village. And so, runs the account in the Dutch Annals, one fine summer day he found himself on the steps of the presbytery in Volendam. He explained the purpose of his visit to the parish priest, who wasted no time in getting down to business. The fishing fleet had just come into port; and when the two priests arrived there, the people were already gathered together. The MSC priest kept a bit to the side in the shadow of the parish priest who strode purposefully through the crowd of fishermen who were shouting and calling out. He mounted the platform from which the auctioneer sold the fish, called for silence, and the crowd fell quiet. The « dear brethren » pressed curiously around the unusual pulpit. They soon knew the subject matter: this missionary priest needed a fine lot of young men who were ready to go with him as brothers to work in the missions. (Were there any bids?) The missionary thought it was a truly evangelical way of seeking vocations (cf. Mt. 4, 18-20); but he was not a little surprised when, after the short explanation given by the parish priest, three strong young lads « who wanted to go » presented themselves to him. It was literally: 'Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men' and 'immediately they left their nets and followed him'. That very evening three more candidates came to the presbytery. Next day six young men from Volendam, after a rather matter-of-fact leave-taking from home and friends, set out for a distant mission-house which would be for them a clearing-house for the missions¹¹.

I do not know whether these are the six, whose names we have seen. But, clearly, we should have more exegesis of the Necrology.

Finally, it was a Dutch brother, Bro. van Heugten, who took devoted care of Fr. Chevalier in his declining years.

4. A MULTIPLICITY OF FOUNDERS.

A Founder tries to pass on his charism to the members of his Society - without, however, wishing to pass on the charism of being Founders in their turn. Yet this was what Fr. Chevalier did in more than one instance. Being a Founder of a Congregation of Sisters presented no problem, for this did not clash with remaining a member of the MSC Congregation. And tension was reduced to a complete minimum in the case of Fr. HUBERT LINCKENS who, as an MSC founded a congregation of MSC Sisters.

On the other hand when a man feels that he is called to found a congregation or society of men, it is almost impossible for him to identify himself completely with the new group while remaining a member of the other. The call to be a Founder of such a group, by psychological necessity takes with it a call to leave one's former group. While the former confreres regret the departure from their midst of a talented member, they rejoice that their particular loss results in a greater good for the Church. Two of the early MSC called to be founders of other groups (and ipso facto called to leave the MSC) were Frs. P. Barral and T. Reyn.

Fr. PETER BARRAL was born in Savoy at Moûtiers on November 6th, 1855, and was to die there in 1929. An active man within the Congregation, he decided in 1891 that he could find better scope for his activities elsewhere. Fr. Jean Marie Vandel had always been in his eyes the model of what a priest should be; so, too, the Apostolic School was the model he used in his new work. In October 1894 he received permission to start such a work in the diocese of Basle, Switzerland. His work spread beyond Switzerland into France and Italy. He founded the Institute of Bethlehem - which later became (or resulted in) the Foreign Missionary Society of Bethlehem in Switzerland; he founded also the Poor Missionary Sisters of Bethlehem¹².

Fr. THEOPHILE REYN was born, March 8th, 1860 at Bevery near Antwerp in Belgium.

We shall see more of Fr. Reyn in the following Chapter. Here we wish only to note that, still young, he left the MSC Society in order to found a religious society of priests to work for the apostolate of the workers in Belgium. He had an early insight into what was to be realized later on a wider scale: the need for a special apostolate in this field. His congregation of « les Aumôniers du travail » was founded on November 21st, 1894.

There were to be other foundations by MSC after the period with which this book is concerned. Within our time, there is one further « item of interest » in the field of foundations. Not to be outdone by the Fathers some of the MSC brothers decided that they, too, could be called to work in this field. The prime mover was a PETRUS ONCKEL, of Arcen in Dutch Limbourg, who had entered the Society at Tilburg, making his profession on October 4th, 1888. It seems that, in 1896 he tried to found an order of brothers at Antwerp, Belgium. Some of the other MSC brothers joined him. They envisaged a special apostolate among the children of the poor. Their intentions were no doubt laudable, but the work did not persevere.

5. LUCIEN CATTIN.

The MSC Apostolic School opened at Chezal-Benoît in October 1867. To help finance it an appeal had been launched for many people to help by giving a « sou » per year (twenty sous make a franc).

The first student to arrive was a sixteen-year old from the Jura in Switzerland, named Lucien Cattin. He arrived at Issoudun on April 2nd, proudly bringing « 588 sous from 588 people ». These were people of his home district to whom he had explained the plan and who had gladly cooperated. His 29 francs 40 were entered in the books, and Lucien later started work with the rest of the boys.

The next chapter in his story is simply and movingly told in the words of Fr. Vandel:

« The Apostolic School has made the sacrifice of its firstfruits. The first of our students to arrive and one of the best of our boys has declared, after some months in the school of Our Lady of the Sacred Heart, that he believes he is called to join the Company of Jesus (Jesuits). We could not harden our hearts to this request, but believing it to be the will of God, we were happy that the firstfruits of the Apostolic School be gathered by Mary for the famous Society which bears the name of her Son. We foresee that the Apostolic School will be blessed for this sacrifice »¹³.

When Lucien Cattin took the habit as a Novice of the Company of Jesus, it was Fr. Vandel who gave it to him. Years later, in 1901 with the expulsion of religious from France, Fr. Lucien Cattin, S.J. offered to organize a house of studies for the MSC students in Lebanon. Political difficulties prevented the realization of this plan. But Fr. Cattin had kept his attachment to the MSC over the years - as over the years he was a zealous apostle of devotion to Our Lady of the Sacred Heart.

It was from Lebanon that his offer came. In fact, he had become the founder of the Jesuits' Eastern mission, rector of the college of Alexandria in Egypt, Provincial Chancellor of the Mission of Syria, Rector of the University of Beyruth - and later Knight of the Legion of Honour. He died in 1929.

6. JEAN CAPTIER.

Some interesting characters have wandered into and out of the MSC Congregation. One of these was a Jean Captier who came after he had received tonsure in 1868. For different reasons, chiefly some sort of « nervous illness » as it has been vaguely termed, he could not be admitted to Major Orders. However, in 1871 he was admitted to temporary profession as a brother in the MSC Congregation. He taught for some years at the college of Chezal-Benoît; he was there when Archbishop Lynch visited the place while staying at Issoudun in 1873.

The Archbishop was looking for men for his Archdiocese of Toronto, especially those who could speak English. Discovering that Captier spoke English well, he suggested that he might return with him as a missionary in the diocese of Toronto. « But I am not a priest », he said, « I am only a brother ». Archbishop Lynch suggested that perhaps he might ordain him. At that Captier told a story of how, many years before he had spoken with the Curé of Ars who had told him that one day he would enter a Congregation not yet in existence, which would be composed of three branches. This had come true with his entry into the MSC. The Curé had also told him that someday he would meet an understanding bishop who would ordain him priest. « You have just met him », said Archbishop Lynch. « I am going to Rome, and on my way back I shall ordain you priest - with the permission I shall get from Pope Pius IX ». (Some have said that Pius IX would give you permission to do almost anything you asked for). Sure enough, on his way back, Archbishop Lynch ordained John Captier - Minor Orders, Subdiaconate, Diaconate and Priesthood, all within the week. However, when the Archbishop left for Toronto, he did not take his newly-ordained missionary with him. Perhaps Captier refused to go; or perhaps the Archbishop had clear evidence of the lack of balance which marked his personality. At all events, he left Fr. Jean Captier at Chezal-Benoît. He left the MSC Congregation in 1879. But before he left he stirred things up. In October 1876, he sent a Memorandum to the Cardinal Prefect of the Congregation of Bishops and Regulars. A couple of days later, he sent another one almost cancelling the first; but the first made quite an impression, because Fr. Jouet got wind of it and sent a copy to Fr. Chevalier. Fr. Chevalier and the Archbishop of Bourges prepared a refutation of the Captier document which they sent to Rome.

Fr. Captier had requested that the Holy See authorize a canonical visitation of the MSC Society: He gave a list of reasons why this should be done: The Institute, he said, lacked stability; it did not provide its members with the means of tending effectively towards religious perfection;

the interior life was relegated to the second place; devotion to the Sacred Heart did not enjoy the pride of place it should have; the society was feverishly engaged in too many activities. Too much money had been spent on the foundation of the Daughters of Our Lady of the Sacred Heart, and contrary to Canon Law, Fr. Chevalier had assumed direction of this group of Sisters. Also, Fr. Chevalier had suppressed almost all the spiritual exercises at the Apostolic School. With this last item, we probably come to the *real* reason for Captier's complaints. Fr. Chevalier had intervened in the running of the Apostolic School feeling that the line of formation being given there was not quite healthy, being tinged with an unreal mysticism. Captier was a man of many qualities and gifts; he was a « mystic » and had a gift for composing prayers. (It is possible that he was the author of the Memorare to Our Lady of the Sacred Heart which became so widespread as a prayer of members of the Arch-confraternity).

After Captier left our Congregation he joined the group now known as the « Priests of the Sacred Heart », founded by Fr. Dehon. He was one of the chief reasons for the provisional suppression of this Congregation before he was asked to leave it, too, in 1883. The last that was heard of him was that he tried, unsuccessfully, to join a Religious Group in Marseilles.

However this affair turned to good, in that it made Fr. Chevalier and the General Council take stock of the actual situation, seeing what truth there was in the accusations brought by Jean Captier. First of all, it brought about a clear declaration of the nature of the Society: « We have entered this pious Institute to be *missionaries* of the Sacred Heart: this word sums up everything... our Institute of missionaries can not be transformed into a contemplative order »¹⁴. Secondly, at a special meeting of the General Council, it was clearly stated that serious attention must be given and every effort made to live the religious life fervently, to see that formation is solid, and so on¹⁵.

* * *

Note: The phrase; « Our Lady has done everything in our Society » was, it seems, frequently used by Fr. Chevalier and other early MSC. It originated with a visit of Jean Captier to the Curé of Ars who told him he would enter a Congregation 'of three branches, in which Our Lady would do everything'. This was in 1852.

7. QUITO - A DREAM OF ELDORADO.

The Spanish conquistadores moved into South America to conquer and claim these lands for their Sovereign. (With elements of fact mingled with tales of fiction, they developed a dream of « Eldorado », the land of fabulous riches which lay somewhere ahead awaiting discovery).

Something of this same spirit of adventure animated many who set out to « conquer the world for Christ ». It is reflected in many of the early documents of our own Society. For example, with regard to the first M.S.C. foundation in Austria, Fr. Jouet wrote: « Forward! ... with courage and confidence; Conquer Austria, Bavaria, Hungary, Germany, Russia and the whole world for the Sacred Heart, and you will be the happiest men on earth and the most highly rewarded in heaven! » ¹⁶.

Then, from the very land of the conquistadores an Archbishop came to Europe with his own plan for conquering South America for the Sacred Heart, and with his dream of a magnificent Basilica of the Sacred Heart, which would be a wonderful shrine, a source of christian light and faith for millions. Archbishop José Ignacio Ordoñez came from Ecuador, the small Republic which had become well-known and well-liked throughout Christendom because of its eminently christian President Garcia-Moreno. There were many who thought that this man, Garcia Moreno, should be canonized; for his assassination in 1875 was seen as the martyrdom of a man who had been profoundly christian and who had

set about building a nation in which christian values were normative. The proposed Basilica of the Sacred Heart was to be erected in his memory at Quito, capital of the country. It was thought that such a basilica would serve as a shrine not only for the Republic of Ecuador, but for people from all over South America. It was as champion of this project that Archbishop Ordoñez of Quito came to Europe with the hope of getting a group of Religious to take care of this national shrine.

On January 18th, 1887 at the French Seminary, Rome, the Archbishop met Fr. Victor Jouët, Procurator of the Missions of the Sacred Heart. Knowing something of Fr. Jouët's character, we can well understand that, at the end of their conversation, the Archbishop concluded: « I do not think that I need look any further ». Fr. Jouët was fascinated by this spiritual Eldorado that he could see so clearly with his vivid imagination. He sent a telegram immediately to Fr. Chevalier. At Issoudun the project appeared as attractive. There were elements in the situation which would incline the MSC to be emotionally in favour of the request. Firstly, on October 8th, 1873, Garcia Moreno had officially proclaimed the Sacred Heart of Jesus patron of the Republic of Ecuador. Secondly, he had been enrolled as a member of the Association of Our Lady of the Sacred Heart of Issoudun. Thirdly, on April 1st, 1874 he had written asking that « my wife, Mariana Alcazar de Garcia Moreno and if possible my only son, Gabriel Garcia Alcazar, aged four years »¹⁷ be enrolled in the same association.

The Council decided to accept. Even Fr. Guyot thought of going as superior, taking Fr. Klotz with him. But it was insisted, especially by the Archbishop of Bourges and Fr. Guyot, that clear contracts be drawn up and serious guarantees given. They could not, of course, foresee that « serious guarantees » could mean different things to the different parties making the agreement.

On 21st February a contract was signed between Archbishop Ordoñez and Fr. Chevalier. Each promised to pay half the

cost of the missionaries' voyage. These, once arrived in Quito, would be given lodgings and the Church of the Sagrario in the cathedral parish. This church would serve temporarily as Church of the Sacred Heart and centre of pilgrimage while the new Basilica was being built. The M.S.C. would have the spiritual direction of the new Basilica - cooperating with a Committee which would be set up. Any conflicts would be referred to the Pope for solution.

The first group was to leave on May 10th accompanying the Archbishop on his return voyage. Those named were: Fr. Morisseau, as superior; Fr. Caën (these two were aged 58 and 52 respectively); then two young priests Frs. Deriche-mont and François Barral, and two brothers. They set off for Quito and their hopes were high.

But the realities they encountered on arrival were quite different from what they had expected, and their hopes were quickly dashed. Ecuador was an extremely poor country, with very few resources and very little interest in a national shrine. The parish of the Sagrario which was entrusted to them had been long abandoned; the people who lived in the area were not at all parish-minded, having got into the way of going to other churches for the sacraments. What the missionaries found most disheartening was the conviction that the work had been taken on too hastily without sufficient knowledge of what exactly was involved. The Archbishop was also disappointed, for he had the idea that the MSC were going to assume all responsibilities for the new Basilica including that of financing the project. He complained to the group that they were not doing anything in this regard. Fr. Morisseau let the Episcopal Curia know that he was surprised at this departure from the contract. He also informed Fr. Chevalier that, in his view, it would be best to cut their losses there and then, having the whole group leave Ecuador either for Europe or for the missions in Oceania. It would have been wise to follow Fr. Morisseau's advice. But it is not easy to reverse quickly a decision as big as this had been. It is not easy to give up hope that, with persevering effort, some worthwhile success can be achieved. Fr. Chevalier

exhorted his men to this perseverance and continued effort. But the group itself began to fall apart. Fr. Caën, outspoken and eccentric, irritated the Archbishop to the point that he asked for his removal from Quito; he went to Peru where he tried to join the Picpus fathers. Brother Juste was sent away from the community, and the Archbishop took him on as professor of French in the seminary of Ecuador. Bro. Xavier Mayer, who arrived in 1889 to join the group, did not last very long. He left in the same year. Fr. Peyrot arrived in 1889; he died in 1890. Shortly after his death, two new young priests arrived from France. One of them, Fr. Moncorget, died two weeks after his arrival from an illness contracted on the voyage.

In spite of everything, the missionaries set about doing what they could, reorganizing the parish, setting up the Confraternity of Our Lady of the Sacred Heart. With regard to the wonderful Basilica nothing was done - until Fr. Morisseau heard that the Archbishop had torn up the old contract and made a new one with a different religious congregation.

It was then that Fr. Chevalier and his Council decided to send Fr. Jouët as Visitor to the community of Quito. He had been the most enthusiastic supporter of the project in the first place; he seemed the most likely to be able to set things right. On his voyage to Quito he had the Company of the new Apostolic Delegate, Mgr. Macchi, with whom he got on very well. They were determined that, together, they should be able to put things in order. They succeeded. Ably and firmly, Fr. Jouët got the Archbishop to rescind the new contract, acknowledging the continued validity of the one signed at Issoudun. He reorganized the existing community; and asked Issoudun for a man able to organize things for the construction and running of the new Basilica. (Fr. Guyot growled that « since it was Jouët who got us into this mess », he should be left there to finish off his work!)¹⁸. The man chosen for the job was Fr. Pierre Barral, brother of François already in Quito. He had been the chief instrument in founding the MSC house in Salzburg. In this and other enterprises, he had given proof of his ability to organize. The General Council set out precisely what his job was

to be: to be in charge of the spiritual direction of the work of the Basilica, in agreement with the Archbishop and a Committee responsible for the whole work; to launch a campaign of propaganda to collect the necessary funds - but without committing either the MSC Congregation or the Quito community to financial obligations. Barral was very capable; he was also enthusiastic, independent and at times arrogant. He could get things done — but at the same time he could antagonise a lot of people in the process. In fact he got things moving for the construction of the Basilica — and in the process he antagonised the Archbishop who asked Issoudun to withdraw him. After a period of truce, he left Ecuador never to return.

This was December 1890. There were some further changes and interchanges of personnel, but by May 1891 the MSC of Quito insisted that the whole project was impractical. In September of that year the General Council decided to abandon Ecuador. Fr. Jouët, however, who felt particularly involved in the affair, fought a delaying action until the General Chapter of 1893 which unanimously voted to finish once and for all with the whole enterprise. In April of 1894, the last MSC went back to Europe.

It would be a long time before a Basilica of the Sacred Heart was ever built at Quito. The shining national shrine did not then come into being; in the late '90's a simple chapel was erected and dedicated to the Holy Heart of Mary. The facts of the final achievement were far different from the wonderful dreams proposed to the first band of MSC adventurers. The cost to the young MSC society was considerable - in men and in morale. Two priests died in Ecuador, two left the Congregation, and not one of the four brothers who went to Quito remained in the Society. The Quito affair was more than a failure; it was a tragic failure, and there were those who felt that it had been undertaken without sufficient responsible planning - like an expedition to find a new Eldorado.

Notes Chapter 7

- ¹ Letter to Fr. Chevalier, December 1st, 1863.
- ² Acts of the General Council, August 1st, 1873.
- ³ *Ib.*, September 17th, 1872.
- ⁴ Letter to Fr. Jouët, December 17th, 1877.
- ⁵ Cf. *Annales Issoudun*, 1879, pp. 210-213.
- ⁶ *Règles des Missionnaires du Sacré-Coeur, Essai provisoire*, 1855, 1re Partie, Ch. 3, art. 2.
- ⁷ *Premières Règles manuscrites*, 1857, 1re Partie, Ch. I, art. 5, n. 3.
- ⁸ *Formula Instituti Missionariorum Sacratissimi Cordis Iesu*, 1869, Paragraphus sextus, I, 1.
- ⁹ Dossier Vandell, Archives MSC, Paris, December 21th, 1866.
- ¹⁰ *Ib.*, December 29th, 1866.
- ¹¹ Cf. *Annalen van O.L. Vrouw van het H. Hart*, Tilburg, 63 (1949), p. 117.
- ¹² Cf. *Dizionario degli Istituti di Perfezione*, Vol. I, sub verbo.
- ¹³ « *La Petite-Oeuvre du Sacré-Coeur. Un sou par an pour les vocations ecclésiastiques. Première Année 1867-1868* », *Issoudun*, 1869, p. 29.
- ¹⁴ In a document to the S.C. of Bishops and Regulars Jouët replied to Captier's Memorandum of Oct. 17th 1876 and to his letter of Oct. 19th 1876.
- ¹⁵ Special session of the General Council, January 16th to 22nd, 1877.
- ¹⁶ Letter Jouët to P. Barral, June 30th, 1887.
- ¹⁷ *Annales Issoudun*, 1875, p. 274.
- ¹⁸ Letter Guyot to Piperon, June 16th, 1889.

MSC crisis

1. GENERAL CONSIDERATIONS.

The founder of a religious society is a charismatic leader. While he is forming his group of collaborators around him, the group will naturally take on the sort of structure which is described technically as a « charismatic-type organization ». In such an organization, as experts in sociology point out:

- a) the focus on which the organization is centred is the inspiration, intuitions and drive of the charismatic leader;
- b) The charismatic quality of the leader draws others with him and enables him to impart or impose his ideas on his followers;
- c) Control in the organization comes from the exercise of these same qualities; and decisions are usually announced in definite terms.

In the early stages of forming such a group, the first companions of a founder, or charismatic leader, look to him for drive, leadership, decisions. The very reason that they join a new group is because they believe that the founder has the inspiration and the intuitions which can shape the group. If they could not accept this type of leadership and organization, they would not join. Naturally they build up a loyalty to the leader, and a habit of mind which accepts his decisions easily.

However, as the group develops, particularly a group which aspires to become a religious congregation within the Church, it must take on different organizational structures. Chapters, councils and consultation must play a larger part in its life. Laws laid down by the Church must be followed, and even the charismatic leader becomes subject to them. He thereby loses some of his liberty. He may become the Superior General of the approved institute - but now he has to exercise a different sort of leadership, or at least one which has to take more account of the requirements of altered structures. At this later stage, the members joining the group are drawn less by the person, or even the personal charism of the Founder as it exists in him. They come because of the objective existence of that charism in the stated aims and nature of the institute. They expect that they will fit into the new phase of the organization with Councils, consultation and so on - and they expect, to a large extent, that the Founder-become-General will be as bound by the organizational demands of the Institute as they are.

Therefore, even before any consideration of personalities involved, the stage is automatically set for friction and for tension as the whole group with its different component parts works into a new understanding and a new style of cooperation in which all are involved. One can see and foretell the sort of tensions which are almost bound to arise - between those who feel that the supreme law is loyalty to the Founder and his inspirations and ideas, and those who feel that all are now called to share by discussion and dialogue in decisions made with a greater participation of the whole community. For some of the older generation, the new ideas will smack of disloyalty. Some of the younger generation will think that they are not allowed to grow up or have sufficient say.

A further element of tension comes into the situation when a group is passing from the stage of being predominantly of one nationality to that of being an international religious group. This is particularly the case when a certain amount of uniformity is (or was) regarded as being necessary for

the religious life of a single institute. There will be, of necessity, national and cultural differences - and some of these will come into religious life with the candidates. Yet the candidates enter a group which has a declared religious ideal and a definite religious spirit. When you ask people of a different nationality to live religious life as you have lived it, you are immediately presented with a question which has no quick and easy answer:

How much of what you ask from this new group is *imposing* accidental expressions of an ideal; and how much is simply *declaring* what a generous response to the religious ideal *demand*s in any language or culture?

A priori then, it can be said that as a religious group grows, it has to make a double transition:

- from that of charismatic and very personal leadership to a more democratic type of government;
- from that of being a group of a single culture to being an international congregation.

N.B. - This latter issue, in our case, is very minor and very peripheral. Had it been the only tension involved, there would have been no M.S.C. crisis.

In the normal course of events there are two instruments provided by Church law to ease a religious congregation through these stages of transition. These are:

- the General Council which counsels and assists the Founder-General;
- the General Chapter which every six years brings together a number of the members of the Congregation to legislate, solve problems, and make decisions for the whole religious society.

Particular Circumstances.

However, for the MSC, the political situation disturbed the normal course of events. The expulsion from France of many

of the religious had also brought about a scattering of the General Council. Fr. Pipéron was at Tilburg; Fr. Jouët was in Rome as Procurator; and Fr. Guyot, although living in France, was at some distance from Issoudun. Fr. Morisseau stayed with Fr. Chevalier for some time before being transferred to Tilburg and then to Quito. The General Chapter should have been held in 1885. But because of the political situation and the dispersion of the members, the General Council judged that it should be deferred. Perhaps it was not strictly necessary to defer the Chapter, but there were at least sufficient grave inconveniences in the way of holding it that the Council could judge, and Rome would approve, that it should be deferred. Those who felt strongly that the Society still needed to make the two-fold transition mentioned above would, naturally, have been disappointed with this decision. They would have felt that, despite the difficulties, an effort could and should have been made to hold the Chapter.

It should also be noted that the very qualities which make a Founder able to exercise his charismatic leadership successfully will make it harder for him to accept that the time of transition has come. He has been called on to declare what his vision means in practice; to declare the spirit and life-style of his religious congregation. Because others have been happy to accept his declarations, the religious society has come into being. The very drive and determination which enabled him to build the group will make it all the more difficult for him not to over-run the right moment when he has to sit back and let others have more say in the decisions, and let others tell him how his ideal is to be adapted to different cultures and changing *mentalities*. The scattering of the General Council had effects perhaps unperceived by Fr. Chevalier in their full implications. The Council had been divided by political events. Fr. Chevalier consulted them often by letter; but correspondence does not make collegiality. As individuals they received and wrote letters, often not knowing the viewpoint of other councillors. From respect towards the Founder, and without live discussion together, they would have agreed with Fr. Chevalier's

proposals more often than they might have done in a different situation. Also, we have seen one instance of Fr. Chevalier's manoeuvring to make sure that the mission of Oceania was accepted. The feeling grew, among some of the Councillors and beyond, that he was imposing his views more than was good for the whole. This led to resentment. The postponement of the General Chapter was, then, seen as a further indication of an unreadiness for full consultation. Furthermore, without the constant *viva voce* meetings of the Council, it was not possible for Fr. Chevalier to gauge the depth of feeling of discontent. A knowledge of the extent of this feeling would have counselled different action.

Then there was the question of different practices of the religious outside of France: adaptation or laxity? And if there were something of the latter, how best deal with it? Fr. Chevalier wrote: « This scattering of the members led forcibly to a certain relaxing of regular discipline, especially in our houses of the North where the works had taken on too wide a spread. The habits of these countries, being different from those of France, had opened the door to more than one abuse. Our first Rules, drawn up at the beginning of the Society and for the Religious of whom it was then composed, no longer catered for its actual needs. The Superior General, out of care for the future of his Congregation, wished before he died to put the finishing touches to his work by complementing the common and particular rules which did have a number of gaps. His aim was to rule out the arbitrary and to establish the greatest possible uniformity of conduct in our houses. He thought rightly that this was his own serious duty to guard against dangerous shocks after he had gone. Therefore he sent to all the superiors of the houses (even the distant ones) proof copies of these new Rules together with the request that, after having consulted their confreres they send all observations to him. He would take account of these in the final version. This was done.

The appearance of this directory stirred up violent dissatisfaction in the houses of the North... »¹.

With the same aims in mind, Fr. Chevalier set about 'completing the Constitutions' and sent them to Rome. Rome found some things too demanding - such as two years Novitiate instead of one. It further pointed out that the Society was obliged to choose between two courses of action. Firstly, if the old Constitutions were retained, even with minor modifications, they could be approved definitively, since the ten years trial had now drawn to a close. Secondly, if the Society were to adopt new Constitutions, it would have to embark on a further period of trial for another ten years. The decision must be made by a General Chapter.

CHAPTER 1891.

The General Chapter began at Issoudun on January 8th, 1891. Members of the Chapter were: Fr. Jules Chevalier, Superior General; the Assistants General: Frs. C. Piperon, V. Jouët, J. Guyot, A. Delaporte, J. Morisseau (Secretary General), F.X. Maillard (General Bursar); Local Superiors: T. Reyn (Antwerp), P. Tréand (Glastonbury), L. Hartzler (Salzburg), X. Klotz (Tilburg), C. Ramot (Watertown). Present as a former Superior was Bishop L. Couppé.

The superstitious man will perhaps note the ominous fact that there were 13 Capitulants.

The rather involved course of events in and after the Chapter can probably best be followed by taking 3 different topics:

1. The Constitutions.
2. Opposition to and criticism of the General Administration.
3. The existence of certain canonical irregularities within the Congregation and action taken to put these in order.

1. *The Constitutions.* Here there was no real problem. The Chapter voted unanimously to adopt the old Constitutions (approved for 10 years in 1877). On July 24th, 1891, Rome gave definite approval to these Constitutions.

2. *Opposition to and criticism of the General Administration.* Since this is the most complicated of all the issues involved,

it will be studied in greater detail in Chapter Eight. However, the major elements in it are not hard to understand. It was, as already noted, the particular MSC expression of a crisis that is common enough at a certain period of transition within a religious group. Let us note a few historical facts which feature largely in the Chapter discussions. Since there was a General Chapter in 1879, there should have been another Chapter in 1885. The General Council, because of the difficulties of the French persecutions and the subsequent MSC diaspora, judged that it would be too difficult to hold and asked that it be deferred. Rome approved. In 1890 - at a request from the General Council, Fr. Chevalier's term as General was prorogued for 12 years. Fr. Chevalier had written new Constitutions and a Directorium, and presented them to Rome for approval. This, as the text from Fr. Chevalier says, « excited a violent discontent in the houses of the North ».

On the floor of the Chapter, Fr. T. Reyn, Superior of the house of Antwerp tried to explain why this opposition resulted, and still existed. He said: One thing essential to the structures of Religious life is that the Society *through the General Chapter* has the right to elect its Superior General; and the right to change, or leave unchanged, its Constitutions and its Rules. Now our Major Superiors did all this, or tried to do all this themselves. *They* asked for and obtained the prolongation of the General in office. *They* asked for (and might have obtained) the changing of Rules and Constitutions. *They* decided that we could not have a Chapter in 1885. This Chapter must ensure that these things do not happen again.

For in this way of acting, our Major Superiors usurped the rights which belong by law and by right to the Society as a whole - in and through the General Chapter.

I think his point is clear. I think that, for us who look back at a distance, it is also clear that his point is valid. Furthermore, here there is obviously a call to accept the transition in structure which we mentioned above - to a more

democratic group from a group ruled by the more personal charismatic leadership.

Unfortunately, it is impossible to make these points in a given real-life situation without criticizing or seeming to criticize the actions of those involved. And often, if the point is not sufficiently understood or does not seem to be accepted, then personal criticisms are often used to force it home.

The members of the Administration felt themselves under attack. They appealed to the historical events of the last few years — persecution in France and dispersal of the MSC group — to justify their actions. Rightly or wrongly, it was replied that this situation had really changed very little in the last few years. If a Chapter was possible now, it was possible earlier on - had it been really desired.

At some stage in the debate, two members of the General Council disassociated themselves from the Administration and took the side of the younger men. Frs. Guyot and Delaporte were of the opinion that they did not have enough say in the General Council - where, they said, Frs. Chevalier and Jouët made most of the decisions. Fr. Jouët particularly became the target of attack; and a number of decisions of the General Administration in the last few years were criticised, special mention being made of the ill-fated expedition to Quito.

To those who still felt strongly that there was a special function to be played by a General - Founder who had a right to exercise a charismatically personal leadership; and to those who put a particular stress on obedience in religious life (an obedience corresponding to this type of superiority) - it was felt that the younger group were lacking in religious spirit. This feeling was strengthened at hearing what were believed to be uncharitable and unjust accusations.

Two groups emerged clearly - The General Administration (or part thereof) and those with them; and « the dissident group ». Fr. General and his supporters were to feel that the next development was part of this concerted opposition. This next step was:

3. *The reaction to certain canonical irregularities which were deemed to exist in the Society.* The General Council had proposed that these irregularities be looked into - but had not foreseen many of the conclusions. The chief of these, it was suggested, was that it was doubtful whether Fr. Chevalier had really been General of the Society for a number of years! To see the reasons for this assertion, let us put forth a bit of chronology: In 1869, Fr. Chevalier was elected Superior General for 12 years. In 1881, at the end of this time, a Rescript prolongs his charge for 1 year. In 1882, prolongation for 1 year.

In 1883, the same.

In 1884, the same again.

In 1885, 1886, 1887, 1888 ... nothing.

In 1889, he is « prolonged for a year ».

In 1890, he is prolonged in office for 12 years (Decree from Cardinal Protector).

Now what follows might have seemed rather tragic at the time. But in retrospect it can raise a smile here and there. Present at the Chapter was a young Alsatian Fr. X. Klotz, Superior of Tilburg, a very promising young man who had studied Canon Law in Rome, and whom Fr. Chevalier had thought might some day succeed him as Superior General. As he studied some of the documents he had his doubts about certain legal angles, and he put these forward in the Chapter. They caused a furore. Eager young canonists can get carried away by their zeal for legal rectitude in a way that sometimes does not best serve the greater good. He himself wrote in later years - on Nov. 1st, 1925: « When you give an account of those disturbed years, take care not to suppose that there was bad faith on either side. Each man acted according to his conscience. Our misunderstandings are explained by the events. If in 1891 I had had the experience of 1925, as the documents passed through my hands to be read at the Chapter, I would not have had the imprudence of making public the irregularities which I discovered in them. I would have taken Fr. Chevalier aside, I would have drawn up an appeal to Rome, and he would certainly

have signed it. And Rome, in its indulgence, would have given a 'sanatio in radice' at the simple request of a Superior General. This would have established order where there was disorder, with no fuss, no shocks, no hurt. But then I was just in the thirties. At that age one is not as much in control of his impressions as at 67 »².

And at that age, what did he do? He pointed out the gap in the Rescripts prolonging Fr. Chevalier's term of office. (In the discussions, it would seem that Frs. Chevalier and Jouët forgot about the 1884 Rescript. This is understandable in the circumstances!) Discussion concerned the years 1883-1889. He was not renewed in office. Therefore he had not been Superior General. Therefore, all those he had admitted to Profession in those years were not validly professed! Among those 'invalidly professed' are three members of this Chapter: Bishop Couppé, Frs. Reyn and Delaporte. And since Delaporte, as Assistant General took part in the convocation of the Chapter - perhaps the Chapter is invalidly convoked!

Fr. Jouët replied that, in making his application in 1889 he had explained the previous omissions as due to the unsettled state of France and the MSC society scattered about Europe. Therefore, he said, the Rescript of 1889 had carried with it a « sanatio » of all irregularities. Fr. Chevalier was also of the opinion that « Implicitly, this Rescript contained the Sanatio of the preceding irregularities, since Fr. Jouët had mentioned them in his petition »³.

However, those were the days (now happily gone) when a single Canon Lawyer could put the fear of God and the Inquisition into a group of ordinary mortals who knew not Canon Law. Consequently Fr. Jouët's reply did not remove all their fears. Then Fr. Klotz increased their fears by suggesting that some among them were probably subject to penalties and censure in view of that well-known decree *Romani Pontificis*. Such would be Frs. Piperon and Ramot who, as Novice Masters had actually admitted postulants to the Novitiate before the arrival of the testimonial letters.

They could therefore have incurred certain penalties; they could have lost their active and passive voice in the Society, and therefore have no right to be present or vote in the Chapter! There was more, but this was enough to get the members of the Chapter to agree to sign a document exposing their doubts to Rome, and requesting a « *sanatio ad cautelam* ». They also agreed that Fr. Klotz and Fr. Píperon should be delegated to take this document to Rome, the Chapter meanwhile going into recess. All the Chapter members including Fr. Chevalier, signed the document. Frs. Klotz and Píperon, therefore set off for Rome.

Given the fact that the Chapter had split into two camps, the Archbishop of Bourges thought it would be advisable that Fr. Chevalier should be represented in Rome, and that Fr. Jouët should go there for this purpose. The Archbishop wrote in this vein to Cardinal Monaco, Protector of the Congregation, indicating the advice he had given Fr. Chevalier (letter of January 21st). Fr. Chevalier wasted no time accepting the advice; he got his letter off to Cardinal Monaco on January 20th. In it he ventures to suggest that the Cardinal might call Jouët to Rome by telegram. Furthermore, not having much faith in Klotz's viewpoint, he suggests that the Cardinal might find it useful to talk to Píperon on his own. Then with or without telegram, Jouët set off for Rome, too.

The document the two delegates took to Rome was an extraordinary one really. It mentioned, of course, the doubts we have recorded. It further stated that two of the Assistants did not remember whether they were consulted about the application in 1889 (which bore their signatures!) Furthermore some members of the Chapter doubt the validity of the reasons given for postponing the Chapter. (This was a bit rash, since Rome had judged and approved these reasons!). Then, owing to the scattering of the Assistants, several members had been admitted to profession without the consent of the Assistants. Were these professions valid? The General had delegated Superiors to receive profession (whereas the Constitutions speak of his delegating

Provincials). Where *these* professions valid? Some Novices had been professed outside the house of the Novitiate - it would seem that these professions were invalid. Some Novice-Masters, without Indult, had been named as Novice-Master, not having the requisite canonical age.

Bishop Couppé, as Bishop, was no longer under the General. Can he therefore be a member of the Chapter?

Are those members 'invalidly professed' validly at the Chapter? Because of doubts about the way the General was approved, was the decree convoking the Chapter legitimate? What were the fathers really hoping for as a result of this representation to Rome? In the last paragraph of the document they ask that all irregularities (if they exist) might be fixed up, so that they can get on with the Chapter. Fr. Chevalier at least suspected that they were being over optimistic. In his letter to the Cardinal Protector, of January 20th, he wrote:

« Whether the Holy Father judges that the present Chapter be dissolved, or continue, may I make bold to ask Your Eminence to request that either in the continuation of this Chapter or in the formation of a new one, His Holiness should deign to designate to preside as Apostolic Delegate either His Grace the Archbishop of Bourges, or should His Grace not be able to be present, then Bishop of Synope, his brother and Coadjutor ».

The suspicion was well founded. Cardinal Monaco was instructed to « dissolve the chapter and declare it dissolved ». This he did in a document dated January 27th, 1891. It added that the participants were to go home, and that, until further arrangements were made by the Sacred Congregation, business was to be carried on as it had been up to date. Meanwhile the Acts of the Chapter were to be sent to Rome. However, when the General and the Assistants looked around for the Acts, they found that they were not at Issoudun. Fr. Klotz, secretary of the Chapter had gone back to Tilburg taking the documents with him. If Fr. Chevalier had feared that Klotz would not give an unbiased account to Rome,

Klotz now returned the compliment. He asked permission to go to Rome himself; permission was refused. Klotz still went to Rome. In those days such a course of action was regarded as being a serious breach of religious obedience. Fr. Chevalier says that in Rome, Klotz was not given a very warm reception, but was threatened with interdict.

Then, under date of April 15th, a letter was sent to Fr. Chevalier from Cardinal Vega, Prefect of the SC of Regulars. It was brief, and couched in those courteous terms which the Curia uses even when « summoning someone to Rome »:

« Reverend Father,

This Sacred Congregation of Bishops and Regulars, earnestly desiring to put an end to the difficulties which have arisen in the Institute of the Missionaries of the Sacred Heart, of which Your Paternity is Superior General, invites you to come to Rome, where you will be able to clarify these questions for us. While awaiting a prompt reply indicating the day of your arrival, I wish you all the best in the Lord... ».

It was May by the time Fr. Chevalier could comply with this summons; and May in Rome is full of Church holidays. When he got there, he found that Cardinal Vega was away on vacation. He had a half-hour talk with the Pope, and a two-hour talk with the Secretary of the S.C. of Bishops and Regulars. The Secretary was « très affable et très paternel ». However, he would certainly have made it clear that Rome could not make light of mistakes which resulted in doubts about the validity of some 190 professions.

There is a delightful document in the General Archives, under date of June 13th. It begins:

« The Founder and Superior General of the Congregation of the Sacred Heart at Issoudun, in the Archdiocese of Bourges, humbly explains that, in his institute a few irregularities have occurred... » 'A few irregularities' - such as perhaps he was not really Superior General for several years; and some superiors were perhaps not really delegated to receive profession of the subjects — sometimes also novices received without

testimonial letters, and professed at times outside the house of the Novitiate — and perhaps as a result religious invalidly professed.

Therefore he asks a « sanatio » for any irregularities - and from such censures that may have been incurred here and there. Rome, from long experience, is not perturbed by a 'few irregularities'. The Sacred Congregation therefore « benignly granted the faculty » to the Cardinal Protector to absolve and regularize as requested. This he did on June 15th. There were a few important additional items in the Rescript which Cardinal Monaco executed: firstly of confirming the rescript extending Fr. Chevalier's term as General for 12 years (i.e. from 1890).

Secondly, he could confirm the actual Assistants in office until the next General Chapter; with the proviso that they reside with the General.

Thirdly, the sanatio of profession was given to « those who would ask for it in writing ». (Tax on the Rescript was 23 lire!).

Fr. Chevalier then set off to make a round of all the houses, explaining things to the members, and allowing each one to make his own free choice. It is significant that of all the 190 or so people concerned, only one left the Society. This seems to indicate that, whatever the intensity of the Chapter warfare, most members were happy to be in the Congregation. There can be no doubt that the whole business was not a very happy experience for those most deeply involved. Nevertheless there are many indications that the « crisis » was to some extent over-dramatized. One such indication is the number of people who joined the society in those years:

In the years 1891-1892 - there were thirty novices (clerical): of these, some left, but 21 made their profession on October 17th, 1892 and others later.

In 1892-1893, there were 26 novices: the chief group of 14 was professed on October 9th, 1893, with others later.

In 1893-1894, there were 33 Novices, and the following year, 38.

After Fr. Chevalier's trip around the houses, all professions were now regularized. The clouds of canonical doubt were dissipated: Fr. Chevalier was clearly nominated as Superior General for many years to come; the Assistants were confirmed until the next Chapter. The clause about Assistants residing with the General meant that Fr. Jouët, as Procurator in Rome, could not continue as Assistant, and Fr. Guyot had resigned after the Chapter. To replace these two, Frs. Maillard and Morisseau were named Assistants.

One important practical question remained:

What could and should be done about a new General Chapter?

An expert in modern problem-solving techniques would have said that the only way to restore harmony in this troubled situation was for the parties concerned to talk things out - in this instance in Chapter. This was in fact Fr. Chevalier's idea. (Although he was of the opinion that normally chapters were not much use, he shared the opinion of his confreres that, at this time, a new chapter was called for.)

On February 17th, Fr. Maillard wrote to Fr. Jouët: « He (Fr. Chevalier) still believes, and we do too, that to have a Chapter convoked as soon as possible, to be presided over by an Apostolic Delegate is the only way to calm people down and finish these matters. So would you please act along these lines ».

On September 5th, 1891, Fr. Chevalier and his Assistants officially petitioned the Holy See to be allowed to hold another Chapter, *with the same members* as in January. (Chevalier here went along with Reyn and Co.). Naturally, the Holy See had not heard of twentieth century techniques for solving problems, and perhaps it did not believe that this particular group of MSC was capable of finding a solution in friendly dialogue. On January 27th it had « dissolved the

Chapter and declared it dissolved ». In reply to this petition of September 5th, it said that « after having weighed all things carefully », the answer was « No ». If a Chapter were to be held, it should be held according to the Constitutions recently given definitive approval. Furthermore it could be held only after the Sacred Congregation gave permission - a permission it was not yet ready to give.

On March 5th, 1892, in reply to a further request to hold a Chapter, the S.C. again replied that it did not judge it opportune to do so. However it did express itself prepared to listen to the serious reasons which the Superior General might be prepared to put forward showing that such a Chapter was necessary or useful.

On July 17th, in reply to a further request from Fr. Chevalier, permission was granted. But evidently, the S.C. still had little faith in the MSC group. For the following conditions were laid down:

1. President of the Chapter would be, Mgr. A. Marchal, Bishop of Sinope, as Apostolic Delegate. He should interview each of the members before the Chapter began.
2. The members should put in three days of spiritual exercises before starting the Chapter.
3. Members will be chosen and be present as prescribed by the Constitutions.
4. The business of the Chapter will be to elect four Assistants General and a Procurator General - and also a commission of four members who, under the Presidency of the General, will write a Directorium.
5. The members, if they wish, may express their opinion, but this time all decisions will be taken by the Holy See.
6. The Apostolic Delegate has a right to end the Chapter when he judges fit.
7. For the rest, let the Constitutions be observed.

If Rome thought that it had found the right formula for solving the MSC problem, it was destined to be disappointed.

On February 7th, 1893, the Chapter was officially begun under the presidency of Mgr. A. Marchal. Again there were 13 Capitulants present (but five good men were absent):

J. Chevalier, Superior General; Assistants General: Frs. C. Piperon, J. Morisseau (Secretary General), F. Maillard, A. Bâtard (General Bursar); Local Superiors: T. Reyn (Antwerp), V. Casas (Barcelona), C. Ramot (Glastonbury), F. Miniot (Paris), F. Barral (Quito), L. Hartzler (Salzburg), A. Lanctin (Tilburg), F. Dérichemont (Watertown). As an extra item of business they had been asked by Cardinal Rampolla to vote on whether they suppress the foundation in Quito. The vote for suppression was unanimous. But the most important business of the Chapter was the election of Assistants and Procurator. Elected were: Fr. Ramot, First Assistant, and Frs. Morisseau, Delaporte and Lanctin as Assistants. Fr. Guyot was elected Procurator General.

Mgr. Marchal had exhorted the Chapter to act for peace and unity; he had stressed the importance of choosing Assistants who would help the General, and not oppose him. Now, as he read the written submission given him — according to the condition n. 5 — he saw that these four men had, in the submissions given him to take to Rome, expressed rather bitter opposition to Fr. Chevalier. He had doubts — and he expressed these doubts in his report to Rome — about the spirit in which these men had come to do their work. « It seems to me », he said, « ... that the election had been prearranged and that nothing would persuade the electors to abandon the decision they had taken together ... Since they had the majority, they named as assistants those who, in 1891 had most violently declared themselves against the old administration... » (Report of Feb. 11th). Since Mgr. Marchal and Fr. Chevalier were good friends, since they shared the same views about authority and obedience, neither would have been happy about these elections. To what extent one influenced the other to think the elections might have been invalid would be impossible to say. But certainly each confirmed the other in his suspicion.

Fuller reports were sent on February 20th and 22nd. The Sacred Congregation replied, on March 10th that it was not clear from his reports whether the elections were valid or not (because perhaps pre-arranged by factions). He was therefore to make further enquiries and send a fuller report. Meanwhile the newly elected Assistants were not to exercise their functions; the old officials were to be reinstated until, after further enquiries, the Holy See made other arrangements.

As a result of the enquiry, Rome decided that the MSC Society needed some further outside assistance. Archbishop Boyer, the new Bishop of Bourges was named Apostolic Visitor of the Society. The elections of February 7th were declared null and void. Frs. Piperon, Morisseau, Reyn and Vaudon were named 'provisional Assistants'. Maillard had written to Boyer that he felt it would be better for the Society if he were not appointed Assistant. Fr. Carrière was appointed as Procurator and Superior of the House in Rome; Fr. Bâtard - Bursar, and Fr. Maillard Minister of the Missions. All this was communicated by the Archbishop in a letter of August 21st, 1893. He added confidently: « The peace mission which has been entrusted to me will be easy to carry out ». When he died at the end of 1896, Fr. Chevalier could write to the Holy Father:

« Little by little, calm has been restored, spirits have been pacified and hearts united by bonds which can not be broken again. We can bear witness that, at this moment, perfect agreement and harmony exists between superiors and subjects, as also between all the members of our Congregation »⁴.

2. A PARTIAL ANALYSIS.

Having seen the course of events during this critical period, we must now try to go behind the scenes and see if we can come out with an understanding of this part of our history. Insofar as that is possible, we shall endeavour to do so with all respect for our departed confreres. We should leave to be buried with them the evidences of human weakness, the little things which might take away from the good they did. For

the tragic thing about the crisis was that these were good men caught up in misunderstanding that caused much personal heartache. Mistakes were made all round. Ours is not to sit in judgement; we shall merely try to understand.

There were, first of all, two basic ideologies about government of the Society, at this stage of its development.

1. « The era of the foundation is closed. Henceforth the Chapter legislates, the Superior administers »⁵.

2. « The Superior General ... (the Founder) is not an ordinary Superior ... He is the head and the root ... It is for us (Assistants) to be the principal members and the chief branches living with the same life and the same sap, in order to communicate it to others ». While the assistants must discuss, give suggestions, and give or refuse consent, they can not set out systematically to oppose the General-Founder.

« The work is in the formative stage and it is from the Founder that the initiative must come in harmony with those who have espoused his work and who share a mutual confidence with him... ». Even a Chapter can not *impose* its will on the Founder if he is totally opposed to the suggestions of a certain group⁶.

As we have seen, a number of the members came to the Chapter of 1891 convinced of the first thesis; convinced, too, that by not calling a Chapter, the General Administration had deprived the members of the Society of their rights. They came then with certain resentments - and resentment often leads to exaggerated statements. When the exaggerations are rebutted, the resentment increases. They spoke of the Chapter as the « Supreme Tribunal »; this supreme tribunal could pass judgment on the Administration. In passing this judgment, it had many things to criticize, such as too many foundations which it was difficult to staff. — But especially did it criticize the omissions in observance of Canon law: non-consultation of Assistants by the General; obtaining Indults from Rome instead of calling a Chapter earlier; and the failure to obtain indults when they should have been obtained. The sons were more learned than their fathers on some of these

points, and they let it be known that they did not appreciate the « muddling » of the General Administration and its careless attitude towards the prescriptions of Canon Law.

The General Administration which had lived and worked through the difficulties of the political persecutions saw things from their history and experience. They felt that they had done what they could to keep the Society alive - and that sheer necessity dispensed from worrying too much about the law. They had scattered their Assistants (Piperon to the North and Jouët to Rome) to have their best men in their most important projects. It was easy enough for young men who had grown up in the sheltered houses *they* had established and supported in fear and sacrifice, to say what should have been done.

But the « Chapter fathers » were determined to say what would be done from now on. They would have no more of this haphazard type of government. They would, to begin with, see that Assistants and General came together. If this could not be done at Issoudun, then it would be done in Rome where most General Houses were, anyway. In vain could Fr. Chevalier protest that at that stage of the Congregation's life, Issoudun was vital for the Society's existence - as the centre of its works and as the source of its financial stability. The chapter voted that the General House should be transferred to Rome. This was an example of what the opposing school would call « imposing decisions on the Founder-General ». It was also an un-canonical example of the Chapter acting beyond its powers!

Then, when the revelation of canonical irregularities made it clear that recourse to Rome would be needed - it was not the Superior General who would have such recourse, nor his Procurator. The Chapter would elect *its* delegates to Rome - these, as we know were Frs. Piperon and Klotz. The members therefore resented the fact that Fr. Jouët himself went to Rome. It did not consider whether, as Procurator he had the right to represent the Society in Rome - the Chapter, that « Supreme Tribunal » had not sent him! And then ...

« As the official delegates of the Chapter presided by the Superior General returned with empty hands, it was he (Jouët) who triumphantly bears the decree of dissolution which made it impossible to elect the Procurator and the Assistants »⁷. (The text omits to say that the Chapter over-ruled Chevalier's strong plea to send Fr. Jouët to Rome).

The reaction to this decree was predictably strong. The almighty chapter had been dissolved. It could not change the administration - as the logic of its position would have demanded, and as it had planned to do. Everyone was told to go home - and go on being ruled by this Administration they had so much criticised. Fr. Guyot, a man of quick reactions, judging that this decision was an insult to the dignity of the Chapter members resigned as Assistant. Klotz resigned as Superior of Tilburg. Before departing, the members got together and decided that they should ask for another Chapter consisting of the same members.

It is clear that, among a number of those present a certain mentality continued, as if they were still « the Chapter » charged with seeing that laws were kept and Constitutions observed - and then of keeping a careful eye on the wayward General Administration. They did not seem to realize fully that as Jouët wrote in some exasperation later, « The Chapter was dissolved, is dissolved and remains dissolved ». Klotz as « secretary » of a « Chapter » which no longer existed, took off with him the Acts of the Chapter, which the *Superior General* was supposed to send to Rome. He continued in this character of « representative » of the Chapter for some time: He took the Acts to Rome, and he and others whom he represented hired a lawyer in Rome to defend their rights in the Holy See. He obviously felt called to defend the rights of the « oppressed », as he called them, and lived for the day when the Chapter would meet again to see that justice would be done. When he heard that Fr. Ramot might be going to Sydney as Superior, he wrote to tell him not to go for he would be needed in the next Chapter. Klotz certainly regarded himself as a sort of religious Robin Hood, ready to right the wrongs being done:

« I'm armed from head to foot »... etc. « and I'm waiting on your signal either to lay down my arms, or to dash into battle again. Do not delay in bringing me up to date. One day lost could be fatal for us... »⁸.

This group was so convinced of the rightness of their cause that they could think of no explanation of the dissolution of the Chapter unless unless there had been some dirty work at the cross-roads!

Obviously Fr. Jouët had engineered the dissolution, and he must have used unfair means to do so - since right was on their side. Some even said that he slandered them to the Archbishop of Bourges and to Rome. Others said that Chevalier had told him to seek a dissolution so that the old Administration could carry on. If this were so, then they thought they were justified in fighting that justice be done.

The other side set much store on authority, obedience and respect for authority. Even those who believed that there was much to be said for the claims of the younger men could not go along with the way they were going about things - either in or after the Chapter. Not all of them would have been sure that you need to add much, if anything, because your Superior is also Founder. But they were certain that something was wrong when you started to take away what christian virtue demanded. Fr. Piperon wrote sadly: « I don't see the Spirit of God in all this tempest. Where respect is lacking and charity and obedience too, there can not be the action of God. It is this that frightens me » ...⁹. Even the suave Delaporte who took their side is forced to admit that they had « gone too far ». Piperon also wrote, in a report to Rome about the Chapter, of « schoolboy anger... lack of reverence, lack of gratitude, presumption ... ».

Fr. Chevalier had been superior for 35 years. He lived in a time when much stress was put on religious obedience. In the two Marchals, Archbishop of Bourges and Bishop of Sinope, he had men who shared his views. All insisted that obedience and respect for authority were essential for religious life.

Both of these things seemed to be sadly lacking. Therefore Fr. Chevalier was convinced (and remained convinced to the end of his life) that « lack of religious spirit » was the root cause of all the trouble. This lack of religious spirit could not be countenanced; it had to be resisted, and as Superior he had to guard against its spreading. Those who aligned themselves with Klotz were « the rebels », « the opposition », « the other side ». It so happened that, in the Chapter, three of these men had been Superiors of the houses in the North: Klotz at Tilburg, Reyn at Antwerp and L. Hartzler at Strasbourg.

Since Klotz had resigned as Superior of Tilburg, where he was also Novice Master, he would have to be replaced - or the Novitiate would have to be transferred elsewhere. Fr. Chevalier and the Council decided that they would transfer the Novitiate to Chezal-Benoit, close to Issoudun. A Rescript was obtained from Rome, and Fr. Piperon was sent to bring the Novices from Tilburg. Frs. Reyn, Vandel and Meyer went to Tilburg to oppose the transfer of the Novices. They maintained that nothing could be done until the difficulties had been resolved (a sort of moral on-going existence of the « Chapter », despite the Roman decree that the old Administration continue to administer the Society).

The concern for safeguarding the religious spirit pushed Chevalier even further; the senior boys of the northern apostolic schools were brought to Issoudun, where the scholasticate also would be under his vigilant and paternal care. Naturally this upset the « *partie adverse* » very much indeed. It was seen as an attempt to diminish the importance of the houses in the north. Some strong things were said. Some very reasonable things were also written about the disadvantages of bringing the boys and Novices to be educated outside their own countries, particularly in view of Germany's attitude towards missionaries educated in France, and with regard to the mind of people contributing to the education of boys in the local seminaries. However, it was the anxiety about the « evil spirit » which had the final say. At this time, too, some people, Jouët among them, wrote and said some unwise things about « french and catholic » as interchangeable words.

This could pour no oil on the very troubled waters of the time.

Every prolonged struggle of this sort leads to something of an obsession on both sides. If the one side was a bit obsessed with the « chapter-complex », the other was equally obsessed with the « mauvais esprit », seeing it even in helpful criticism. An issue in early 1893 was whether Fr. Chevalier had the right to open the letters of the Assistants (let us not forget that in those days the Superior, by religious law, was expected to keep a careful eye on the correspondence of his subjects). The Bishop of Sinope judged that it was fair enough - the Superior General was entitled to know what «the other side» was up to! In point of fact Chevalier got some very juicy morsels of correspondence in this way.

Another obsession was that it was Jouët's machinations that had brought about the dissolution of the Chapter. Some suggested that Fr. Chevalier had instigated this move. Certainly, in Rome, Jouët spoke with the Cardinal Vicar of the possibility of dissolution. Furthermore, Chevalier had sent Jouët to Rome to speak on his behalf, not to agree with Klotz. But how much pressure he brought, or could bring, to bear on the S.C. is matter for conjecture. Correspondence between Chevalier and Jouët (neither of whom could pretend to the other) takes it for granted that it was entirely a decision of the Sacred Congregation. Even more likely is what Fr. Jouët wrote: « The Chapter committed suicide » - the Congregation only declared it dead!

For it is clear that the « chapter » grossly overdramatized a number of issues. It was a very small chapter of a very little congregation, which did not even have its Constitutions definitively approved. Its claims of being the « Supreme Tribunal » really representing the Society cut very little ice in Rome. It consisted of 13 men; those who were not part of the General Administration were local Superiors, appointed by that Administration, and elected by it to participate in the Chapter. The document it sent to Rome was a confession of being in a complete juridical mess - and it further suggested

that some Roman Cardinals had given indulgences on grounds which were canonically insufficient. This insinuation is hardly ever appreciated by Roman Cardinals! Then the solemn delegation of two specially chosen representatives instead of the normal representation from General or Procurator did not impress either. As Cardinal Monaco said: « Why did not Fr. Chevalier simply write a letter? » The fact that one of the anti-administration group was Fr. Delaporte did impress, but unfavourably. He had been Superior General of another Congregation in France, « les Pères de la Miséricorde ». In this position he had administered the Congregation so badly that he had to leave the Congregation. Hearing that he was one of the leaders of the Chapter majority did not convince Rome that this small band of good men and true (7 or 9 of the 13) was going to right all wrongs and straighten out the Society's troubles. A further question was whether the Chapter really had any further business to discuss. It had been called to make a choice between old and new Constitutions. It had done that. Therefore, said Rome, you might as well pack up and go home. (The Chapter members were a bit ingenuous in thinking that they could get an over-night 'sanatio' in response to the many different doubts they proposed. Even with Jouët 'exerting pressure', it was nearly six months until the Rescript was given. And then Fr. Chevalier still had his long trip to do around the houses of the north before the whole matter was cleared up).

But if the Chapter over-dramatized, so did Fr. Chevalier. (It is difficult not to over-dramatize in an emotionally charged situation). Perhaps Fr. Chevalier began the over-dramatization with his judgment of the « abuses in the houses of the North ». Fr. Delaporte wrote: « Before the Chapter of 1891 in a small number of houses there was some discontent, some ideas a little bit special; but there was nothing in all this to cause concern. These houses had been visited very little; they were out of contact with the centre of the Society, necessarily entrusted to the care of confreres without experience. It was inevitable that they would fall short in some things. But, all things considered, the Apostolic School and their apostolic

ministry were flourishing there, and the financial situation was quite satisfactory »¹⁰.

Certainly, whatever the 'abuses', the new Rules, descending to details in many minutiae, were not well calculated to restore religious discipline. Suggestions by confreres which, it seems clear, were inspired by friendship and a desire to help, were taken by Chevalier as « attacks on my administration ». One such attack it was alleged, was made by Fr. Reyn when, in the Chapter, he suggested that, if the good of the Society demanded that Fr. Chevalier remain parish priest of Issoudun, then let him, while remaining General, have a Vicar-General appointed to visit the Society constantly to keep in personal contact with his subjects. Today anyone who made the same suggestion for a man in the same position would be regarded as talking sense. Reyn was judged to be talking revolt.

When, in July 1891, the Constitutions were approved, a couple of modifications made by Rome added some further fuel to the fire. For Rome said that as well as being finally professed, Superiors had to be 35 years old. It further said that, at this stage, only superiors in office (and not ex-superiors) could take part in the Chapter. This was a blow to those who still considered themselves as 'the moral chapter'. Some of them were not old enough to be superiors or assist at the Chapter. Also, Klotz, Delaporte, and Guyot were automatically excluded. Again the cry went up that this was Jouët's doing, a deliberate plot to keep these men out of the Chapter. Although, when it suited them, they complained that the Society was being too much ruled by indults and not enough by the Constitutions, they were happy enough that Chevalier got an indult to name superiors under 35.

Then came the Chapter of 1893 and its later annulment. This double event could contribute nothing to improve the dispositions of either side. You can imagine the different versions of what led to the annulment - some saying it was at Chevalier's instigation, while he was convinced that this particular General Council had been foisted on him by the « partie adverse ». The Bishop of Sinope, the Apostolic Delegate was

not very helpful to him here. Before his first meeting with the Council, he showed Chevalier the written allegations of these four men severely criticizing his administration. The Bishop himself was not very favourably impressed by them. At the end of February 1893, he wrote to Chevalier that he could not accept an invitation to come to Issoudun to speak with him and his Council. He had a prior engagement. Further « I no longer have any confidence in the good manners of these agitated fellows, and assuredly they would be lacking in respect towards me ... It is not fitting that I be laid open to this sort of thing ».

By now things were pretty grim in the small MSC Congregation, even judged through friendly eyes. In April of the previous year, Mgr. Marchal, Archbishop of Bourges had written to Rome that, because of the situation in France and beyond, Fr. Chevalier could not cover all the Society. And because of « the incomplete organization of the Society's government ... confidence has been weakened among nearly all the members, it has been lost by several. And with the confidence, obedience and respect have vanished on the part of a certain number »¹¹.

The recent events would made for deterioration rather than improvement.

A further sad event in this intervening period was the expulsion from the Society of Fr. Klotz. There is abundant correspondence to, from, and about Klotz. The main lines we could guess - on the one side the plea that he is fighting for justice, and is unjustly treated; on the other hand the statement that he is a cause of dissension and constantly trying to stir up trouble against the lawful superiors of the Society. After his expulsion, he wrote letters of repentance and pleaded to be taken back.

In 1893, it was obvious that serious and special measures were needed to clear up an unhappy situation which had lasted too long. Fr. Chevalier fell back on an old well-tried device of making Novenas. Rome appointed a wise and im-

partial Apostolic Visitor, Mgr. Boyer, the new Archbishop of Bourges. The combination of prayer and impartiality gradually brought healing to the group. The impartiality was manifested first of all in the choice of Assistants: Piperon was a loyal friend of the Founder; Reyn was a representative of the younger group; Morisseau had been with Chevalier on some issues and against him on others, while Vaudon seemed to enjoy the respect of all. Boyer refused to believe that all who criticised the General Administration were rebels - and he instructed Chevalier not to use this or other similar terms. He listened to all who wished to speak to him, and recognised the validity of many points of the younger men. He even got Fr. Chevalier to accept Fr. Klotz back into the Congregation, to give him another try.

Fr. Chevalier, at least in the beginning was not altogether convinced of the Archbishop's impartiality - he thought he was too much on the 'other side'. However, while he « prayed for the Archbishop's enlightenment », he did what he was told - and he did it for a number of years. And perhaps this was better for his soul and for his society than he ever realized.

When an Apostolic Visitor is appointed to a Religious Congregation, the General and Council have to get his permission for any steps to be taken; all Council decisions must be submitted to him for approval, and a constant account of administration must be given him. He becomes, for the time being, a sort of Super-Superior General with Presidential powers. His appointment is a sign to the society that a careful eye is being kept on all proceedings. In this instance, it was therefore clear to all that their General Administration had to give a careful account of every move they made. It was also clear that they had better learn to cooperate with authority, for here the authority of the Holy See was very much involved. With obvious representatives of «the people» on the General Council, it was evident that every effort was being made to ensure that there was government for the people. If there was a real love for the Society in the members, this was the way to bring it to express itself in harmony and cooperation.

There was such a love for the society in most of the members; and it produced that peace the Visitor had promised. There was to be, however, a little more sadness before the happy ending. Fr. Reyn was to leave the society of the MSC. During this time of crisis, he had been living his own personal drama. His letters to Fr. Chevalier are rather impressive. He is honest; he says what he thinks, and he thinks well. But he can not admit to thinking what he does not believe; and if Fr. Chevalier takes this badly - well, that is unfortunate and sad for both of them. Let us see how he writes to Fr. Chevalier:

« We have different ideas, R. Fr. Superior, about the division which exists in the Society, but I have never asked God that my way of seeing things should triumph. I ask him only that truth and justice should prevail, and to give me the grace to submit completely and humbly if I am wrong. If then, Rev. Fr. Superior, I have caused you pain, it is only because, in conscience, I believed myself obliged to do so. It is because in my heart as a religious there are two great loves: the one for our dear Society, the other for its venerated Founder »¹². Also « My reverend and very dear Father, pray much for me. For if these difficulties should last much longer, I believe that my vocation will be endangered. Ah, if our Rev. Fr. Superior only knew well the state of minds, if everyone would dare to speak to him with this frankness and openness of heart... Oh I am convinced that our well loved Superior would not hesitate an instant to make any sacrifice in order to satisfy the just claims of the Society. For the Society is *his* work, the Missionaries of the Sacred Heart are *his* sons. And he has too good a heart, he is too good a father to let his best children perish ... I fear that our Reverend Father Superior has a false idea of the situation. He believes, perhaps, that he is not loved and esteemed as he ought to be... »¹³.

It was this Fr. Reyn who, two years later gave his resignation as Assistant General, on the grounds that he had no confidence in the Administration of Fr. Chevalier; soon afterward he asked to leave the Society. He had made plans to go to Belgium to found a Society of Chaplains to Workers, as

it is called today. With him went Fr. Jules Vandel and some of the students. Fr. Klotz also joined them. Fr. Vandel, and one of the French students, Courbon, later returned to the Society. The others were gone for good. Earlier we saw the serene comment of Fr. Klotz in later years. In saying our farewell to Fr. Reyn let us see this quotation: « In 1930 I met Fr. Reyn in Rome. He told me that his feelings of bitterness in those days had long given way to a great liking (sympathie) and that he considered his Congregation as a branch of ours grown up on its own soil, by the grace of God »¹⁴. Perhaps it is a bit difficult for two Founders to live and work harmoniously in the same Congregation!

This was the last sad blow in the crisis. There was one further blow — although it is hard to know how to classify it — as sad or humorous. Two of the original « chapter members », still fighting a rear-guard action, sent to Rome a copy of Fr. Chevalier's two books — on the Sacred Heart and Our Lady — in an effort to get them condemned! The Holy Office was not interested.

Notes Chapter 8

- ¹ Chevalier, *Ms Annales de la Petite Société*, pp. 32-33.
- ² Quoted by Peeters, *Ms Congrégation M.S.C., Croissance et Jeunesse*, IV, p. 42.
- ³ Chevalier, *Ms Annales de la Petite Société*, p. 35.
- ⁴ Letter to the Holy Father, December 30th, 1896.
- ⁵ Letter Delaporte to Chevalier, September 1891.
- ⁶ Jouët to the Archbishop of Bourges, March 6th, 1891.
- ⁷ Letter Delaporte to Chevalier, Good Friday, 1893.
- ⁸ Klotz to Ramot, quoted by Chevalier to Jouët, March 30th, 1891.
- ⁹ Letter to Jouët, February 26th, 1893.
- ¹⁰ Letter to Chevalier, Good Friday, 1893.
- ¹¹ Archbishop of Bourges to the Prefect of the Sacred Congregation of Bishops and Regulars, April 20th, 1892.
- ¹² Letter to Chevalier, November 23rd, 1891.
- ¹³ A letter of Reyn, September 5th, 1891.
- ¹⁴ Wemmers in « Onze Provincie », *Missiehuis Tilburg*, May 1942, p. 7.

The human drama

1. THE CRISIS OF VICTOR JOUËT.

There are times when one man must die for the people, either because the people demand it, or the man himself knows that it must be done. At this time of crisis in the MSC Congregation, the demands of the people were quite clear; they had selected a victim: Fr. Victor Jouët. This was evident *in the Chapter* of 1891, of which Fr. Piperon wrote: «I found most objectionable and a crying injustice the accusations brought against the Rev. Procurator General in open Chapter. An avowed criminal dragged before his judges would not have had to listen to anything harder or more intransigent »¹.

After the Chapter the younger men repeat that Fr. Jouët is « the only one responsible » for all the difficulty. Some of the older men note that this feeling towards Jouët is irremovable. « The principal cause of all our woes is to be found in Fr. Jouët's way of acting »². Fr. Jouët is completely «de-valued», It is suggested that, if he is to govern the Society and restore peace, Fr. Chevalier should get rid of Jouët; it is even suggested that he « denounce him as a bungler and an adversary of the Congregation »³.

In defense of Fr. Jouët, Fr. Piperon wrote to the Prefect of the S.C. of Bishops and Regulars:

« I took careful account of the accusations brought against

him so immoderately, both in individual sessions of the Chapter and in private conversations, and I could find nothing which authorized such conduct in regard to him. In all the violent reactions I was able to find only exaggerations of facts very simple in themselves, which could have been explained in a good sense. I must say things as I see them - these were schoolboy rancours. It was clear to me that passion dictated the accusations... » He goes on to add:

« It is twenty-five years now that I have known Fr. Procurator intimately; I affirm, and were it necessary, I would affirm under oath, that I do not know any religious in the Congregation more devoted to the good of this Congregation, more obedient to his superior, nor one who has worked with so much selflessness for the common good ». (cf. 1).

In reply to Fr. Guyot's suggestion that in Jouët's way of acting, there was one of the main reasons for the present difficulties, Fr. Chevalier writes magnificently in his defence: « First of all we must distinguish the Procurator, the Superior and the religious.

« 1. As Procurator, with what can we reproach him? Nothing, absolutely nothing. It would be a long time before you would find his equal. Every affair of the Society which was entrusted to him he has made succeed. It is to him that we owe ... that the Association of Our Lady of the Sacred Heart was erected into a universal archconfraternity with its centre in our church, with us as its perpetual directors. It is to him that we owe our Vicars Apostolic, the Procure in Sydney, our mission Seminary in Antwerp. It is to him that we owe the esteem we enjoy in Rome, and the sympathy of the Holy See and all the Cardinals with whom he has to deal.

« 2. As Superior, his position has been most difficult. He had too much to do, and no doubt he was forced to neglect some things and do others imperfectly ... He was busy with building, with book-keeping, with hospitality to visitors, with the Procure, with errands to run for everyone, with running the house with insufficient and inexperienced personnel, with scholastics who were often undisciplined, pretentious, demanding...; further he had to devote his attention to the asso-

ciation of Our Lady of the Sacred Heart, editing the Annals, the apostolic school, bursaring, etc. Obviously he was crushed by the work: we have then to make allowances for his position.

« 3. As a religious: with what can he be reproached? His piety is admired by all; the spirit of faith animates all his actions; his obedience is blind, his devotedness absolute to the point of immolation. His character is good, kind and easy: he is intelligent without being pretentious, mortified, poor, self-forgetful, never seeking his own ease. You will find few religious in our Society who have such a rare combination of qualities. He's not without fault, I know, but no man is perfect. What saddens me deeply is to see this unjust violence manifesting itself against Fr. Jouët, who lives only for the good of our Society never calculating what he gives in the way of zeal and sacrifice; it is seeing so much ingratitude in his regard. Tell me: who has worked as much as he for the success of our works? Didn't he give the impetus to the Association of Our Lady of the Sacred Heart and to the Apostolic School too? Who founded the Annals and got them 16,000 subscribers - something people seem to forget these days?

Isn't it he who has by his travels, his preaching, his writings which are so much appreciated, more than anyone else, procured the sympathy and the resources which we benefit by? Isn't it he who by his indefatigable zeal, his enterprise and his *savoir faire*, has created our magnificent pilgrimages? Isn't it he who saved the house of Antwerp from ruin, when the young fathers, today so worked up against him, had so gravely compromised it that the Archbishop of Mechlin wanted to get rid of us? It was this dear confrere, sick and all as he was, who went to plead our cause, which was truly desperate, and finished by gaining the day »⁴.

How does it come about that a man so highly regarded by his closest associates is so strongly attacked by the younger men, to the extent that Guyot and Delaporte can see that he is « de-valued »? First of all let it be noted that even his strongest defenders admit that he was not successful as a

local superior. We saw that in Chevalier's text. Piperon also admitted: « Despite his eminent and numerous qualities, he was not an administrator. He did not know how to govern men or material things. A man of affairs, preacher, writer, gifted for managing important affairs, he could not tie himself down to the hundred and one details which the government of a house demands »⁵. In this, he too was 'a victim of circumstances'. With its limited personnel, the MSC group had, in its early years, to entrust too many tasks to individuals. As superior of the students in Rome, Jouët could not spend the time with them which such a position demands. The students felt neglected. And when Jouët returned home from his numerous commissions, he reacted strongly and over severely to the lack of discipline in the house. In the resulting malaise in the community, a number of the students were taken away. Many of these felt that it was « thanks to Jouët that we have not finished our studies », and thanks to him that the scholasticate in Rome was much less important than it might have been. Some of these who resented past treatment, and had no confidence in Jouët as a result of their experience as students, were now members of the Chapter. They also knew that, in setting up the house in Rome, he had got into some financial tangles. The part he played in taking on the various foundations, including Quito, was also well known.

Now when it was felt that the Society was too widely extended for its numbers, when some were worried about this situation, it was obvious that they would try to lay the blame on Jouët, especially since they had some old resentments against him. Furthermore, coming to the Chapter feeling that the Society was too much administered by indults, and not enough according to the constitutions, he was the natural one to blame. For as Procurator, he had got these permissions which they did not now approve - and he had failed to get others, the failure resulting in the juridical mix-up that came to light in the Chapter.

That in all things he was acting as Procurator; that all foundations were approved by the whole Council; that all the

Administration bore equal responsibility for not applying for necessary permissions - these were things which some conveniently forgot, in singling him out for special attack. Others did not forget but they attacked him knowing that, in so doing, they were attacking the General, too. They knew the old man's fighting qualities, and they preferred to skirmish with Jouët⁶. They were to find that Jouët himself was no mean fighter!

Then, when he went to Rome and returned with the decree of dissolution of the Chapter, they were utterly convinced that he had procured it by unfair means. Their obsession with the Chapter, Supreme Tribunal, called to right all wrongs against the General Administration, generated a fixed idea, which persisted for a long time, that any decision which came from Rome unfavourable to them was due to the machinations of Jouët.

It may be as well to repeat that this trip to Rome becomes a keypoint as the Chapter members seek to justify their resentment against Jouët. And resentment justified, or anger labelled as « righteous », is very hard to dislodge. This 'righteous anger' flared up in the Chapter. Armed with canons from the Code, the young men saw themselves as enlightened Crusaders for the right. (And although *he* does not record it, when Piperon questioned some of their accusations, he was publicly informed that he was an old ignoramus!).

They sent Klotz, their elected champion, to Rome to do battle for their cause, and to bring back various 'sanationes'. Then when they had cleaned up the mess caused by their fathers, they would get on with the business of the Chapter. One important item of business was to replace the old administration with less ignorant and more competent men. Fr. Chevalier wrote that they already had the various positions, including Vicar-General, assigned to members of their group. And the Bishop of Sinope is later astounded at the sublime confidence of these young and inexperienced men that they could run the Society without any problem.

When such cocksure confidence meets with failure it has to blame someone. When the elected champion descends into the lists and comes home without his trophy, he and his electors will cry foul play. They never questioned whether a Chapter has the right to over-rule its General and President about who should take to Rome a petition for indults. The document contained no more than this; and many indults were for matters not connected with the Chapter. This was clearly the Procurator's job.

« Why did not Fr. Chevalier simply write a letter? » asked Cardinal Monaco. Chevalier saw that Klotz was going to do more than present a document - he was going to plead a cause. The young champion was out-manoeuvred, and Jouët was never forgiven.

Both Chevalier and Jouët knew that, during the Chapter of 1891, much of the criticism directed against Jouët was meant for the Founder. It worried Chevalier, but it did not seem to disturb Jouët unduly. He wrote soon after to Fr. Chevalier that he did not hold one word against his confreres who had spoken against him - although he did admit to a lingering taste of bitterness. He went back to his Procurator's office, determined to see that Chevalier was treated as a Founder-General should be.

When he had gone, Fr. Chevalier got much free advice on how to solve the problem. Fr. Delaporte was a writer by profession, and he deluged Chevalier with letters (one of them of 15 large pages), in almost all of which there was the advice to « get rid of Jouët ». Guyot's opinion has already been recorded. In spite of his repeated defence of Jouët, Chevalier could see that the opposition to Jouët was massive. The young men pleaded with their « Cher Père Supérieur » to show an understanding of the justice of their claims, to show the heart of the father they knew him to be. This would be made clear to all of them if he would get rid of Jouët.

He knew the young men were wrong; but he could see that they were in earnest. They would be satisfied only if he gave

them the head of Victor Jouët; and he was no Herod. It was a dreadfully painful position to be in - and there seemed no way out. Meanwhile, quite unaware of the position of his Superior General, Jouët blithely wrote from Rome about how well things were going.

Then a letter came to Fr. Chevalier asking whether the MSC Society might be able to let Fr. Jouët take on an important mission for the Propagation of the Faith in the United States of America. This work, as well as being an important one for the missions, would make the MSC well known through the whole U.S.A. and could be very advantageous to the MSC society. Perhaps here was a way out for Fr. Chevalier. He wrote to Fr. Jouët putting the proposition to him, stressing its importance, and suggesting that perhaps Jouët might like to accept it after he had got some of the more urgent business fixed up in Rome. He would remain officially Procurator, with a vicar carrying out commissions in his name. What did Jouët think? ⁷ In his reply Jouët showed that the proposition interested him ⁸. Chevalier must have sighed with relief - perhaps he would be able to satisfy the crowd without beheading Jouët.

However, as the year wore on Jouët began to grow puzzled. At Issoudun things did not seem to be as clear-cut as he saw them in Rome. For him the issue had seemed quite clear: protect the position of the Founder-Superior and bring the dissidents into line. First Morisseau and then Chevalier seem to favour compromises - compromises which he did not think would work. He wrote to Fr. Chevalier along these lines: 'You are being inconsistent, and making us appear inconsistent before the Sacred Congregation. You began to fight the issue on the grounds that a group, lacking in religious spirit, were working against their lawful religious superiors. Now you want this group to meet in Chapter to discuss and decide - so that their attitudes will prevail. You suggest that one of them (Fr. Chevalier had written about possibly making Reyn an Assistant) be put on the General Council. The S.C. refused their request that they choose an Assistant to replace Guyot, and approved our choice, Mail-

lard; now you want to give in to them. If you were right in the first instance, then how can you be right now, wanting to make concessions to those whom you have said are animated by a 'mauvais esprit'? ».

He saw, too, that these were compromises in which he himself was involved - and he came to realize the truth about the offer of a trip to the United States. In a letter of Sept. 10th, 1891, he continued:

« They then turned on Fr. Jouët, and asked that he withdraw. Fr. Jouët wrote his resignation (as Assistant) at the request which Fr. Piperon made on your behalf. The Cardinal Protector and Mgr. Sepiacci told me: don't do anything it's not necessary... But you wanted to push ahead and give them this bit of consolation, which they then declared was not enough... *You then proposed to them my departure for America...* You have letters from Fr. Klotz and Fr. Morisseau which tell you clearly that this will not satisfy them either... ». Chevalier made no further reference to America. But by this time, Fr. Jouët had begun to suspect the fix his Founder was in. The suspicion grew to certainty as he became aware of how strong the animosity against him was. He heard some of the things that others wrote about him - to Issoudun, to Rome. He read some of them, too. He read statements like this:

« I do not dare to suspect that Fr. Jouët would or could have deceived, no matter how little esteem I have for his frankness and loyalty ».

« I think he's very pious, a bit too much after the french fashion, it's true, but I think he is even more political and diplomatic than pious ... a man who, by his tricks and cunning, drives a whole Congregation to despair. Alas! if our poor Congregation had been governed as the Constitutions prescribe, it would long ago have got rid of this Procurator... the Procurator who knows how much he is detested, but who clings to power. He is strong against his superiors who placed too much confidence in him; and any revelations would be as compromising for them as for him... I express here not just my personal opinion, but, I would say, the

opinion common to most members of the Society »⁹. Jouët copied the letter into his notebook. Even though he knew that the author was a boorish and difficult young man, he still must have been hurt by reading this text. Others were more gentlemanly, but they, too, expressed opposition...

And finally he knew what he must do for the Society he loved and its Founder whom he loved even more. He himself must do what Chevalier could never bring himself to do. It was now clear to him that Chevalier could never regain the confidence of many of his younger men while he, Jouët, was mixed up with the General Administration. *He* was the stumbling block, and although he would never understand why this should be, he knew that there are times when one man must die for the people. He knew what must be done.

« He thought that he should sacrifice himself in the cause of peace and the general good, and he did so with great sorrow. In withdrawing he wanted still to serve the congregation. I was in Rome when he took his decision. He had talked to me on different occasions, and at great length, of his enemies, his perplexities and the motives which inclined him to withdraw... ». Thus writes Fr. Pipéron who was in Rome in mid-1892¹⁰. Fr. Chevalier's pretext for painless extraction of Jouët from the European MSC scene by sending him to America had not worked. Jouët now found a pretext which, he hoped, would save Chevalier trouble. He made out a case for the invalidity of his final profession in the Society. I shall not give the details here, but, in reality it is not much of a case. It might present a canonical problem, but it is not convincing - my canonical experts tell me that there is no doubt his profession was quite clearly valid. Had there been real objective reason to doubt, Jouët could quite easily have got a 'sanatio in radice'. As Fr. Reyn had written in another context, Jouët had probably got more indulgences than any other man in the history of religious life, and if he really wanted an indulgence, he could get one. In this case he obviously did not want one; and the reason, equally obviously, was that he *wanted* to have a juridical pretext for

calling into doubt his position in the Society. In this way he could withdraw from official activities for reasons which he could insist that Chevalier accept. But his motivation was not juridical doubt; it was the belief that, in this way, he might help to bring about peace in the Society.

It is not quite clear from the records when he confided in Fr. Chevalier. But a letter written in October 1892 shows how deeply Fr. Chevalier was feeling the whole situation: « I'm discouraged in seeing that everyone is abandoning us. Still we've always had the desire of doing the right thing and of giving satisfaction to everyone... If I should give my resignation, I am prepared to do so, for my position is no longer tenable. The letter of Bishop Verius, in which he recounts his audience with Cardinal Monaco, has caused me indescribable pain. He says that the Cardinal told him that you also have asked to leave the Society... Is it possible that you want to abandon me, you too »?!

Jouët had, in fact, discussed his position with Cardinal Monaco. He writes back to Chevalier on October 26th: « I saw Cardinal Monaco this evening and I told him that more than ever I intend to remain devoted to you and to the Society ... but later we shall see what the good God wants. This is what I said to Mgr. Marchal and to Fr. Piperon, and this is what I ask you to accept, too, as being, in the situation in which we are, that which is best for me; in the interests of the Society itself ».

« I pray and I get others to pray; and I suffer from this state of things, but I am convinced that the good of the Society (to which I am more than ever devoted in your person and in that of Fr. Piperon) will come out of it all... »¹⁰.

On September 10th, 1892 he wrote an official petition to be excused from the Chapter at the beginning of 1893 « for personal reasons ». In one of his letters he wrote « in the interest of peace »; this was his real reason. To make his drawing off from the Society less obvious, he took on a « special work » as so many MSC did then and have done

since. He was put in charge of the Archconfraternity of the Sacred Heart in favour of the Souls in Purgatory; he also had the task of constructing a Church in Lungotevere Prati, Rome, to be a shrine for prayers for the holy souls. With a touch of the old Jouët humour, he added: « That won't disturb any of the living ». (After his death, this Church and the surrounding parish passed into the care of the Italian MSC.)

His status vis-a-vis the whole Society was arranged in the greatest secrecy. Fr. Jouët was most insistent that apart from Chevalier, Piperon, and later Maillard, no one was to know. He was given a yearly pension from the Society of 1800 francs. In January 1893, he wrote:

« I am still convinced in the bottom of my heart, that spontaneously putting myself at a distance from the affairs of the Society, particularly the Administration, will calm spirits on both sides, and that a peaceful solution will come about ».

He said that the work for the Holy Souls was going well, and this sign of God's blessing confirmed his conviction. He went on:

« Nobody can object to my devoting myself to the souls in Purgatory, so that I won't hinder the liberty of the living ».

It should be noted that, in his own mind he was only leaving « the affairs of the Society », not the Society itself. He was always hurt if anyone omitted the MSC after his name. « I am and I remain in heart and soul what I have always been in fact, even if I am not canonically... a Missionary of the Sacred Heart. It was you yourself who gave me this title seven years before I asked the Holy Father for permission to enter the Society... Further, my position, I hope will be temporary only. It is made necessary by the work for the Holy Souls to which I desire to consecrate the little strength that is left to me, and for the good and peace of the Society »¹¹.

He saw his position as temporary only. But the years go by and there is no going back. Writing to him in 1897, Chevalier remarked that several Assistants and some confreres had heard it said that he no longer belonged to the Society. This impression was confirmed by the fact that he was signing Jouët MASC, the A indicating Apostolic. « I replied », he said, « that the Cardinal Vicar has asked for you to devote yourself to the construction of the Church of the Sacred Heart in the Prati dedicated to the Holy Souls in Purgatory, and that from that moment you were subtracted from the jurisdiction of your Superior General, depending only on the Cardinal Vicar as long as your presence was necessary for the work confided to you; but that in the internal forum you remained always a Religious of the Sacred Heart of Issoudun »¹².

This explanation, said Chevalier, pleased the Assistants who esteemed Jouët highly: « for you are so much a part of the foundation of our Society in our eyes and in the eyes of the public, that they could not understand if it were different... I have no doubt of this, and I would be desolate if it were otherwise ».

In these latter words we have, too, an explanation of why Jouët could not merely take up a place on the edge of the MSC Society. As Fr. Ceresi wrote after Jouët's death: « he was an exuberant man in body and spirit, born for enterprise and combativeness, made for movement... he could not, by the intimate law of his life and without denying himself, adapt himself » just to sitting around¹³. He had been Chevalier's comrade-in-arms through all the exciting years; now that was gone forever. « He could not just sit in his religious cell ». He needed to be up and doing. Taking his new direction must be seen, says Fr. Ceresi of « his former superior and father » « under the light of fidelity to his own intimate duty and to the special mission of his existence ».

It was to this same concept of his 'mission' that Jouët himself appealed when discussing his situation with Piperon:

« My mission in the Society is finished: I see that there I can no longer do any good »¹⁴. We would say rather that by some quirk of fate, things had come to such a strange pass in regard to his position in the Society, that the final step in his mission for the Society was to 'withdraw from its affairs'. The development of his thought after the recorded conversation with Piperon indicates that this, too, was the conclusion he drew. But he did not withdraw by asking for a dispensation from his vows; perhaps he might never have had the heart to do this. And in the logic of the position he took up, there was no need to.

In order to take up a position which would enable him 'to withdraw from the affairs of the Society' without asking for a dispensation, he went back to the year 1872 when Pope Pius IX had given him permission to leave his diocese of Marseilles in order to become an MSC. This permission was given for seven years, « ad septennium », dated July 7th. 1872. Immediately he made his profession before the Pope, Fr. Chevalier renewing his. Now this permission 'for seven years' was never renewed, said Fr. Jouët: therefore he was still 'a priest of the diocese of Marseilles'. Having many friends among the Roman Cardinals, and being a man of influence, he managed to get some of them to accept his thesis: while the Bishop of Marseilles was happy to acquire an extra priest for the diocese.

However, what Jouët fails to mention is that:

— prior to 1877, public profession in the MSC Society was perpetual;

— On June 3rd, 1874, together with Frs. Chevalier and Vandel, he had renewed his profession before the Pope, and all three had taken the fourth vow of stability — which could only be taken by the perpetually professed;

— On January 18th, 1879, Bishop L. Robert of Marseilles wrote that he considered Jouët freed totally from his diocese to be perpetually an MSC. There was then, absolutely no need for a papal renewal of special permission to stay

with the MSC when the « septennium » expired in July of that same year.

How much Jouët really believed his own argumentation, and how much it was his way of 'withdrawing' without leaving the Society or giving Chevalier the impression he was deserting him, we have no means of knowing. But whatever be the answer to these unanswered questions, one thing is clear - what Jouët did in those days was done for love of the MSC Society. In his last will and testament he left his property at Marseilles and Rome to Fr. Charles Piperon MSC. If Shakespeare were to have written his story he might well have adapted the words he wrote of Brutus to read: 'this was the noblest MSC of all'.

2. A FATHER AND HIS SONS.

A complicated question, like that of the MSC crisis, is more easily understood if one sees it from different angles. Looking from different viewpoints one also appreciates better the character of the people involved in this human drama. Let us remember that it was a *group* problem. We shall therefore better grasp the factors involved if we invoke the aid of some simple principles of group dynamics. Any active religious group has two sets of goals:

- a) its task-goals, or the job to be done;
- b) its goal of satisfying emotionality need — the needs of friendship and human relationships.

With regard to the task-goals, for the purpose in hand we need note only two things. Firstly a group will tend to dissatisfaction if its members feel continually that the job, whatever it is, is not being done reasonably well. Secondly, members will also be dissatisfied if they feel that they are not sufficiently qualified to do the job properly. These two dissatisfactions (in the field of task) can be offset by factors in the emotionality field — i.e; by understanding and friendship. Especially is this so when it is felt that superiors, united with their subects in sympathetic understanding, rea-

lize the defects in the work area and are determined to remedy these as soon as reasonably possible. But if corresponding to the void in the job satisfaction there is also a void in the fulfilment of emotionality needs, the objective situation is one in which the group runs a high risk of disintegration or explosion.

We shall understand a lot of what happened in 1891 to 1894 if we realize that the MSC Congregation was not providing its young members with a sufficient measure of satisfaction in the two areas mentioned in the previous paragraph. This was an almost inevitable result of the dispersion following on the persecutions of 1880. It has a logical explanation which can excuse everyone from blame. But logical explanations can never satisfy frustrated psychological needs.

Firstly, the MSC group were trying to do too many things. They were committed to more jobs than they could handle. The point does not need to be argued. We can simply quote Fr. Chevalier himself:

« the young Society of Missionaries of the Sacred Heart (was), as it were, crushed under the weight of works which were so important and so numerous »¹⁵.

If the Society was « crushed », there were men being crushed, too. And in such circumstances the task can not be performed sufficiently well. This is also clear if we consider that, secondly, many of the men were doing jobs they were not prepared for: « The Society, having used up its men and its forces, was overburdened with works which were not being done properly. Children, grown men, young religious just out of the novitiate, carried out a whole host of tasks »¹⁶. The older men would have felt this less. They had their own ministry, preaching, writing, pastoral work. But it was the young men who were put into the work of education in seminaries and apostolic schools. Just how overburdened they were does not matter much. They felt that the situation was bad — and the others admitted they had reason to feel this way. Reasons could be given excusing the state

of affairs — the founding period of the Society, the persecutions. But even good reasons do not help men in a situation which requires a remedy.

They could have been helped through this by experiencing a sympathetic understanding and a fatherly support. This Fr. Chevalier gave magnificently to those with whom he lived (see Ch. XI). But the diaspora following 1880 had separated them from Issoudun; and his appointment as parish priest of Issoudun made it imperative for him to stay there. He was more than a distant Superior General of modern times: he was their Father and Founder, and the *only* Major Superior they had. But circumstances kept him separated from them; and no amount of letter-writing can substitute for personal contact. It should be noted, too, that this generation of young men had been further deprived of the 'father-son' relationship in the course of their religious formation. Guyot was an absentee novice-master; Jouët 'because of his many tasks' was hardly ever home in the scholasticate in Rome.

To men in this potentially dangerous situation, the General Chapter would have seemed a ray of hope. It was both a chance to 'make contact', and a chance to plan for a more satisfactory task-situation. These were hopes for the satisfaction of some rather vital personal needs.

At this point let us pause to point out how the whole situation, together with its historical development, would have served to make Jouët, inevitably, the target of animosity. It was believed (rightly or wrongly does not matter, for it was believed strongly) that he was the main agent in taking on all the works of the Society. In this way he contributed to their job-dissatisfaction. But even worse was the fact that he had sent some of them away from Rome before they finished their studies. Therefore he was to blame for the fact that they felt themselves disqualified from performing their tasks adequately. Anyone who knows students will realize how this would have been a bitter resentment they found it hard to lay aside. He had failed them, too,

in their emotionality needs through the long years of the scholasticate. And by having (in their eyes) the Chapter dissolved, he had blasted their hopes of getting out of a very trying and frustrating situation. While things failed to improve, it was going to be hard for them to forgive Jouët. However, the central personal drama was to be worked out between Chevalier and his sons. In saying this, I have no wish to turn this into a chapter of a sentimental or psychological novel. But that is how the record reads. Piperon (and Chevalier himself?) summed up this situation in the scriptural phrase: « I have raised up sons and they have turned against me »¹⁷. Guyot, writing to Chevalier to give his analysis of the crisis said that Fr. Chevalier had to show them « the heart of a Father »¹⁸. And as the story develops, we see the older men — Jouët, Guyot, Piperon and Delaporte — retire to the wings, waiting for the principal drama to work itself out on centre-stage. And as one looks at the correspondence of those days from this point of view which the actors themselves have suggested, it is extraordinary how the story develops as an exact parallel to real life events which many of us know so well. I refer here to the case of a very good christian father who works hard for his family. He gets involved in, let us say, building up a new business which requires that he work late at night and, often enough, during the week-ends. As a result, he sees little of his family. He lays down rules for their conduct: they must not stay out too late at night, they must study hard. Individual questions to resolve are solved as cases of right and wrong; but there is no time for the on-going dialogue or the easy relation which comes from a lot of time spent together. Then one day one or a number of his children, who have grown into young adults while his back was turned, clash with the father and perhaps walk out of the home. On his part there is puzzled bewilderment - on theirs a conviction that there will never be understanding between them. We know the dialogue and the recriminations:

« All my work in building up this business was for the family » (yes, but you did not give us your time or yourself). « Parents have the duty of seeing that the children do the right thing; they are entitled to expect respect and

obedience » (yes, but we are grown-up now, and are entitled to expect some discussion.) etc. The parallel with Chevalier and his priests is quite clear as we watch the course of events. The course of events began when Chevalier published his new rules. These, he said, provoked a 'violent reaction in the houses of the North'. Prior to that time, despite the existence of a potentially troubled situation « omnia recte procederunt, atque in optima pace essent comportata », things were going peacefully. The publication of the rules was an « inopinato perturbatio ». The reaction it caused can be understood only against the background which we have already outlined. Anyone who did not realize the depth of the psychological frustration, the strained state of the group dynamic, would be surprised at the strong reaction - particularly a man who thought he was acting reasonably and in accord with his rights, even obliged by his duty so to act. He was the Founder thinking to put the finishing touches to his work before he died¹⁹.

On February 20th, 1889 a Memorandum was sent to the Holy See from some of the priests, setting forth their complaints: - there had been no Chapter, there were irregularities in administration, and finally, without consultation these new rules came out which were too detailed, too severe. The Latin text was quoted and carefully exegeted to prove the 'severity'. Examples were given to prove both the unnecessary detail and the severe demands: - Students were expected to say the breviary together; all were expected to observe silence all through the monthly day of retreat on First Fridays; the religious should not blow on their soup, touch their hair (ever!) - they should cut their nails!

On March 5th, the Memorandum was passed to the MSC Procurator « pro informatione et voto ». Jouët, of course, sent a copy to Fr. Chevalier.

The latter wrote back to Fr. Jouët in a very calm tone, 'only half-surprised', for « I know that the devil does all he can in order to throw the spirit of division into the most united religious families »²⁰. Fr. Chevalier was a very super-

natural man. Unfortunately he was stronger on demonology than on group dynamics. While he could put the trouble down to preternatural causes, his faith could keep him calm and serene. This was to make it more difficult for him to admit the real issues and find an early solution. This, probably is why Delaporte would later write:

« I had a long and friendly discussion with the Rev. Fr. General. I was dismayed by his serenity. There is no possible doubt about the rightness of his intentions. »²¹ No one ever questioned the rightness of his intentions through this time. But others, too, were dismayed by his serenity. It is fine to believe that with God's help all will come out right in the end. However, those who feel that they have a legitimate grievance would like to see some human solutions to their problems. Here often his sons groaned in dismay - they felt that their father was missing their point, or attributing to bad will what was due to human frustration with a situation which could be improved.

« God is my witness », he wrote, « that in drawing up the Constitutions and the common Rules, I have sought only his glory and the good of our dear confreres »²² (This no-one would deny. The Memorandum spoke of him as « a man who is still living, and of outstanding piety »)²³. He went on to say: « After thirty-five years of experience and sixty-nine years of age, I felt the need, before I die, of putting the final touches to our dear work in order to save the future from shocks and arbitrary decisions »²⁴. (But, dear Father, they would say, this is an impossible dream). He continued that, in making the Rules more precise, he was merely filling in a few gaps. (But if one fills in all the gaps, especially for men feeling hemmed in by overwork, it becomes impossible to breathe). He says that « The French translation takes away the apparent severity of the Latin » (and the Memorandum does give the impression of a scrupulous exegesis). Although the Memorandum said that he had introduced the changes without consultation, he points out that he had consulted « the Assistants, all the Superiors of the Institute and the older fathers ». (And here, they said, is our point: what of the younger ones?) In fact the Memorandum, he

writes, is written by « some young Fathers with no experience of life ». And young men in religious life also let their nails grow long out of vanity « and have their hair artistically arranged like men of the world » - so why not point out the right religious way of acting. It sounds like a modern father; and we can almost hear the sons' reactions.

He makes the father's understandable complaint; Why did they not ask me first, before sending a complaint to Rome? We could have talked it out together. And had we not been able to agree, they could have talked with the Assistants. Then they could have gone to Rome had they still not been satisfied. This was the aspect which hurt him most. And it was on this point that the young men did not have a valid answer.

Going to Rome behind his back with a complaint to the Holy See, without giving him a chance to explain, or to change things 'in the family' - this was their worst mistake. For this goes outside the normal son-father relationship (no matter how much they might later protest that they have it restored). It became difficult for him then to see their further steps, in and after the Chapter of 1891, as no more than a search for dialogue. He could not but see them as « attacks on him and his administration » - as the representation to Rome had been. It is very hard for any man to trust a son who, behind his back, has tried to have him condemned.

Issoudun, in the whole debate, is very much like the business in the family incident we have proposed as a parallel. Long before, Fr. Piperon had seen that taking the parish was not to be an unmixed blessing: either the parish will suffer, or the Society - or perhaps both ²⁵. The parish did not suffer, for Fr. Chevalier had some very devoted assistants with him. He repeatedly stressed how much Issoudun meant to the Society financially, and therefore for the formation of these young men who criticised it. He felt that *they* did not appreciate what Issoudun was doing for the Society and for *them*. And so he could not understand why they wanted to move the General House from Issoudun. But he did not

appreciate what Issoudun was doing to him, and through him to them. It was keeping him away from them - which was why they wanted him out of Issoudun. But realizing that Issoudun did mean a lot to the work and therefore to the Society, they were prepared to compromise; let him stay at Issoudun if he must. But let a Vicar-General be appointed to play the role of father to the congregation. They had too much love and respect for him even to think of proposing another General. Yet he saw this suggestion of the Vicar-General as a sign that they wanted to get rid of him, and the attacks on Issoudun as ingratitude. In reality it was their way of saying that, in a choice between Issoudun and him, it was *him* that they wanted.

So with the two Chapters, the closing of one, and the annulment of the other, there was hurt and misunderstanding; there was disappointment on one side and on the other the feeling of being condemned to continue in frustration. The words the young men had spoken out of frustration had been attacks indeed. They *had* been out of order; but they found it hard to be classed as rebels motivated by an evil spirit. Father and sons had arrived at an impasse, and there was deep suffering on both sides. Delaporte and Guyot wrote long letters to Chevalier telling him how to fix up the whole situation. They both got rather smart verbal slaps for their trouble. And this was not just out of the hurt that Chevalier felt for the unhappy situation with the young men. He reacted out of a double pain. They were telling him that the young men loved him and respected him, that all he had to do was to show the heart of a Father. This he so wanted to do. However, as the situation had developed, they were asking him to do it by sacrificing Jouët. At the same time that they were asking for the declaration of total peace with him, they were making war with Jouët. And Piperon wrote: « Those who conducted this war have done a great wrong, I've always been convinced... I pity very much those who have forced him to withdraw; and towards this well loved priest I retain the most sincere affection and the most lively gratitude. His decision to leave afflicted Fr. Chevalier greatly. It was another cup of bitterness of which he had to drink

so abundantly at that time. He loved Fr. Jouët tenderly, and never forgot his unwearying devotion to the Congregation »²⁶.

At the beginning of the MSC society, Fr. Chevalier had had Fr. Maugenest, his most gifted and loved co-founder, taken from his side. Toward the end of his life, Fr. Jouët, his closest friend and alter-ego had been forced to take the same road away from him. Obviously this sort of thing cuts pretty deep into a man's heart. From Jouët's course of action in these troubled years, we see something of how fine a man he was; and we can perhaps understand some of the hurt that Chevalier suffered when his « sons » were saying that *this* man must be sacrificed if they were to see in him the heart of their father. We can understand a bit better that, in response to their appeals, he appealed to authority. He could not do what they asked. He had to refuse. When we know what was being asked, and the tragedy that came into the lives of good and dedicated men in those days, we may not find exaggerated Fr. Chevalier's claim that the Evil One was at work in the troubles that beset the Society. Something could be said for demonology as well as for group-dynamics.

Eventually Jouët would make it clear that there was no need to sacrifice him for the common good; he would sacrifice himself. This, however, was not to become known until late in 1893 or, for the public, later still. After the Chapter in January 1891, Chevalier found himself in this impossible situation. He could not make the move which his « opponents » were asking. He decided to make some others. Perhaps if he drew the teeth of the opposition, things would calm down. He replaced Delaporte as superior of the house in Paris, and set about moving others out of the battle area. He tried to send Ramot to Sydney - but at Klotz' rallying-cry, Ramot declined to go. Fr. Pierre Tréand (although classified by Chevalier as moderate opposition only) was sent to Sydney — for which the Australian Province will be forever grateful.

These moves did not help. They confirmed in their opinion those who considered that Chevalier was being stubbornly opposed to necessary changes; they made others waver. And they gave Klotz material for the subversive campaign which he seems to have embarked on at this time.

What was Chevalier to do? He had to find a solution to the problem as it presented itself. It is not always easy to put into practice the norm of good counselling: to see beyond the 'presenting problem' to the real problem behind it. The problem presented itself to Chevalier in rather unpleasant terms:

- Memoranda had been sent to Rome behind his back;
- Attacks were launched on his Administration with lack of charity and 'the rancour of schoolboys' (Piperon);
- there was the fierce (and for him incomprehensible) attack on Jouët.

He was neither psychologist nor sociologist. He was the Founder and Superior General of a religious society, which others now seemed to be trying to tear apart. He was a man who believed strongly in obedience, and in the duty in conscience of a superior to see that his subjects acted with virtue²⁷. The very qualities which had enabled him to build a new religious community in difficult circumstances had also contributed to his present problem. They now contributed to his difficulty in solving it.

For where a man's strength is, there will his weakness lie. Chevalier was a strong man, a man of boundless energy and a wide vision. He had the courage to risk and the tenacity to succeed. His strength was his weakness; and one might ask whether, up to this point, he had really understood the weak. « We are *all* born fiery and aggressive », he wrote²⁸. But what of those born hesitant, timid, in need of support and encouragement? In his own tremendous dedication, did he expect too much of people who could not summon the same unflagging dedication as he? In his wide vision of building up a missionary society, did he take enough account

of the more limited world of young and inexperienced men hemmed in by the pressure of more work than they could manage calmly and efficiently? Under the pressure of his own work, taking for granted the same utter dedication in others as in himself, his letters had become 'laconic in tone, with the accents of the boss'²⁹. He had lapsed into the blunt *Berry* way, and his letters were not informed by that 'charism of kindness' which marked his personal relations with others. Pressure of work did not allow him the leisure of the kindly letter which would have helped so much. His were business letters more often than not; and this meant that his correspondence was concerned, for the greater part, with decisions taken, matters of discipline. Also, in order to make it easier to implement decisions of the General Council, local superiors used to publish difficult directives as coming from the Superior General. As a result: « Our young people do not know you, Reverend Father, and it is regrettable. When others speak in your name, it is always with exaggerated severity. »³⁰.

What was needed now was « that a current of kindness and paternal condescension goes out from you Reverend Father, and from those who speak and act in your name, and then our confreres will come back to you and stay. »³¹. This was the answer, but how put it into execution in the existing factual situation? For a long time Chevalier could only wait and pray and hope.

The departure of Reyn and Klotz from the Society was a turning point. Klotz was the chief trouble-maker and a source of dissension was gone. But Reyn and Jules Vandel and some six or seven students went, too and this made others realize that they were in the process of destroying themselves. Jouët's withdrawal from the affairs of the Society drained off some of the more aggressive feelings. In these years Chevalier learned, too, to see beyond the presenting problem; and in spite of the Memoranda and the attacks, he learned to trust again. For Reyn left, not in anger, but as a son who knelt to ask his father's blessing. And immediately Fr. Chevalier received a heartening response from the students.

They had naturally been disturbed by the events of those times, and the departure of some of their number. They discussed their future, and in two different interviews, representatives of the Dutch and the German groups talked with Fr. Chevalier. He was deeply touched to see that their sole concern was to save their vocation as MSC. They suggested that, to this end, they should go back and continue their studies in their own countries. In the discussions « although serious and a bit tense, he was amiable as always »³². It was evidently a man-to-man discussion. He suggested the possibility of going to Rome; he also offered the opinion that with Fr. Vaudon now in charge of the Scholasticate, things would settle down. The students said that they did not really share his confidence in Vaudon; nor did they think that going to Rome would help them much at the moment. They felt that for their vocation as MSC, it would be best to go back to the houses in their home countries. Their proposition « was evidently inspired by grace », Fr. Chevalier wrote³³.

Shortly afterwards the « Province of the North » was erected comprising mainly the houses and personnel of Antwerp, Tilburg and Salzburg. Whereas earlier, Chevalier had felt that the move for a Province had been a 'separatist movement', he now saw it as a positive step. It was a way both to better administration of the houses, and to more personal contact with a major superior. Not long afterwards, Chevalier could write to Jouët: « Thanks be to God, since the departures of Frs. Reyn and Klotz and the erection of the Province of the North, concord, peace and union reign among us now. May the Sacred Heart consolidate this state of affairs ever more »³⁴.

It is impossible to give all the steps in the process of things working themselves out. But work themselves out they did — not overnight and not without suffering. Even some time later we find Chevalier pleading with others to give him a fair go — not to blame him for every decision that someone finds a bit hard:

« You know well, dear friend, that in all questions submitted

to the Council, I have only one voice. I do not want to impose my opinion. For the last four years, not to say always, this is the line of conduct I have imposed on myself, no matter what some may say - so for the love of God, don't make me responsible for the decisions taken »³⁵.

There were still human problems, disagreements among men, complaints. Fr. Chevalier — whose calm and serenity never ceased to impress and amaze people — suffered a lot underneath. This suffering is occasionally, though rarely, betrayed in a letter:

« I'm wearied, and tired, and sick, from all these disagreements »³⁶. Despite this, the laconic letters have given way to warm, friendly thoughtful messages: « Don't pay too much attention, dear friend, to the stories of certain confreres who probably use my name as a cover for expressing their own thoughts. Let it be enough for you to know that I love you, that I have a high regard for you, and more than anyone I appreciate the qualities with which the good God has endowed you. »³⁷. Now he frequently runs in a *P.S.* either thoughtful, or good-humoured, or a combination of both. For example, to Fr. Vaudon: 'I was so sorry to hear about your accident, and I do hope that you soon recover. I was very relieved to hear that it was not serious. Would you believe that when I told the curates in the parish (your good friends, incidentally) about the way you fell out of the carriage, the blighters burst out laughing!'.

Others suffered, too, of course throughout this period. Guyot wrote in 1896 that his life had been « literally poisoned by Chapters », and he did not ever want to hear the word again. Nor did he want to be burdened with any position of responsibility in the Society: « I love this society and I want to pass my last days in it, and die there in obedience and in peace; this idea of any authority being given to me troubles and crushes me »³⁸. Fr. Delaporte, who was to die in 1895 was not very much affected by the whole affair. In spite of his 270 lbs (122 kilos) he sat lightly in life's saddle, and took the bad with the good.

There is one case in which we can see Fr. Chevalier live the whole history of this time, the case of Fr. Jules Vandel, nephew of the more famous Jean Marie. On Feb 11th, 1891, he wrote to Fr. Chevalier a plea which was rather incoherent, but repeated « it is you, Father who alone can save the Society », « it is you who, they say, are responsible for all these troubles, and you have understood that through Fr. Jouët they are aiming at your person ». « We are all convinced... that you will not fail your sons, nor yourself, nor the Heart of Our Lord ». Had Chevalier been able to see through to the real problem, he would have seen the emotionality needs behind this cry of the heart. He saw the presenting problem only, and wrote across the letter probably for Jouët:

« To be kept. Here is the insolent letter of Fr. Vandel, to which I have replied with kindness, but firmly and with truth ». We have no copy of this reply, but a further letter of Vandel does indeed acknowledge its kindness, expressing gratitude « for the signs of paternal affection which you showed me »³⁹. He goes on to repeat that he believes the solution must come from Chevalier; he then replies « to the questions you put to me ». Firstly, he does not admit that he was wrong in not expressing his worries about the state of the Society. He had expressed them once in Rome and « the results, alas, did not encourage me to frankness. Immediately Fr. Jouët got rid of half the scholastics... Fr. Jouët had me sent away from Rome a year before I had finished my studies. God knows I have forgiven this dear Father from my heart, but it is difficult to wipe out the impression made ». He goes on to speak of the state of the houses « either without enough men, or men who are incapable, or have not received suitable formation... You yourself, Reverend Father Superior, are you not crushed by the weight of your work? If you do not look after yourself, if you have no consideration for your rest and your strength, at least you should be troubled by the fact that your works, and souls, are suffering as a result ». There are, he says, too many men with too much work, and it was against this evil that the Chapter was to concentrate.

He admits to having written with too much feeling, but those who are particularly touched by the state of affairs are then carried away and express themselves strongly. Further it is hard for the young men to have applied to them the words of St. Paul about neophytes being carried away by pride and falling into the snare of the devil. In the same epistle to Timothy, Vandel points out, St. Paul also says not to let anyone despise his youth. The others are not the opposition, but men who have expressed their honest opinions, who remain with « a sincere devotion to your person and to our dear society... And by doing so little you can regain the affection, the profound consideration with which you should always be surrounded ». His letter was endorsed and signed by Fr. Meyer.

But the waiting became too long, and in February 1894 Fr. Vandel left the Society with Fr. Reyn. Before then he had sent a Memorandum to Cardinal Mermillod in Rome. In a copy of it, written in Jouët's hand we read « the Rev. Fr. Jouët, whose brilliant qualities are well known, but who, alas has lost the confidence of his confreres and does not really represent the Society »⁴⁰. But not very long after leaving the MSC he is again in contact with Jouët, through the intermediary of his cousin in Rome, Sister Léontine Vandel. This time he is arranging his return to his father's house. He wrote to his cousin in September 1894 that his readmission was practically a *fait accompli* « thanks to our dear Father Jouët... The Rev. Fr. General has left no stone unturned to bring things to a quick and happy conclusion »⁴¹. The happy conclusion came about, and he went to Sydney to join his good friend, from the same Swiss village, Fr. P. Tréand. On board ship he wrote:

« My venerated and well loved Fr. Jouët,
I left Europe with my heart full of your goodness, your charity and your friendship. As the ship left port, I could not tear my eyes away from you; I saw the great sign of the cross you traced in the air; I received your last blessing, and I sent you my last goodbyes and my last thanks... »⁴².

In the next January, Fr. Chevalier wrote to him: « How

good God is, how admirable in his ways. He made us pass, you and me, through a series of painful trials ». The results were good for you, and good for the Society which now has a new Province; and God « has filled me with consolation which is so much the sweeter, because I suffered much. So let us say with dear Fr. Jouët: Vive les difficultés, vive le Sacré Coeur ». And in conclusion:

« Give my kind regards to all our dear fathers and brothers, and pray much for him who never forgets you... »⁴³.

In reply, Fr. Vandel wrote:

« Your last letter was so full of paternal tenderness that I was deeply touched by it »⁴⁴.

Although a special case, the Vandel affair was not an isolated instance. The crisis was over: father and sons had found themselves again.

Notes Chapter 9

- ¹ Letter to the Prefect of the S. Congregation of Bishops and Regulars, April 28th, 1891.
- ² Letter Guyot to Chevalier, January 24th, 1891.
- ³ Letter Delaporte to Chevalier, February 1st, 1891; cf. also Correspondence Reyn-Chevalier.
- ⁴ Letter to Guyot, January 28th, 1891.
- ⁵ Píperon, Ms Notes intimes.
- ⁶ Cf. Letter Jules Vandel to Chevalier, February 11th, 1891.
- ⁷ Letter Chevalier to Jouët, March 21st, 1891.
- ⁸ Reply to Chevalier, April 3rd, 1891. A further offer to have him named Bishop in New Guinea did not please him too much.
- ⁹ H. Peeters MSC to Mgr. Rinaldini, Internuncio in Holland, February 5th, 1892.
- ¹⁰ Letter to Chevalier, October 1st, 1892.
- ¹¹ Letter to Chevalier June 15th, 1893; cf. letter to the same, December 5th, 1895.
- ¹² Chevalier received no reply to this letter.
- ¹³ *Annali di Nostra Signora del Sacro Cuore*, Roma, October 1912, pp. 299-302.
- ¹⁴ Píperon, Ms Epreuves, p. 26, MSC Archives, Paris.
- ¹⁵ Chevalier, « Règles du Tiers-Ordre du Sacré-Cœur de Jésus », Issoudun, 1887, p. IV.
- ¹⁶ Letter J. Vandel to Mgr. Verjus, July 21st, 1892.
- ¹⁷ Isaiah, 1,2.
- ¹⁸ Letter to Chevalier, January 28th, 1891.
- ¹⁹ Chevalier, Ms Annales de la Petite Société, p. 35.
- ²⁰ Letter to Jouët, March 25th, 1889.
- ²¹ Letter to the Archbishop of Bourges, May 1893.
- ²² Letter to Jouët, March 25th, 1889.
- ²³ *Postulatum ad S. Congregationem Episcopis et Regularibus praepositam*, February 20th, 1889: « Fundator in vivis est vir sane spectatae pietatis ».
- ²⁴ Letter to Jouët, March 25th, 1889.
- ²⁵ Píperon, Ms Notes sur l'état actuel de la Congrégation, November 1873.
- ²⁶ Píperon, Ms Notes intimes.

²⁷ Cf. Chevalier, « Méditations », vol. II, p. 338; vol. I, p. 234, Méditation « sur la vigilance des supérieurs sur leurs inférieurs ».

²⁹ Chevalier, « Méditations », vol. II, p. 110.

²⁹ Letter Guyot to Chevalier, January 24th, 1891.

³⁰ Letter Vaudon to Chevalier, August 26th, 1892.

³¹ Ibidem.

³² Wemmers, « Onze Province », May 1942, p. 5.

³³ Chevalier, Ms Notes intimes, pp. 64-65.

³⁴ Letter to Jouët, January 2nd, 1895.

³⁵ Letter to Vaudon, October 21st, 1896.

³⁶ Ib., June 30th, 1896.

³⁷ Ib., March 10th, 1895.

³⁸ Ib., May 5th, 1896.

³⁹ Letter to Chevalier, February 27th, 1891.

⁴⁰ Memorandum (undated) to Cardinal Mermillod.

⁴¹ Letter, September 1st, 1894.

⁴² Letter to Jouët, October 6th, 1894.

⁴³ Letter to J. Vandel, January 8th, 1895.

⁴⁴ Letter to Chevalier, March 9th, 1896.

Mission accomplished

1. LIFE IN THE LOCAL CHURCH.

It has become a commonplace to say that every man must live and work in his local Church. Founder though he was of international Congregations, Fr. Chevalier was nevertheless subject to this law, even more than most Founders. For him the 'local Church' was a triangle with one apex at Issoudun, another at Bourges where the Archbishop lived, and the third at Paris where an anti-religious government was in power. The inter-relation of these three factors had much to do with the atmosphere in which he carried out his work.

In the latter part of his life Fr. Chevalier's position was made more difficult because of the Archbishop's attitude towards him and his missionaries. Chevalier was very much a man of the Church, and he liked his relationships with the Ecclesiastical authorities to be not only correct but also friendly. On the whole they were happy relationships. Nevertheless, « even though he did not have equally friendly relationships with the six archbishops under whom he lived and worked, he was always more than correct, and he knew how to combine an attitude of absolute deference with a feel for his own rights and the interests of his religious community »¹.

A quick look at the principal Chevalier-Archbishop connections will help us understand a number of things in these later years of Chevalier's life, as well as give us some further insights into his character. During the vital growing-period of his Congregation, he was fortunate in having Archbishops who were his friends and helpers. First of all Cardinal Dupont and Archbishop Menjaud had appreciated his work and favoured its growth. After the latter's death, in December 1861, he was succeeded by his Coadjutor, the Prince-Archbishop Charles-Amable de la Tour d'Auvergne Laraguais. What his friendship meant to the MSC can be gathered from this quotation from the funeral oration for the Archbishop eighteen years later:

« You would have, if not the right to reproach me, at least a cause for regret, if I did not call you as witnesses, Religious of the Sacred Heart of Issoudun. Tell me, could a founder have done more than he did for you? »².

The answer to this rhetorical question is given by Fr. Piperon: « In him Fr. Chevalier found an enlightened and prudent counsellor, a devoted protector, an affectionate father, the strongest support of his congregation in which the venerable prelate was as interested as if it had been his own work »³.

When the Archbishop died, continues Piperon, « we feared for a while that he (Chevalier) would not get over his grief. In his last years, when he spoke of this outstanding benefactor, a lively emotion was evident in his voice. He truly loved the venerable Archbishop as the best of sons loves and venerates the most affectionate and tender of fathers »⁴.

It was this great friend and wise counsellor who saw how strategic a move it could be to appoint Fr. Chevalier as parish priest of Issoudun. Having him named as irremovable rector could give solidity to the MSC Congregation in the time of political difficulties which he foresaw as inevitable. « When in 1872, Archbishop de la Tour d'Auvergne offered the Society the parish of Issoudun, I presented some good reasons for not accepting it. His Eminence replied: 'I have no wish to impose it; I am acting only in the interest of your

Congregation. We have a republic now! and in France it could go to extremes. Perhaps one day the possession of this parish will be a plank of salvation for your Institute and your works'. This prophecy was realized »⁵.

By 1880 of course, there was a new Archbishop J. Marchal (1880-1892). But he also wished to help Fr. Chevalier to use the parish of Issoudun to escape, as far as possible, the effects of the persecutions. He cooperated with him, asking from Rome that « the Missionaries of the Sacred Heart be dispensed from the common life, and placed under the authority of the Bishops of the dioceses in which they live, as Apostolic Delegates, *ad nutum S. Pontificis*. We feel certain that, if this is done, it will be possible to avoid the dispersion of the Congregation; it will allow it to keep its apostolic school and scholasticate, and to continue the work of the great pilgrimage of Our Lady of the Sacred Heart »⁶. His hopes were not completely fulfilled. But when the scholasticate was dissolved, he gave refuge to five MSC seminarians in his own seminary, going to meet them himself at the station of Bourges to take them in his carriage to their place of refuge.

However, he did make it possible for Fr. Chevalier and his priests to hold their ground at Issoudun, giving them legal cover. Fr. Chevalier could prepare this statement for the civil authorities:

« You come here to expel the religious. There are none. All those who live in this house are secular priests, incorporated in the Diocese of Bourges, and have their faculties from His Grace, the Archbishop of the Diocese, who is the tenant of this house since June 24th. »⁷. It is important to see this particular arrangement as a background to the steps which the MSC were forced to take in 1901, when the Archbishop of the time would be less friendly and less cooperative.

Archibishop Marchal was also a good friend to Fr. Chevalier, although in some ways their friendship did not get off to a good start. An Archbishop coming into Bourges in those

days was in a slightly difficult position. As the bishop he was supposed to be the spiritual leader; and he found, at Issoudun, a spiritual leader already established. Spiritually and financially, Issoudun was an important centre in the diocese. Some of the local clergy would not have been displeased to be named to the parish. The new Archbishop heard rumours and criticisms, and gave some credence to them. The following, somewhat lengthy, quotation is given because it brings out a few interesting points.

« After the death of Archbishop de la Tour d'Auvergne, so devoted to Fr. Chevalier and his works, when Archbishop Marchal was named as Archbishop of Bourges, he received a number of letters from priests of the diocese against Fr. Chevalier, which stated that he did not take care of the parish of St. Cyr, devoting all his time instead to the Sacred Heart and his personal works. Against him it was said that he had not introduced any parish works; he had neglected the catechism and other lay-movements, etc.

« Thus when Archbishop Marchal came to make his first visit to the community on the Feast of Our Lady of the Sacred Heart, he was quite cold towards Fr. Chevalier. During dinner, His Grace asked who was the preacher for the ceremony which was to take place in the Basilica. Fr. Chevalier took the occasion to say that, should His Grace wish to say a few words, the faithful — everyone in fact — would be very happy. The Archbishop's reply was rude. He said that maybe he had been able to tell *Archbishop de La Tour d'Auvergne* what to do; but he himself was not going to be steered by Chevalier. He would govern his own diocese the way he thought he should, etc. etc. Poor Father Chevalier accepted the heavy blow without a word and with the greatest humility. But there was complete silence for the rest of the meal! However, before leaving the community the Archbishop understood that he had gone too far, and apologized.

« Some time later the Archbishop came to give Confirmation at Issoudun. He asked for the records of the works establi-

shed in the parish. They brought him a dozen registers: that of the Blessed Sacrament, of the Rosary, of the Christian Mothers, of the Children of Mary, of the youth group, of the Catechism of Perseverance, of the boys and girls, of the Soldiers' apostolate, of the voluntary catechists, of the Servants' Group, of the General Communion of girls for the first Friday of each month, of the boys for the first Sunday of the month; the Conference of St. Vincent de Paul to visit and help the poor, the work of the Sisters taking care of the sick; the work of the Propagation of the Faith, of the Holy Childhood and of St. Francis de Sales. All these works had been begun by Fr. Chevalier and his missionaries. The Archbishop and his brother the Vicar General examined these registers one after the other. They inspected the Church, and its new additions. Before giving Confirmation, the Vicar General, Bishop August Marchal, went among the seats and questioned a large number of children indiscriminately. The Archbishop had four come up before him, two boys and two girls, and asked them questions about the whole catechism. After the questions, the Archbishop rose, and having conferred with his brother, he spoke to the children complimenting them on their knowledge. 'I'm forced to admit', he said, 'that the parish of Issoudun is among the best in the diocese for organization, the children's knowledge' etc.

« The Vicar General declared that at Issoudun things were done in much the same way that he had done them when he was parish priest.

« He would like to come himself sometime to preside over the catechism lessons (advanced). For this special reunion he was astonished and delighted to see the body of the Church of St. Cyr filled with the youth of both sexes.

Also, later on during his pastoral visits, Archbishop Marchal used to cite Issoudun as an example for the organization of catechetics. He used to say that only at Issoudun was catechism taught publicly from the pulpit during the childrens' Mass, and there too the prescription of the Council of Trent was followed to the letter, that catechism should be taught every Sunday. Before leaving Issoudun the Archbishop took

Fr. Chevalier aside and said to him: 'During my first visit you must have found strange my way of treating you. Well! I can tell you now that I had some preconceived ideas against you and your administration of the parish; you'll have to forgive me because I had received a whole series of letters from priests of the diocese which contained unworthy calumnies. I've got their names there, he said, tapping his forehead, and I'll keep an eye on them'.

'Ah, Your Grace', said Fr. Chevalier, 'you ought to forget all that. That's the way human nature is made. I've outlived worse things than that'.

Some years later Archbishop Marchal who had studied all Fr. Chevalier's works, particularly those of the parish, exclaimed at table during dinner: 'I wish that all my parishes were looked after by religious: they would gain a lot'. And that after having praised the parish priest and his curates. The same day Fr. Chevalier recommended to the Archbishop a priest of the diocese who hoped to be made a canon and who had asked him to speak for him to the Archbishop. The latter said, in his frank way: 'I'll tell you one thing, Father. I'm not very keen on naming canons and even less the one you recommend, because he was one of those who wrote against you when I was first named Archbishop of Bourges'. 'Well in that case, Your Grace, I recommend him doubly to your benevolence. You could not give me greater pleasure than to make him a canon for the good he has done for the diocese' »⁸.

The man was made a canon; the Archbishop had finished up taking orders from Chevalier after all!

The account brings out far more than this, of course; it shows Fr. Chevalier as a man of humility, meekness and charity. It gives an idea of his apostolic zeal and his pastoral activity.

Archbishop Marchal was succeeded by Archbishop J.P. Boyer (1892-1896). He was appointed in the midst of the MSC crisis, and he was named Apostolic Visitor to the Society.

Neither the unhappy situation of the Society, nor his own personal temperament allowed for a warm and friendly relationship with Fr. Chevalier. He confessed that he found it hard to see the rights and wrongs of the internal MSC dispute; however, it was clear to him that the worst thing he could do would be to give the impression that he was on one side or the other. He strove to give the impression of complete neutrality demanded from an arbiter. For Chevalier, used as he was to a completely different relationship with his Archbishop, this novel experience was not to his liking. He growled to himself, in his *Notes Intimes*, about: "The Apostolic Visitor... who never came to visit us... he remained peacefully in his palace" ⁹. In one letter to the Archbishop, Chevalier dropped a polite but pointed hint: « It is a pity, Your Grace, that although you are the Apostolic Visitor of our Congregation, your health prevents you from visiting our houses yourself; you would see that nothing is neglected and that everything is done according to the Constitutions » ¹⁰.

However, this Archbishop, too, came to appreciate Chevalier's qualities; and Fr. Chevalier himself seemed to appreciate the reasons which kept him at a distance. He wrote that perhaps the opposition of the Archbishop was « more apparent than real » ¹¹. There was no question now of his making suggestions to his local Ordinary. In letters to previous Archbishops he had « presumed to suggest » and « ventured to propose » and so on, with a very easy relationship. Now he was often summoned to the episcopal palace at Bourges. Now we find him writing phrases such as these: « Your Grace, would you please indicate the line of conduct I am to follow » ¹²: « Not wishing to do anything without the complete approbation of Your Grace, I venture to submit... » Fr. Chevalier had four years in which to practice this rather humbling and complete obedience; and he did it without fail.

While he liked Archbishops, he did not like them looking over his shoulder and breathing down his neck. He probably would not have appreciated either having to have all official

communications bear this message: « All Right — Seen and Approved », and signed by the Archbishop — Apostolic Visitor¹³.

Consequently when Archbishop Boyer died in 1896, Chevalier wasted no time in writing to the Holy Father. The letter was written in the approved style¹⁴. Its message is this: Holy Father, four years ago, because of difficulties in our society, in your paternal solicitude, you gave us an Apostolic Visitor. While we mourn his loss, we thank you for your kind intervention. He did his job so well, that we do not need any more Visitors! May we, therefore, be left to stand on our own feet, have a General Chapter, and get on with the job.

To his great relief his request was granted; and perhaps just in time. For Boyer was to be succeeded by a man whose friendship Fr. Chevalier never won. His last Archbishop, Pierre Servonnet, was to remain cold towards him, and was to give him no help whatsoever in further difficulties with the French Government. Historians of the Diocese of Bourges do not rate him very high: « A pious prelate and austere, leading the life of a seminarian in his palace, hard on himself and others, but in many ways mediocre, inadequate and of a changeable character »¹⁵. He was « a republican Archbishop » who « could not control his republican zeal. This passion clouded his mind even to the point of making him believe in the integrity of the men in power in the worst moments of *combism*. His inadequacy or his naiveté were too evident in this field not to appear outside; they made him obstinate in his judgments, but left him in good faith »¹⁶.

Fr. Chevalier was a royalist; he had little faith in the Republic. He and the Archbishop were to adopt quite different attitudes regarding the line of conduct which religious should adopt after 1901. But their political differences were already clear prior to that date. They were to have other differences as well. The first of these was to be with regard to financial matters. Fr. Chevalier, against his better judgment but yielding to pressure from Cardinal Boyer, had

agreed to buy the property of the College at Chezal-Benoît. The agreement was, however, conditional, depending on Government approval and, when this approval was not forthcoming, both Fr. Chevalier and Mgr. Bardel (Auxiliary to Boyer) considered that the contract had lapsed. Servonnet did not take this view. There were in consequence some months of strained relationships between the two men.

Differing from him in politics, having touched him in his pocket-book, Fr. Chevalier was now to offend the Archbishop in his pride. The latter had been having some difficulties with the opening of a Catholic school at Chateauroux. This school had been founded by a civil society, enlarged with a legacy of a Mrs. L. Marchain, and was to be reopened on condition that the college was run by religious. Somewhat autocratically the Archbishop decided that he could ignore the desires of the laity, and that he would staff the college with priests of the diocese. The laity resisted and made approaches to Fr. Chevalier to have the MSC take over the college. He got in touch with the Archbishop for advice; the latter wrote by return of post telling him: « Accept! I name Fr. Vaudon superior of the establishment, and Fr. Povereau official director before the Academy »¹⁷. Now both these men were MSC, and they both had jobs already at Chezal-Benoît. Fr. Chevalier therefore reminded the Archbishop that he had no power to make such appointments; it was for the Religious Superior to do so. In this case since the religious superiors did not feel that Fr. Vaudon, in spite of his many qualities, was really qualified for this new position, they could not accept the Archbishop's proposal. The latter tried to affirm that he did have the right, and quoted some documents from Rome. Fr. Chevalier remained firm, refusing to accept the Archbishop's interpretation of the documents. Considering that an important matter of principle was at stake, he remained firm even though the superior of the Seminary of Bourges came to him saying: « I know the Archbishop. If you persist in your refusal, you will have in him an irreconcilable enemy who could do you much harm »¹⁸. However, having talked the matter

over with his Council, Fr. Chevalier felt obliged to maintain his position.

From then on the Archbishop's attitude was indeed one of irreconcilable enmity; it was an enmity that was conditioned by these experiences: « saying that Fr. Chevalier wanted to govern the diocese »¹⁹, and with a certain obsession about money. For example: « His Grace disapproves the fact that a large and luxurious religious house was built, and that nothing was spent for St. Cyr and for works useful for the country »²⁰. One has only to visit Issoudun to discount the charge of luxury, and independent authorities bear witness to how much Fr. Chevalier spent on St. Cyr²¹. We have already seen an independent authority witnessing to the Archbishop's obstinacy; and when obstinate men get fixed ideas not much can be done about them. The 'financial' idea is very clear in this letter to Fr. Chevalier: « I read with interest the account you gave me of your festivities. Now, *you* have a really solid basilica. I would like to build a more modest one for St. Solange. When that time comes will you aid us generously? We would need about 10,000 francs... ». By way of comment, Fr. Chevalier scribbled on this: « A letter full of irony »²².

Nevertheless he could not simply resign himself to opposition from his Archbishop. In a letter to the latter for his feast-day, he concluded with this humble request: « On the occasion of your feast, Your Grace, we beg you to forget the complaints you may have against us, to forgive us if we have committed some fault, and to show your goodwill towards us for we very much desire this ». The Archbishop replied:

« I thank you for your good wishes which I know to be sincere; I know that you have always had for me personally all the deference I could wish for. But it must be recognised that there is opposition between the interests which are my responsibility and those of your congregation such as your administration understands them... I would willingly have an open discussion with you on this subject when the occasion offers, although I do not see the necessity, nor does

it seem likely that we can change anything... »²³. The olive branch was not to be accepted!

In the course of the years, then, we see a variety of experiences in Fr. Chevalier's relations with the Archbishops of Bourges. Firstly with the Prince Archbishop de La Tour d'Auvergne he enjoys a very close and enriching friendship, a friendship so close that « in no moment of his life have we seen him shed such abundant and bitter tears, as over the mortal remains of this dear deceased »²⁴. We have, secondly, seen him publicly insulted in his own house by his new Archbishop - and then turn enmity into friendship by all that he was as an extraordinary man and an exceptional priest. We have seen him carefully submitting to the authority of the Apostolic Visitor over a period of four years, obeying as humbly as any novice. And finally we have seen him, respectfully but firmly and for the sake of his Congregation, refuse to have his own rightful authority disregarded. We have seen, too, how he refuses to let this lead to a permanent personal attitude of opposition and how he will not easily resign himself to not being in complete harmony with his Archbishop. But when his own overtures of peace are politely but definitely refused, all that he can do is to continue to be correct and to carry on. The Lord gives and the Lord takes away; with or without episcopal favour, he still had a mission to accomplish and a number of things to do.

The first of these was to have a General Chapter. Looking around his MSC Society, he saw that « the most complete peace, union and harmony now exist among us »²⁵. He looked to the North where on May 5th, 1894 a new Province had been erected with Fr. C. Ramot as Provincial and he could write: « The Province of the North... gives us a deep satisfaction »²⁶. From the South Cardinal Moran of Sydney « has written me a letter in which he sings the praises of my confreres, convinced that our Congregation, well-liked and highly regarded by the whole Australian Episcopate, has a great future in those countries » (i.e. Australia and Oceania)²⁷. He was heartened by what he saw and heard and he felt that « a Chapter which everyone would like will

consolidate our Society even more and give it a new impulse »²⁸.

He had asked for this Chapter in February 1896, but although it was convoked for August 15th of that year, the members of the Chapter did not come together until July 19th, 1897. In his conferences prior to the beginning of Chapter business, in the preliminary retreat, Fr. Chevalier touched very lightly on the immediate past. Speaking of the MSC Society, he said: « You know its origin, the crises through which it has had to pass, the difficulties which it had to encounter, and the divine protection which has been given to it. Our Congregation, willed by heaven, has a special mission... »²⁹. He then went on to remind the Capitulants that they had to build for the future. He stressed that, for the welfare of religious life, they needed a rule which was strong but « impregnated with charity ». He placed special emphasis on the duties of superiors and the need for a sense of responsibility in their work. So much depended on them, on their sense of responsibility, their prudence, their good administration.

One of the interesting though less important matters treated was the wearing of the habit. This had been under discussion for some time, especially since, in the Province of the North the practice had been to some extent neglected. There it was felt that in protestant countries it was not a cause of edification but in fact the contrary, to go out of the house clad in a soutane with a red heart on the chest.

The decision of the Chapter was: the habit is to be worn. but when MSC go out of the house, they may leave their hearts at home!

Writing a circular letter to the members of the Society on August 11th, Fr. Chevalier said the Chapter « could hardly have had a happier outcome ». And even the official Latin account would speak of the laughter which rang through the Chapter halls: « Non raro quaedam solutio vel explanatio fuit data iis verbis, quae spontaneos risus cierent

et fessis animis exoptatam afferrent relaxationem »³⁰. Shortly afterwards, since things were going so well in the North and vocations were numerous, it was decided to erect a German Province on September 1st, 1897. Fr. Hubert Linckens was appointed Provincial. The erection of this German Province was urged also by the special requirements of the German Government regarding missionaries in its territories. The mission of New Pomerania (New Britain) assigned to the Province of the North in 1894 now became the mission of the German Province. In a further effort to work as well as possible with the German government, the German Province, unlike the other Provinces, was directly subject to the Sacred Congregation for the Propagation of the Faith.

Fr. Chevalier went to Hiltrup for the opening of the central house of the new Province in August 1898. There he became quite ill and spent some time in his room. Then he knew that age (he was 74) was catching up with him and that it was time for a younger man to take over. Thinking over his course of action, it was natural that his thoughts should go to Fr. Jouët who had helped him so much in building his work. He wrote to him about the state of his health and that the time had come for him to give to another the responsibility of ruling the Congregation. The Assistants, he said, approve: « but on condition that I remain in charge of the Congregation as long as I live, and that a Vicar is appointed with the right of future succession. I would prefer the opposite », i.e. a new Superior General³¹. He explained his reasons to the Society in a letter of July, 1899; and a Chapter met in April 1900. To the Chapter he said: « I offer you purely and simply my resignation, and I ask you dear confreres to accept »³².

The Chapter did not accept his resignation. As a sign of their veneration and affection for their Founder they re-elected him Superior General (28 votes out of 31). Then, acceding to his request for a Vicar General, they elected Fr. A. Lanctin to this position. Fr. G. Genocchi was elected Procurator General. And even within the closed circle of

an MSC Chapter, Fr. Chevalier had one further little bit of «bishop-trouble», this time with an MSC - Bishop Couppé Vicar Apostolic of new Britain. Like many mission bishops, he had a great concern for the welfare of his own mission territory. Preoccupied by the need for priests, he did not like the provision of the 1897 Directory which stated that no MSC could be obliged to go to the missions if he did not wish to go. Having recourse to the Congregation of Propaganda Fide, he had obtained permission to require an oath to go to the missions from any young man desiring to enter the Novitiate at Hiltrup. He hoped in this way to ensure a constant supply of personnel for his mission. From a similar motivation he asserted that the MSC houses at Antwerp, Belgium and Kensington, Australia, should be totally directed towards the foreign missions. Finally he wanted some rigid rules made about financial contributions from benefactors. The General Chapter of 1900 discussed these matters and worked on the questions of the relations between the MSC Society and its own bishops.

For Fr. Chevalier, the Chapter was the end of an era. From now on much of the Society's government could be left to Fr. Lanctin. He himself could stay at Issoudun; and one would have hoped that he might pass his remaining years in peace and a leisurely semi-retirement. His own Society was stable and growing. Even in France the anti-religious laws had not been applied too strictly and the MSC had seven residences in the country, with their house of philosophy in French territory in Algeria. However, this was no more than a surface calm; anti-religious feelings were soon to be let loose; new laws were to be passed, and they were to be rigorously enforced by the man who was to be known as « the little Fr. Combes ».

2. THE LAWS OF THE LAND.

On July 2nd 1901, the « Law regarding the Associations » was passed. It has been said that it was really a 'law against religious societies', for its aim was to strike a further blow

against the Church and in particular against religious congregations. Since these were 'associations' they came under the law, according to which only those associations would be permitted 'whose goal was not contrary to the constitutions of the State'. Furthermore, all associations (and therefore congregations of religious) must come under the control of the State. The State would judge whether they should exist or not, according to their usefulness. All must ask for authorization under pain of dissolution: but of course authorization would not necessarily be given on demand. Some Congregations, such as the Jesuits, saw that it was useless for them even to ask for authorization. Most of the others were disposed to try.

What should the MSC do? With their Republican Archbishop maintaining that at Paris there was a great, unfavourable dossier on them in government files³³ they were not encouraged to ask for approbation. (More than one Republican bishop resorted to this tactic against religious congregations in his diocese). However, a stronger reason was that the MSC and Chevalier particularly had no faith in the friendliness of the government. They decided not to ask for authorization. Events were to prove the wisdom of their decision; very few orders were approved and at least 1500 establishments of religious were closed. On November 2nd, 1902, of 59 petitions for authorization, 54 were refused by the government. On March 18th, 1903, 25 out of 28 were refused, and so on.

Six times in June of 1901, the General Council met to discuss what should be done when the law was passed. In the very first chapter of this book we have seen the judgement that Chevalier was a man who inspired confidence. He gave his confreres confidence now. Writing to him for his forthcoming fiftieth anniversary of priestly ordination, Fr. Guyot said:

« I thank God for having kept you with us until now; your experience and your spirit of decision will be able to save much wreckage from the ruin. I think that at the fatal day of the vote we shall not be caught unawares; measures

will have been studied and agreed on. Please then indicate the action we must take...

« We shall be united in spirit with our confreres who will be gathered around you, Reverend Father, in the same sentiments of affection, respect, submission and the desire to see your days prolonged, to see God's grace abound in you, the kingdom of the Heart of Christ strengthened in us all, and our little Society emerge victorious from the trials which await it »³⁴.

This vote of confidence and esteem is all the more striking coming from one who differed from Chevalier on a number of points in the past.

Discussing their course of action Fr. Chevalier and his counsellors would naturally have thought, first of all, of what they had done in 1880, when with Archbishop Marchal's help, they had simply merged with the local clergy. But now Servonnet was Archbishop of Bourges and this made quite a difference: « We could escape (from the law) at least partially, if the Archbishop would cooperate and take us under his protection, incorporating us into the diocesan clergy. But it is certain that he, even more than the government, wants to get rid of us from Issoudun. He has declared roundly that he will not do a thing to keep us there, and even that he believes that Fr. Chevalier can not remain parish priest. It is this enmity of the Archbishop and his connivance with the government which causes us the greatest difficulty »³⁵.

This judgment of Fr. Meyer is confirmed by Fr. Genocchi, writing from Rome:

« I would have liked to see the Archbishop with more sympathy for Fr. Chevalier and the fathers of Issoudun. But he has none... He is even convinced that we are not wanted at Issoudun and that we will soon be gone »³⁶.

Even though these letters were written a little later, the realities they express were clear in the minds of the men who, in June and July faced up to the future of the MSC.

Judging it useless to ask for government authorization, knowing that the Archbishop would not help them, they had to ask whether it was really important for them to stay at Issoudun. The answer to this question is contained in a document which Fr. Meyer took to Rome on July 20th when, in the name of the Council, he went to discuss the situation with the Roman Congregations. They must at any cost save the works at Issoudun. And *the Reasons*:

« 1. If the works at Issoudun perish all the works of the Society in France and in the missions will perish. For our Society's recruitment is by means of Apostolic Schools; so we have to support boys, novices, scholastics (actually 70 boys, 20 novices, 70 scholastics = 160 people), and this requires more than 100,000 francs. Now all this comes from Issoudun by means of the Annals, the Contributions for the Apostolic School, Masses etc., Archconfraternity etc. If the works of Issoudun were taken from us, we would have to send away these 160 people, which would mean vocations lost and an accumulation of material and moral ruin. On the other hand, if the works of Issoudun are kept, even if we are not approved, the essential works will be saved; for vocations will not be lacking. The apostolic school, the novitiate and the scholasticate will be set up outside of France at the frontiers.

« 2. Repercussion of these disasters for the missions:

a) no more missionaries; and, therefore, in a short time the total abandonment of the Vicariates of New Guinea and the Gilbert Islands;

b) then too, the cessation of many gifts, in particular Mass offerings for the missionaries;

c) our destruction would bring about that of the Daughters of Our Lady of the Sacred Heart who are the indispensable helpers of our missionaries »³⁷.

The Memorandum goes on to strengthen the argument; but it is clear enough. It is to be noted that here, as all through his last years, Fr. Chevalier is fighting for the Daughters of Our Lady of the Sacred Heart as much as for his own

MSC Society. Now, too, others were realizing clearly what Chevalier had stressed before - the importance of Issoudun for the welfare of the two Congregations.

Having decided that it was vital for some MSC at least to stay at Issoudun, two further questions remained. Who would stay? And how would this be arranged? There was only one practical answer to the first question: Fr. Chevalier was irremovable parish priest of Issoudun, recognised as such by law. If he were to leave, Servonnet would not replace him with an MSC. Because of age and failing health he could no longer visit his scattered society in his capacity as Superior General - and for that reason he had asked for a Vicar. If he were to leave France, there was little he could do for the Society. But by remaining he could do much. If he could, he would stay; but this meant that the Society would be better governed abroad if he resigned as Superior General in favour of Fr. Lanctin who already had the right of succession. Some of his confreres would stay with him at Issoudun, and others in other parts of France.

But how was this to be arranged? They could not stay as members of an unauthorized 'Association'. They would then legally cease to be members of that association. Rome was having a busy time in those months trying to find ways and means of helping the religious congregations in France retain what was necessary for their survival. Eventually in March, 1903, a special decree would be passed: « Given the particular circumstances in which French Religious Congregations now find themselves... »³⁸. But even before this decree, special arrangements were being made, and urgent permissions given.

On August 23rd, Fr. Genocchi wrote to Fr. Chevalier: « I have explained your situation relative to the parish of Issoudun to the two above mentioned Cardinals (Gotti and Parocchi). Cardinal Parocchi says that you *must* do everything possible, absolutely everything, to retain your position. He advises you to ask for secularization, which you can use with the Archbishop and the Government if necessary.

Cardinal Gotti is of the same opinion: he says that you should make the request, pure and simple, yourself... You should simply say that having good reasons to be provided with a secularization, with a view to keeping your position as Archpriest, you make your request to the Holy See ». On August 28th, Fr. Chevalier sent a double petition to Rome, asking that his resignation as Superior General be accepted and that he should be secularized 'for as long as events demanded'. Both requests were granted. In the *Analecta* of December 1901, it is stated that, for reasons we have already seen, Fr. Chevalier resigned as Superior General and asked for a certain secularization: *quandam secularizationem* ³⁹.

A number of years later, Fr. H. Peeters, smelling a certain scandal in the word 'secularizationem', and failing to grasp the significance of the 'quandam' spread the rumour that Fr. Chevalier had left the Society. Like all rumours, and especially those that smell of scandal, this one went about and abroad. And yet, if one studies the special arrangements made 'for the special circumstances in which the French religious congregations found themselves', the whole affair is very clear and very positive.

A preliminary observation which may be useful is that, at that time, no one employed the later distinction made between « exclaustation » and secularization. Prior to the Code of Canon Law of 1918, any separation from one's religious institute was called secularization. If a man wanted to leave his Congregation, he asked for a « dispensatio super votis », a dispensation from his vows. But in these special cases, in which many religious then found themselves, there was no question of dispensation from vows. They asked for an « absolutio a vinculo quo tenentur erga Institutum » - dissolving the bond which attached them to the Institute, so that they could then be numbered among the secular clergy. And « in view of the particular circumstances », their request was granted. It was according to this latter and « more recent » form that Chevalier's dispensation was granted. And he had asked for it in these terms:

« that he might be secularized for as long as the events demand, while *keeping in the internal forum his obligations as a religious* » ⁴⁰.

It is understandable that, given the double use of the word 'secularization', some were not as clear on what was involved as was Chevalier; and in the *Analecta* of June, 1902, it was explained that:

« There is not the least doubt that religious secularized in this way only, continue to be true religious, almost in the same way as those members who are sent by their superiors to live in a distant country » ⁴¹. There was one interesting little difference. Those who dissimulated their connection with their religious institute were often expected to wear, concealed on their person, some sign of their religious affiliation.

The MSC were to wear their hearts sewn on the inside of their soutanes! ⁴².

Fr. Chevalier was not left alone in France. The so called 'Province of France' (the Province to be erected officially only on August 25th, 1905) had its 'first Provincial Council' in February 20th-26th, 1902, at Barcelona. President was Fr. Lanctin, Superior General and Provincial of France. One of the questions studied was the 'personnel of the Province'. On October 3rd, 1901 the General Administration had moved to Chimay in Belgium, and its members (Frs. Lanctin, Ramot, Piperon, Meyer, and Carrière) were listed as belonging to the French Province. But our immediate interest concerns the third category listed (after the Provincial Government):

« At Issoudun: Rev. Frs. Chevalier, Hériault, Brunet, Periot, Michel, Maillard Bâtard, Bertin - secularized.

At Paris: Frs. Bouvier, Morisseau, Astier - secularized.

At Vichy: Fr. Guyot, secularized.

At Marseilles: Fr. Pacaud, secularized.

In their dioceses: Frs. Doutré and Suchet, secularized » ⁴³.

It is not known whether all these men sewed their hearts on the inside of their soutanes, but they all considered them-

selves as MSC. Fr. Doutré, to leave the Congregation, got a *further* descript of dispensation from his vows on November 4th, 1902.

With their situation regularized by Rome, the 'secularized MSC' remaining in France went ahead with what they had to do. First of all there was the question of living their religious life. Fr. Lanctin made a canonical visitation of the houses of Issoudun in February 1902 and he wrote of the Presbytery:

« All are very attached to Fr. Chevalier and bear him a strong and deep affection. They realize that, all his other sons being scattered, it is up to them to show him a cheerful and careful attention, to console him by their priestly zeal, by their religious spirit and by their charitable understanding. They must obey him in all things, not only as local superior, but even as Superior General, whose powers I delegate to him»⁴⁴.

It would have been less the delegated powers, and more his paternal interest and his privileged position as 'elder statesman', which made him keep an interested eye on all that was going on in the Society. He wrote letters to the MSC in Canada and Australia. He gave his opinion freely to Fr. Lanctin and later to Fr. Meyer when, in the General Chapter of 1905, he was elected Superior General. He had no qualms about writing to the Cardinal Protector with suggestions as to what should be done regarding proposed changes in the Constitutions⁴⁵. He was also freely consulted about special cases.

It is obvious that the colony of the secularized MSC considered themselves more as «dispersed religious», a term which was frequently enough applied to them in those days. The following letter from Fr. Bertin to Fr. Lanctin, on December 29th, 1904 shows how life went on almost as normal:

« With the keenest joy and the most profound gratitude for your kindness in which you granted my desire, I wish to notify you by this present letter that, on December 25th, 1904, I had the happiness of consecrating myself more intimately

to the Sacred Heart by pronouncing the fourth vow in the hands of the Venerated Father Founder of our dear Congregation.

May Our Lady of the Sacred Heart deign to help me serve better henceforth the glory of the Sacred Heart and the interests of our dear Congregation.

And will you yourself, very Reverend Father, please bless him who is happy to declare himself your affectionately devoted son in the Heart of Christ... Signed. Bertin ».

Immediately following the signature were these words: « I certify that Fr. Bertin, MSC has made the fourth vow in my hands, on December 25th, 1904.

J. Chevalier ».

The dispersed religious were far from considering themselves « separated brethren ».

In these years, too, Fr. Chevalier concluded his career as a writer.

Apostle of the Sacred Heart that he was, he neglected no possible means of preaching the love of Christ and deepening that devotion in the hearts of men. He may not have been a gifted writer but part of his philosophy of life was that we do not have to be 'eagles or saints' to achieve something worthwhile for Christ; and he knew that his books did help a number of people. The fact that his books ran to several editions prove that in this way too, he exercised his missionary vocation.

He had already written a number of works:

1. « Le Sacré Coeur de Jésus dans ses rapports avec Marie ». « Notre Dame du Sacré Coeur » was to be the later title of a second edition of this book.
2. « Le Sacré Coeur de Jésus ».
3. « Histoire Religieuse d'Issoudun ».
4. « L'Ecole du Sacré Coeur ».
5. « Méditations pour tous les jours de l'année, selon l'esprit du Sacré Coeur » (2. vols).
6. « Le Sacré Coeur et le Ciel ».

There were also some smaller, very minor publications such as a retreat, and collections of hymns for the use of his parishioners.

Now in his last years he wrote: « L'Apocalypse et les Temps Présents ». It was finished in 1904 and because of his physical debility of that time, he wrote much of it holding the paper on his knees. It was part of his fight against « Le Mal Moderne » and in an appendix he says that Freemasonry is a « diabolical sect, inspired by Satan himself ». He knew that the government would not be happy about it, nor Archbishop Servonnet. In a rather smart diplomatic move he had his book « approved by the Master of the Sacred Palace » in Rome.

However, he does not by any means become obsessed with the ills of the time, nor does he see them as purely negative. « Let us see in the trials that the good God sends us a purpose of his love and his mercy », he wrote to Fr. Meyer on April 13th, 1906. « Let us try to draw profit from them; perhaps religious Congregations had too much forgotten their beautiful and sublime mission. They had grown accustomed to live in ease and perhaps in worldliness. Divine Providence seems to wish to recall them to their pristine vocation which is the continuation of the life of Jesus Christ in the world and sharing in his sufferings: *si vis perfectus esse*. The practice of poverty is a treasure which will never fail. Priests and religious will never want for what is necessary if they are what they ought to be. Therefore in this regard I am completely unapprehensive about the future. Persecution, like poverty, is a blessing. Far from complaining about it we should rejoice like the apostles for having been judged worthy to suffer with and for our divine Master ».

There is a wonderful calm about these words coming from a man who was suffering from a painful illness and who was feeling the effects both of poverty and persecution. The separation of Church and State had been voted through on December 9th, 1905. Salaries previously paid to priests by the government were cut off. In the opinion of Fr. Meyer

and others the MSC might not be able to retain their properties at Issoudun. While they were very worried, Chevalier was calmly confident that he could bring to a happy conclusion this last work for which he had remained in France. This one last thing he would do for the Society before he died - and not only for the MSC Society.

« We must also safeguard the property of the Daughters of Our Lady of the Sacred Heart. They sacrificed all that they possessed for the construction of their convent which they then put into the hands of the civil society without any compensation. Can we abandon them? I do not think so. They are without money and without resources now that the pilgrimages have been stopped. They have devoted themselves generously to us and to our missions » ⁴⁶.

The Civil Society referred to here was the « Société Immobilière de l'Indre » formed in 1897 in perfectly legal fashion. At that time, Fr. Chevalier had already foreseen that religious would probably be dispossessed of their property. He had therefore organized a civil society which could legally acquire 'ownership' of the properties which belonged to his religious. However, such was the strength of free-masonic feeling against the Church that even the legal correctness of this society did not save the religious from expropriation. The « law regarding Association », as applied by Combes, took care of that and the properties were put up for auction. To many this seemed the end of the fight; they had fought well, but they had lost. But Fr. Chevalier would not admit defeat. There was still another way. By 1903 he had sent 40,000 francs to be banked by Fr. Nysters in Belgium, and in 1906 he could write that he hoped to increase this amount to 60,000.

His plan was to enlist the aid of friends who were wealthy enough for the government to judge that they could be acting in their own name and to get these to buy the church properties when they went up for auction. These would be sold for much less than their real value and later on the money which Fr. Chevalier had collected and saved for this

purpose could be used to re-imburse the buyers. In carrying out this plan the Vicomte Bernard de Bonneval was a good friend indeed to Fr. Chevalier and of invaluable assistance. He was warmly thanked and praised by the Holy See for his help to the Church in these times. With his help the MSC properties were saved and later paid for with the monies collected through Fr. Chevalier's devoted efforts. Bonneval bought the Basilica; he had the body of Fr. Jules Vandel (which had been buried in the adjoining park) transferred to the crypt. He also obtained permission to prepare there a tomb for Fr. Chevalier himself. The basilica was re-opened just a few days before his death. With his faithful collaborators he had managed to fight successfully his last fight for the works he had begun. In this regard his mission was accomplished.

However, it would be very wrong to give the impression that Fr. Chevalier during this time, was merely « using » the parish of St. Cyr for other ends. He was a man of too much integrity to do that. He was also a man who was described as « having a passion for souls ». That passion would only die with him and until he died he would devote himself to the parish ministry with whatever strength remained to him. For this work, he had, too, his band of devoted curates. There is a very interesting testimony given by one of the brothers about his last years. In 1904 he was very ill, and his confreres were afraid he was going to die, weakened as he was by haemorrhages and sickness. But, writes the brother: « In this very critical state of health which one could say was between life and death, the good father, without worrying about his illness, led a very active life as if he were in good health. He never omitted his breviary nor his rosary; he received visitors, replied to numerous letters and often, I believe, he forgot his own sufferings in giving himself completely to others ». His state of health improving « Fr. Chevalier soon resumed his former occupations, i.e., he began to say Mass, first of all in his own room where he had a very nice little chapel where, with permission of the Holy Father, he could say Mass. But his zeal was not content with this,

and soon he must go to the parish church to hear confessions and preach.

I seem to see him still: he was running, so content was he to make his appearance again among his dear parishioners. What a joy for him but also for everyone, for who did not know Fr. Chevalier? Even the most hostile to religion and the poor. They were happy to be able to meet him going and coming to and from the church, for it was not always easy to come and visit him at home.... For a long time he continued his ministry, but the good God knows with what fatigue. The curates wanted to relieve him especially for the Sunday mass in the parish, but he rarely accepted their offer and that only when he absolutely could not do any more. He regarded the service of the parish mass as a personal duty of the parish priest and he wanted to continue this right until the end »⁴⁷.

The end was not very far off. But before then Fr. Chevalier was to pass through what was, in some respects, both his saddest and finest hour. Pushing the separation of Church and State to further lengths, the State was claiming church properties from the clergy and expelling them from their presbyteries. On December 15th, even the 'republican Archbishop' Servonnet was expelled from his palace. But our interest is less in the episcopal palace than in the presbytery of Issoudun.

« On Monday January 21st, 1907, a date which will remain forever engraved on the memory of our parishioners, at about 8.00 in the morning, the police commissioner, accompanied by three policemen and two keepers, made his way to the presbytery. He found the door closed. In spite of his summons the door remained closed and he went off to give an account of the results of the wretched mission which he had been ordered to accomplish. At 2.00 p.m., he returned accompanied by his policemen and this time by a housebreaker, named Pâris, who works for M. Naudin a locksmith of Rue de l'Amendier; these two names should pass on to posterity.

For several locksmiths had refused to have any part in this act of brutality.

« After the three summonses which had no more effect than those of the morning, the commissioner ordered Pâris the housebreaker to stave in the door. The latter, pale and trembling before a crowd of a thousand people who were beginning to murmur, took a pole-axe and struck the door, which resisted the blow. Immediately the crowd cried: 'Down with the thieves! Long live Fr. Chevalier!' At each blow of the pole-axe which rang out lugubriously making a painful impression on the people present, the same cries were heard. Finally the door gave way and the commissioner soon found himself in the presence of the venerable Archpriest, surrounded by his curates, the Count de Bonneval and several men of the town. Fr. Chevalier protested strongly against the odious measures being taken against him who had never transgressed the laws of the land. The curates likewise protested.

« Having heard their protests, the Commissioner ordered the Archpriest to move out; he said that he was unable to do so, and that if they wanted to chase him out of his dwelling, they would have to carry him. At a sign from the commissioner, two of the policemen removed their caps and hoods and took hold of the armchair in which the venerable priest was seated. As they could not carry it by themselves, the commissioner gave them a hand. During this time Pâris, the housebreaker, with a churlish air, had his hat on his head and smoked a cigarette.

« When Fr. Chevalier appeared at the door, carried by the police, the crowd bared their heads and cried: 'Long live Fr. Chevalier! Long live Fr. Chevalier! Down with the thieves!' Fr. Chevalier got into a carriage which took him to Rue Daridan to the house which Count de Bonneval had put at his disposal. The 'Parce Domine' was sung and all along the way cries were heard of 'Long live Fr. Chevalier!'.

As soon as the venerable pastor had moved into his new

dwelling he received numerous visits; each day an uninterrupted line of people of all ranks of life came to present their homage and to say how disgusted they were by what had happened to him.

Having expelled the parish priest from the presbytery, the commissioner then had the curates Frs. Hériault and Brunet removed also; they were seized by the arm and led to the door for they, too, would not leave the presbytery except by force »⁴⁸.

This is a stirring and moving account. It shows that neither age nor sickness nor persecution could quench Fr. Chevalier's indomitable spirit. It indicates the loyalty and total devotion of his confreres, and it lets us see the veneration of his people who loved him.

Fr. Chevalier was to die nine months later but he still had some things to do. He continued and successfully concluded the business of redeeming the MSC properties. He had to give his parishioners what time he could and he had to visit some old friends, knowing that it was for the last time. He had already prepared his Spiritual Testaments well in advance. They reflect something of the grave preoccupations of the years from 1890 onwards. They are the expression of a father's solicitous concern as he takes leave of his children for the last time, wanting - vainly perhaps but out of a desire to protect - to rule out all possible harm. They need to be read with these considerations in mind. The Testaments were three in number, and they indicate the three great loves of his life; The Missionaries of the Sacred Heart, the Daughters of Our Lady of the Sacred Heart, and the people of the parish of Issoudun; there was one for each group.

Exactly nine months after he was expelled from his presbytery, Fr. Jules Chevalier died on Monday October 21st, 1907. He died fortified by the last rites of the Church with his friends and confreres at his bedside. Among them was Fr. E. Meyer, Superior General of the Missionaries of the Sacred Heart. Other friends were far away and most of his

confreres were in exile. In Belgium, Fr. Píperon was thinking of him and praying for him. He, too, was an old man now, but he was ready to come — probably hoping to come — to Issoudun if only his superior would give the word. Having heard that Fr. Chevalier was gravely ill, he had written to Fr. Meyer on October 11th:

« For several days now all our prayers have been for the Reverend Father (Chevalier), and today more than ever. Do you think, Reverend Father, that my presence would be useful in any way? I do not see that it would, but if you find that it would, just give me a command, for I would not undertake such a journey except from obedience ».

The obedience was not given, and the humble Fr. Píperon who never pushed his own desires, made this last sacrifice. He made it with grace, writing later to Fr. Meyer:

« I was very consoled to know that you were at Issoudun to receive the last words and the last sigh of our well loved Father ... No one better than you could give him comfort in his last hour »⁴⁹.

Fr. Chevalier wanted no flowers on his coffin: he wanted no panegyric preached. Let us then conclude this section with two brief quotations.

« Pastor of souls in the highest and noblest sense of the term, Fr. Chevalier was for sixty years the good counsellor, the faithful and sure friend of those who had recourse to the light of his deep faith, or made appeal to his heart which was an inexhaustible source of indulgence and kindness. Persecuted like so many of his brethren, he remained smiling but unshakeable in adversity; he never had a word of bitterness against those who seemed to have made it their aim to destroy his work »⁵⁰.

« The faithful of his parish weep for him as for a father, and pray to him as to a saint »⁵¹.

3. FACTS AND FIGURES.

In the early years of Chevalier's life it is the vision and the enthusiasm which dominate. Later it is the 'agonia' of coping with the difficulties which beset him on every side. In his final years the man himself stands out for what he is in himself. Therefore, to some extent, in this chapter the man has dominated the history which has somehow become a background against which he moves. In order not to leave suspended too many historical threads, we give some facts and figures up to 1907, facts and figures which did not fit easily into the text of the Chapter.

In 1905 at a General Chapter of the MSC Society, Fr. Lanctin, successor to Fr. Chevalier, produced a document which he had received from the Holy See, allowing him to resign as Superior General. His reasons were ill-health and the conviction that the office was beyond his strength. Fr. E. Meyer was elected as his successor and was to remain Superior General until 1920. This same Chapter of 1905 decided that the General House should be transferred to Rome; a move which took place shortly after the Chapter. A little later Fr. Meyer wrote to his friend Fr. Jules Vandel in Sydney: « If Fr. Tréand had been at the Chapter, the betting is a hundred to one that he would have replaced Fr. Lanctin, for he is a man who brings people together; while you and I, and others too are people *of a party*, having some for us and some against us. However, things went very well at the Chapter; it was incomparably better than that of 1900: no personal questions, no disputes, a complete harmony, a sustained interest given to all questions, and intense effort on the part of all ... Change of Assistants ... the good Fr. Piperon was really too old ... it would have been cruel to make him go to Rome ».

The Society was by then divided into five Provinces:
 The Province of the North, erected May 5th, 1894.
 The German Province, erected September 1st, 1897.
 The Italian Province, erected September 1st, 1900.
 The French Province, erected August 25th, 1905.
 The Australian Province, erected December 8th, 1905.

A further General Chapter, for the revision of the Constitutions was held in Rome, from September 5th to October 4th, 1907.

In 1906, the Daughters of Our Lady of the Sacred Heart moved their General House to Thuin in Belgium. They kept in constant touch with Fr. Chevalier by letter. Mother Marie Louise Hartzler was not to live very long after Fr. Chevalier. She died on February 22nd, 1908.

The following are the main statistics of both Congregations at the time of Fr. Chevalier's death.

At the end of 1907, the MSC Society, founded by Fr. Chevalier, numbered roughly 800 members:

4 bishops,
325 priests,
272 brothers,
201 students.

Facts and figures at December 8th, 1907 were:

Superior General: Fr. Eugene Meyer... Via di Porta Pinciana 32, ROME

Assistants: Fr. G. Genocchi

J. Field

J. Wemmers

E. Kuntz

PROVINCES:

1. *The Northern Province:*

Provincial: Fr. T. Okhuijzen

Houses: In Holland: Tilburg, Arnhem.

In Belgium: Borgerhout-Anvers, Héverlé.

Mission of the Province:

Prefecture Apostolic of Dutch New Guinea.

Prefect Apostolic (Fr. Neyens), 14 priests, 11 brothers.

2. *German Province:*

Provincial: Fr. H. Linckens

Houses: Hilstrup, Oeventrop, Salzburg.

Mission of the Province:

Vicariate Apostolic of New Pomerania.

Bishop Couppé, 27 priests, 41 brothers.

Vicariate Apostolic of Marshall Islands.

Ecclesiastical and Religious Superior: Fr. Erdland. 2 priests, 4 brothers.

3. *Italian Province:*

Provincial: Fr. N. Nicolò

Houses: Rome, Omegna, Florence.

4. *French Province:*

Provincial: Fr. P. Carrière

Houses: Issoudun: Basilica and Secretariate; Paris; Canet de Mar and Barcelona - in Spain; Fribourg (Switzerland); Thuin (Belgium); Québec, Beauport (Canada).

Missions of the Province:

Vicariate Apostolic of British New Guinea: Archbishop Navarre, Coadjutor Bishop de Boismenu: 26 priests, 23 brothers.

Vicariate Apostolic of Gilbert and Ellice Islands; Bishop Leray, 23 Priests, 14 brothers.

5. *Australian Province:*

Provincial: Fr. P. Tréand

Houses: Randwick, Kensington, Douglas Park, Fingal (Tas) - depending from Randwick, Port Darwin.

* * *

Houses directly under the Superior General

England: Glastonbury, St. Albans, Braintree.

U.S.A.: Watertown, Natick.

The Congregation of the Daughters of Our Lady of the Sacred Heart, founded twenty years later than the MSC, also had a slow beginning. However, by the year 1907, they had made steady progress and had made their mark as missionary sisters. The state of their Congregation was:

FRANCE

Issoudun - 4 sisters.

No expansion in France because of the persecutions.

BELGIUM

Thuin - Generalate and Novitiate.

22 sisters

6 novices and postulants.

Superior General: Mother M. Louise Hartzer

Assistants: Mother M. Valerie

Mother M. Stanislaus

Mother M. Eugenie

The 4th Assistant was Mother M. Gertrude, left at Issoudun to keep the Congregation in contact with Father Chevalier.

Tongre Notre Dame - 3 sisters

Dour - 5 sisters

Ham sur-Heure - 2 sisters

Couillet - 3 sisters

A total of 39 sisters, mostly engaged in caring for the sick.

AUSTRALIA.

Kensington - 15 sisters

10 novices and postulants

Botany Bay - 5 sisters

Bowral - 4 sisters

Bowraville - 5 sisters

Mathinna - 4 sisters

Campbelltown - 4 sisters

Gormanston - 3 sisters

Queenstown - 5 sisters

A total of 45 sisters, mostly engaged in teaching.

MISSIONS.

Thursday Island - 5 sisters

British New Guinea - 27 sisters distributed in 6 stations

New Pomerania - 13 sisters distributed in 3 stations

Gilbert Islands - 18 sisters distributed in 8 stations

A total of 63 sisters working in the missions.

Thus 32 houses with 151 sisters, 16 postulants and novices.

Notes Chapter 10

- ¹ Abbé J. Belleville, *Le T.R.P. Chevalier d'Issoudun*, Article in *L'Univers*, November 1907.
- ² Mgr. Duquesnay, *Annales Issoudun* 1879, pp. 257-258.
- ³ Pipéron, « *Le R.R.P. Jules Chevalier* », 1912, p. 137.
- ⁴ *Ib.*
- ⁵ Letter to Archbishop Boyer, January 20th, 1894.
- ⁶ Letter of Archbishop of Bourges to the Holy Father, July 27th, 1880.
- ⁷ Statement, November 5th, 1880.
- ⁸ Hériault, *Ms Vertus du R.P. Chevalier*, pp. 11-18.
- ⁹ Chevalier, *Ms Notes intimes*, pp. 63-64.
- ¹⁰ Letter to the Archbishop, May 13th, 1895.
- ¹¹ Chevalier, *Ms Notes intimes*, p. 72.
- ¹² Letter to Archbishop Boyer, August 21st, 1892.
- ¹³ Cf. v.g. Chevalier's Circular Letter on Observance of the Rule, September 28th, 1896.
- ¹⁴ Letter to the Holy Father, December 30th, 1896; signed by all MSC Superiors.
- ¹⁵ G. Devailly e.a., « *Le Diocèse de Bourges* », Paris, Letouzey et Ané, 1973, p. 208.
- ¹⁶ *Ib.* *Combism* is derived from the name of Emile Combes, a Freemason notorious for his hatred of the Church.
- ¹⁷ Chevalier, *Ms Notes intimes*, p. 75.
- ¹⁸ *Ib.*, p. 76.
- ¹⁹ Carrière in a letter to Meyer, October 24th, 1906.
- ²⁰ Genocchi in a letter to Meyer, August 5th, 1901.
- ²¹ After Fr. Chevalier's death, a diocesan priest was named to the parish of Issoudun, Fr. Augustin Gay. His successor was another diocesan priest, Fr. Armand Chevalier. In a book which he wrote: « *Issoudun, sa Paroisse à travers les âges* », Issoudun, Gaignault et Fils, 1934, he pays an eloquent tribute to Jules Chevalier's work for the parish church, with precise figures of the money he gave, collected and spent.
- ²² Letter to Chevalier, October 11th, 1899.
- ²³ Letter to Chevalier, July (figure illegible), 1900.
- ²⁴ Pipéron, « *Le T.R.P. Jules Chevalier* », p. 134.
- ²⁵ Letter to Archbishop Boyer, February 11th, 1896.

- ²⁶ Chevalier, *Ms Notes intimes*, p. 65.
- ²⁷ Letter to Archbishop Boyer, February 11th, 1896.
- ²⁸ *Ib.*
- ²⁹ *Mss of Chevalier's Conferences to the Chapter*, 1897.
- ³⁰ *Analecta Societatis Missionariorum Sacratissimi Cordis Jesu*, Issoudun, 1 (1898), p. 30.
- ³¹ Letter to Jouët, July 4th, 1899.
- ³² *Analecta Societatis* 3 (1900), p. 55.
- ³³ Cf. Letter Genocchi to Meyer, August 3rd, 1901.
- ³⁴ Letter to Chevalier, June 11th, 1901.
- ³⁵ Letter of Meyer to J. Vandel, August 12th, 1901.
- ³⁶ Letter of Genocchi to Meyer, August 5th, 1901.
- ³⁷ Notes to be taken to Rome by Fr. Meyer, Assistant and Secretary, from the General Council meeting of July 1901.
- ³⁸ « *Attentis peculiaribus conditionibus in quibus religiosae Galliarum congregationes nunc versantur...* », March 24th, 1903.
- ³⁹ Chevalier's request was granted, September 3rd, « *iuxta nuperriam formulam* ». The notification was given to the Society in *Analecta Societatis*, 4 (1901), pp. 21-22: « *quondam saecularizationem* ».
- ⁴⁰ Rescript of September 3rd, 1901.
- ⁴¹ *Analecta Societatis*, 5 (1902), p. 17. If they wished to leave the Society, then they must get a further dispensation, this time from their vows. In the letter referred to in note 42, Fr. Lanctin wrote: « Vous n'avez pas la remise pure et simple de vos vœux: la pièce qui vous a été transmise est uniquement celle de votre sécularisation... Devant Dieu, devant votre conscience, devant le for interne de l'Eglise, vous êtes religieux: vous gardez vos vœux qui vous lient envers Dieu, et ils restent intacts ».
- ⁴² Letter Lanctin to Teste, without date, 1901 or 1902.
- ⁴³ *Compte rendu* of this Council Meeting, February, 1902.
- ⁴⁴ *Compte rendu* in Lanctin's handwriting.
- ⁴⁵ Letter to Cardinal Protector, June 21st, 1905.
- ⁴⁶ Letter Chevalier to Carrière, April 23rd, 1906.
- ⁴⁷ Unsigned testimony of MSC Brother (= Brother J. van Heugten), Archives MSC, Paris.
- ⁴⁸ *Bulletin Paroissial d'Issoudun*, May, 1907.
- ⁴⁹ Letter of Piperon to Meyer, October 23rd, 1907.
- ⁵⁰ From « *Le Reveil de l'Indre* », Chateauroux, Sunday October 27th, 1907.
- ⁵¹ Quoted in *Annales Issoudun*, 1907, p. 441, from *l'Univers*, November 2nd, 1907.

Jules Chevalier personality and profile

« Our young people do not know you, Father, and it is regrettable » wrote Fr. Vaudon to Chevalier in 1892. These young people gathered their impressions of their Founder second-hand, and « when others speak in your name, it is always with exaggerated severity »¹. The young men went off to other countries; often their second-hand impressions were passed on. In this final chapter, we shall let the men who *did* know Fr. Chevalier give their testimony for all to hear, testimonies from their first-hand knowledge of the man.

These testimonies will be almost exclusively from men who lived very close to him for a long time. Given the peculiar circumstances of the French persecutions of religious congregations, there were not many of his confreres who stayed with Fr. Chevalier after 1880. Those who live very close to another man get to know all his human limitations and weaknesses. It is therefore said that no man is a hero to his valet. The man who is an exception to this rule is an exceptional man indeed and Chevalier was a notable exception. I do not mean here to build a case on the testimony of the one man who was his valet in a stricter sense - although this has its own eloquent quality. The Dutch brother, Bro. van Heughen, who cared for Fr. Chevalier in his declining years, was naturally asked for his appreciation of the Founder. Oral tradition has it that his reply was always « C'était un géant »,

which could be freely translated to read: he was a big man in every way. Clearly one looks for fuller comment than this and the men who will make that comment in this chapter are those who were closely associated with Fr. Chevalier as curates or secretary. We shall let their testimonies speak, with as little comment as possible.

However, before listening to MSC voices who might possibly be suspected of prejudice, it is interesting and gratifying to note that the most complete and most eloquent testimony comes from one who was not an MSC at all. The Abbé J. Belleville, a priest of the diocese of Bourges, wrote the following appreciation:

« Oblivion covers the memory of most men, as grass covers their graves. But there are some who, when they die, take their place in history and who can say with the poet: *Non omnis moriar*. Fr. Chevalier is one of these. His name remains attached to a work and to a living posterity in the midst of which he will live on, as the patriarchs in the multitude of their descendants, and the founders of orders in their religious families.

« Yet, if we look at him in his early years, he was an ordinary person with little promise of a bright future. His first teachers doubted about him and it was not without hesitation that he was admitted to Orders. This was a point of resemblance with the Curé of Ars which perhaps does him honour... However, he made his way. He created a religious order; he built monuments; he even wrote books which, while they are not masterpieces, have a certain style and authority.

« But a man's chief worth is that of a spirit put in the service of an idea. It seems that Fr. Chevalier entered life with an idea to which he dedicated himself without reserve and without wavering. It is a mystical idea — devotion to the Sacred Heart and a practical conception — the foundation of a Society of missionaries of the Sacred Heart. His whole life is summed up in this. He is the man of an idea and a work. Having taken his place so to speak, in the Heart of Christ, he will never leave it, come what may. Time and

again, for one reason or another, they can close his chapel or his basilica, and he never gives up hope of coming back.

« He does not like noise; violence is not his affair; but he does not renounce his rights; he goes calmly to his goal, and nothing can turn him aside; he is sweetly stubborn.

« He has at his service a further strength: calm and unruffled self-possession. We have seen him prey to all sorts of difficulties, exposed to contradictions - and he never lost his peace of soul. During those unforgettable feast-days when he drew about him numerous bishops, so many priests and immense crowds of the faithful, far from being agitated, he appeared to be there as the 'prime immovable mover'. Giving himself completely to the person talking to him, he seemed to have nothing else on his mind except the subject of the conversation. A man of easy access, he was kind to all. His whole person breathed simplicity; but it was the simplicity of the dove which, according to the Gospel, was allied to the prudence of the serpent.

« Yet he was the man who was to move so many men and so many things. Hardly was he on his own ground when he made his influence felt. He found a word, a title which he gave to the Blessed Virgin; he makes it echo through the christian world which is thus awoken. Our Lady of the Sacred Heart is invoked across the world and Issoudun becomes a famous pilgrimage. A basilica is built which doubtless only needs the patina of time for its modern gothic to gain the approval even of the most demanding art critics. And soon it will be the town of Issoudun itself which will be entrusted to his care Father Chevalier will be, from now on, parish priest of Issoudun and superior of his missionaries.

« This is his great work, his great claim to glory in the eyes of men and, without doubt, in the judgment of God. He showed he was able to move men as well as stones, to raise up the spiritual building of a religious order as well as the walls of a basilica. His disciples came from everywhere, from near and far, from country presbyteries and from seminaries,

from the temples of the world and of religion, which sent him their strays. Like God himself, he took them all: *et infirma ... et ignobilia ... et contemptibilia*; he assembled, he arranged, he vivified all these elements, and he used them for the conquest of the world. In a little while you will find them again, in Europe, America, Oceania...

« No one will think that such a work can be done without difficulties or contradictions; trials are naturally inevitable and supernaturally necessary. Fr. Chevalier met with them along his way. He was neither surprised nor discouraged by them. He did not even lose that serenity of soul or face which singled him out.

His congregation had grown quickly, by the entry of elements perhaps too heterogeneous to be fused into unity. From this fact resulted differences of viewpoint, of aspirations and of tendencies which were bound to manifest themselves sooner or later. Not all were as attached to Issoudun as Fr. Chevalier was. For him it was the cradle of his children and he dreamed of uniting them often around this blessed hearth.

The persecution would solve this question by chasing all from the paternal house, condemning them to exile. He remained alone in this land of France who, for us catholics, either devours or rejects her children. Superior General for life of this religious order, he had to renounce his title and his charge, and conceal the last bond which still attached him to his religious family. A little later he was thrown out of his house, and he was carried sick, impassive as a roman senator on his wheel-chair; this old man of eighty years was thrown into the street.

He had grown with his work in prosperity; in adversity he managed to bring it to perfection. With a simplicity which never changed he wore his catholic reputation which was a kind of halo for him. Rome appreciated him, Popes respected him. His relations with the six archbishops under whose reign he lived and worked were not all equally friendly. But he was

always more than correct and he always combined an attitude of absolute deference with a feel for his own rights and the interests of his community.

We do not intend, nor are we able, to write here a life of Rev. Fr. Chevalier. It belongs to his spiritual sons to carry out this duty; they will not fail to do so. But since we can not bury his great memory as solemnly as the town of Issoudun buried his mortal remains, we render him at least this modest homage. And we confidently propose his wonderful priestly life for the imitation of all his brothers in the priesthood »².

The picture is nicely balanced and finely drawn. It is the portrait of a man who is strong and serene, easy of access and kind to all and all these things because, having taken his place in the Heart of Christ, he would never leave it, come what may. The words of Belleville coincide with those of Fr. Piperon who knew Fr. Chevalier longer than anyone else. Although we have seen them once, it is worth recalling them here:

« Still today, after fifty years, we find him kind, compassionate, amiable towards all those who come to him. He has become all things to all men to gain them all to Jesus-Christ. This is the great secret which draws so many souls to him from all countries... »³.

Charity expressed through kindness was characteristic of his whole life. It was so characteristic that people took it for granted. It is remarkable how often, just in passing, it was said of him that he was « amiable as always », that he « had all the time in the world » for anyone who approached him. Another thing that was taken for granted and casually mentioned as well known was his « ineffable smile »: « he smiled with that beautiful smile which lit up his whole face »⁴. These remarks occur in recounting factual happenings; their authors are not out to give a character portrayal. For this reason they are all the more valid. It says much of the person indeed, when the things which come most naturally to mind about him are his « wonderful smile », his attentiveness to

people, and his amiability which one knows will be always there. Here, too, was one reason why he had the gift of leadership:

« He had what was needed to command men and lead them; he knew how to sway them by giving himself to them; he endeared them to him by the charm of his person and the enticement of his words. And all this was that he might give them to God, for his was the soul of an apostle ».

Yet the seeming simplicity of his courteous charity was the result of constant ascetical effort, thought out and applied in every detail. It was asceticism with a mystical inspiration for it grew from the conviction that *he* personally, *and others* were « wooed by the love of the Heart of Christ, folded in his tenderness, with his favours lavished upon us »⁶. The mystic inspiration and the ascetical demands come out in his Meditation on fraternal charity⁷.

Mystical in inspiration, his ideas about the practice of charity were down to earth:

« If you do not try to give others pleasure, if you believe yourself better than they, if you despise them because they do not share your opinions, if you speak with superiority or disdain, then you have not charity. If you wound them in discussion by your lack of manners or kindness, posing as a superior person who claims to know everything and whose judgements are unchangeable, you prove that charity is not in you If anyone asks a service of you, do not refuse, if something does not please him, make sure that you do not speak about it in his presence, and if he does not agree with you on some things do not disagree with him harshly. Avoid disputes, murmuring, mockery and sarcasm - and also reprimands unless it is your job to make them »⁸.

He practiced what he preached. For example, he had written: « If something nice happens to your neighbour, rejoice with him as if it had happened to you: congratulate him from your heart. If, on the other hand, he has trials, pity him as if you were suffering in his place and make every effort to show him your sympathy »⁹.

In the testimony of nuns who knew him, we see one example of how well he could put this advice into practice:

« The Rev. Fr. Chevalier, Founder of the Daughters of Our Lady of the Sacred Heart, was keenly interested in them on all occasions. He often came to see them and gave them conferences, especially on feasts of the Blessed Virgin He was present at all the important events of the community: ceremonies of reception of the habit, Profession, departure of the mission sisters, or others. The day of his own feast he came to receive the good wishes of the sisters who gave him their congratulations. He used to reply very much to the point and used the flowers of his bouquet to spell out the spiritual symbolism of each one.

Two principal traits of his character remained engraved on the memory: his great *kindness towards all* and his tenacious *manliness* ...

When the postulants arrived at the community, Mother M. Hartzer used to send them to see the Father Founder. This good Father received them with unequalled kindness and was delighted to see the little flock increase.

On the other hand it was a real heart-break for him when he saw the big community leave Issoudun to seek refuge in Belgium, when it was uncertain how long they could stay safely in France. Then, if it were possible, he redoubled his paternal tenderness for the few who remained at the *Place du Sacré Coeur*.

When there was a departure for the Missions, he would come to see those who stayed behind and consoled them in their moment of sadness. He used to promise that some day he would go with them to New Guinea. This was all that was needed to dry their tears »¹⁰.

Because he understood the practice of charity so well, Fr. Chevalier knew that it had to be a human virtue, and that it gained considerably if it were spiced with *humour*.

« The many things that he had to do, and the care he brought to these tasks did not prevent him from taking his recreations with the community; he was always there. When he was still at the Sacred Heart, from time to time, especially in winter, he liked to play a game of draughts with a confrere, preferably with one of the brothers. Sometimes he would amuse himself by some clever little bits of cheating. The good brother always finished by discovering this; then his vehement recriminations amused us a lot - and Fr. Chevalier more.

« Serious and reserved as he was in general, not taking too much time with his visitors in his office, at recreation he was always gay and talkative. His great pleasure was to joke with his confreres and to tease them gently, especially those who lent themselves to his shrewd attacks and his flashes of wit; with him recreations were always truly amusing and relaxing.

« He had a great facility for rhyme and he used this gift more than once to lampoon one or other confrere. His verses were always full of humour his allusions sly, and at times points were scored. But this was always done so nicely and with so much warmth and good humour that nobody could be hurt by it; often those who were the targets of the songs applauded more loudly than the rest. In this way he put everyone at ease and without losing anything of his authority or his prestige he put himself on the same level as the least important of us. Even though he had supreme authority in the Society, he never took advantage of it; he was never anything but the '*primus inter pares*'. Thus his company was so pleasant; this was one of the beautiful sides of his character »¹¹.

Fr. Heriault, who gives us this glimpse into community life at Issoudun was for very many years Fr. Chevalier's companion and assistant in the parish. He also informs us that Fr. Chevalier did not limit his jokes to members of his own community. He recalls the following incident, after Fr. Che-

valier had won, in a raffle, a set of trick glasses, with a liqueur solidly sealed into the glass.

« On new Year's Eve, according to their custom, the Daughters of St. Vincent de Paul came to wish a happy New Year to their pastor and father. After the usual good wishes, Fr. Chevalier said to the Sisters: 'Look, I've received an excellent liqueur'. Since it is New Year, we shall drink together to your good health'. The good sisters were aghast at the offer. 'But Father', said Mother Gaillard, 'you have never made such an offer before. And you know well that our holy rules forbid us to accept anything, especially liquor'. Fr. Chevalier insisted, Mother Gaillard kept on protesting. Finally Fr. Chevalier went to his cabinet and took the tray with the glasses filled with liqueur. He himself took a glass. 'Come on Sisters, let's all have a glass; it's very mild, and won't do you any harm'. 'But, Reverend Father', said Mother Gaillard, 'I can't understand why you are so insistent'. But Sister Thérèse, a Norman (a real apostle in the parish, who died regretted by all), broke in and said to the Superior: 'Mother, since Fr. Chevalier asks us to take a glass, why refuse? It will not do us any harm; and also we have to obey him'. So then the Superior and all the sisters took a glass and set about tasting the liqueur. They made unheard of efforts to drink the liquid. 'Well, Reverend Mother Gaillard', said Fr. Chevalier, 'what do you think of my liqueur'. 'Strange', she said, 'I can't taste it at all. It is quite insipid'. 'And what about you, Sister Thérèse, how do you find it?' 'Oh, Father', she said, 'I can't swallow a thing; nothing comes out of the glass'. The knowing ones had put their fingers into the glass and tumbled to the trick. Then there were great bursts of laughter ... Next day the Brothers of the Christian Schools, and the singers of St. Cyr, also had their little glasses, without being able to taste the liqueur. Fr. Chevalier loved little tricks like this, which are still remembered »¹².

Charity and Apostolic Work

Charity dominated his life. But for him charity meant far more than being nice to people. It was the charity of Christ

which drove him to work untiringly for the spread of the Kingdom. Fr. Maillard who knew him well and as his secretary had an exact idea of how much Fr. Chevalier did, wrote of « the almost incredible amount of work which he did during his life ». In greater detail, he says:

« Founder and Superior General for forty-seven years of a Congregation which developed considerably in its later years; parish priest for forty-five years of a parish of twelve thousand souls, a parish not easy to run: with a voluminous correspondence, he still found a way of writing several books which must have demanded a lot of study and research He was thus at times quoted as a model of activity and an indefatigable worker.

« (For example) during the period 1872 to 1880, when he was named curate of Issoudun until the expulsions, his rule was the following:

He used to sleep then at the Community of the Sacred Heart: from 5.00 a.m. he was at meditation with his confreres: at 6.00 he went to his confessional in the Basilica: at 6.30 he celebrated Mass at the altar of Our Lady of the Sacred Heart, then, after his thanksgiving, he was again at the service of his penitents This ministry over, he had breakfast while going through his mail. He passed the rest of the morning in his office writing letters and receiving any of his confreres who wished to see him At 11.00 he went to the parish church to teach catechism to the children until noon. He dined at the presbytery and passed the rest of the afternoon there at the disposition of his parishioners. If he had no visitors he went to visit the sick of the parish.

« At 6.00 p.m. he went back to the Basilica for the exercises of the community and stayed there for the night. (It was only after the expulsions of 1880 that he had to live full-time in the presbytery, since the Government allowed only two priests to stay at the Basilica to take care of the property. But the change of residence made no change in his habits and his schedule; he was as assiduous at the exercises of the little community of the presbytery as he had been in the large community of the Sacred Heart).

« His functions of parish priest and Superior General of the Congregation brought him a crowd of visitors; he received them always with perfect politeness, giving them the time to explain everything at leisure, then at the end of the interview, he graciously showed them to the door, and then returned to the task that had been interrupted as if he had not been disturbed at all. One could say that he was, to use an expression that he himself adopted, like 'an ox at the plough', tracing a furrow with a calm energy and an invincible constancy without letting himself be stopped by the unevenness of the ground or by any difficulty »¹³.

Previous chapters have given ample evidence of the apostolic dedication of Fr. Chevalier's life. There is no need to delay on it further. However, we should perhaps note that, in his work, he was concerned with the poor in a particular way. He gave to them generously, knowing that, at times, he was being deceived by their hard-luck stories. He used to say, however, that he would rather give to undeserving cases than refuse to give when the need was genuine.

« He never failed to wonder at or give profuse thanks for divine providence which, in proportion to the needs of his Congregation, sent him not only his daily bread but at times considerable gifts. On the other hand, he poured out generously among the poor, part of the offerings which he received. 'When I speak of *the poor*' said his former bursar and secretary, 'I do not mean only the needy people in his parish or elsewhere; he was always full of compassion towards those and his alms were abundant. I speak also of the works of education and the apostolate (outside our own society), to which he gave with generous heart and hand. When, after 1880, the French Government had suppressed the financial grants which until then it had been making to the major seminaries, Fr. Chevalier organized a collection among the clergy of the diocese of Bourges, on whom he had a great influence. He put his own name at the head of the list for quite a large sum and his example was so well followed that the money collected in this way, and assured for the following years, was greater than the amount suppressed by

the Government. It was this fine gesture of charity and zeal for supporting priestly vocations which won for Fr. Chevalier and his works the good graces of Archbishop Marchal of Bourges who, until then, had been rather cold and reserved towards the Congregation'...

« The work of the Good Press also profited considerably from his generosity; the good newspapers such as *l'Univers*, *la Croix*, *le Peuple Français*, etc. more than once asked his help, which they received according to the measure of his means »¹⁴.

There was an obvious breadth to his works of charity, and to his vision. He saw the value of the mass media. And his interest in his own Congregation did not detract from a wider interest in anything which was for the good of the Church. Just as his mind and heart were open to all, his house was too, for *hospitality* is one of the expressions of charity:

« He exercised a generous hospitality, especially towards the clergy, regular or secular. His house was always open to his confreres in the priesthood and if his table was simple and frugal, his welcome was always very cordial. This fact contributed a lot towards gaining him the sympathy of the clergy of the diocese of Bourges.

« The ecclesiastical conferences of the region of Isoundun, composed of twelve parishes, were held regularly six times a year at Fr. Chevalier's place. According to the diocesan statutes, each priest of the conference should pay fifteen francs a year to cover the cost of reunions. Fr. Chevalier never asked the members of the conference for this money and if by chance some of them gave it to him, he accepted it for his works and thanked them effusively as if they had been his benefactors.

« Priests often came to the community of the Sacred Heart either on pilgrimage or to do a few days' retreat. He would never permit us to ask anything at all for their stay. If, as frequently happened, some of them left an offering to

recompense the community, Fr. Chevalier wanted us to show them a lively gratitude »¹⁵.

From these last two quotations it is clear that Fr. Chevalier was a *grateful man* 'never ceasing to wonder at or give profuse thanks for Divine Providence', thanking people warmly for what others would consider their due. A truly grateful man is a *humble* man in the positive Scriptural meaning of humility: the man whose weakness does not trouble him, but gives him reason to rejoice in wonder when the power of God comes to his aid¹⁶. It is the attitude of soul which can sing a *Magnificat* before the wonderful works of God, and which can be overwhelmed by human kindness.

Since this was so, he was honestly and utterly convinced that whatever he had been able to achieve was God's work. And therefore he simply did not like other people paying *him* compliments for what he had done. Others appreciated his qualities:

« You are venerated by your sons, Reverend Father... Everyone agrees: Providence has given you many qualities, the qualities of which Founders are made »¹⁷.

In Fr. Chevalier's mind, however, there were still strong memories of powerlessness in his poverty. Firstly, he never forgot how he was unable to enter the seminary until providential aid arrived. Secondly, the fulfilment of his dream to found the MSC was made possible through similar help. Thirdly, he knew that it was God's grace that had helped him master his own character, so that he might live the kindness of Christ¹⁸. Convinced of the *given-ness* of all things, he lived the logical consequences of this conviction. While he would willingly join in any hymn of gratitude to God and the Sacred Heart, he was uneasy if anyone complimented him.

« If the praise was public, he could not hide his dissatisfaction. This could be read on his unhappy face and often, at the end of the reunion, he complained strongly. He had

invited a talented religious of great zeal to preach a novena or solemn triduum. This man had pleased him because his preaching was simple and solid. But on the last day the preacher thought it fitting to pay him a compliment which, incidentally was very well put, complimenting him on the fine works which had resulted from his zeal. It was at the time that they were expanding. Fr. Chevalier was not at all pleased. Hardly had we left the church when he said to me: 'The man lost his head! He will never preach in our chapel again. Really one should not profane the sacred word.' He kept his word. However, we must admit that as years went by he became more considerate in his judgements, although he was always opposed to human praise »¹⁹.

He was utterly honest in his humility. He could therefore state quite simply his belief in his own failings. A good example of this is found in his Spiritual Testament. There we see two aspects of his humility: a humble self-depreciation, and a genuine gratitude towards his confreres:

« I avow, humbly, that I was not equal to the mission confided to me. The abuse of grace and my many sins, often paralysed the action of Divine Providence. Without doubt I have scandalized others and given bad example. I sincerely ask pardon for this and I beg my confreres again that they too will pardon me and ask God to show me mercy and to admit me to heaven one day despite my unworthiness.

« I thank them sincerely for the affection which they have always shown me, for their valued cooperation, for their deep attachment to the Society and for their unfailing devotion both to me and to our works. This is a great consolation which I shall take with me to the grave ».

It was evident to all that — apart from acknowledging his faults and asking pardon for them — Fr. Chevalier felt that neither he nor others should waste their time paying attention to himself. He set scant store by his personal appearance - even after one of the parishioners left a comb and boot-polish outside his confessional (an incident which he

related with great amusement)²⁰. On great occasions he was to be seen mingling with visiting dignitaries, himself with a biretta over one ear and dressed like the country parish priest which he insisted he was²¹. He wrote his « Notes Intimes »; but in reading them one has the definite impression that they were written out of a sense of duty rather than from any great interest in writing about himself. At his Requiem Mass there was no funeral oration, for he had asked that « they should not cover either his memory or his coffin with flowers »²².

The truth of course was that he was so caught up in his mission for Christ and for others that he had no patience with anything which diverted attention to himself. For he was an extraordinarily *singleminded* man; he was 'a man of a work and an idea'. May the Sacred Heart of Jesus be everywhere loved. This is what he lived for; this he worked for. His vision of life and his daily attitudes were marked by that strong simplicity about which Belleville wrote. And therefore people remarked his 'calm and imperturbable self-possession'. This was the result of virtue, the fruit of long and determined effort to acquire self-mastery. Simplicity had come into his life because convinced that charity « was the virtue proper to the Sacred Heart »²³ he had made it a complete life-style. He had achieved in his life a unification in simplicity which results from charity strongly lived. This is not easy; it demands that one accept the detailed daily demands of charity. In a life filled with personal contacts this requires a constant and total asceticism. The first demand of charity he saw as an untiring effort to work for the spread of the Gospel. The second was that one's whole personality and way of acting towards others should be filled with a kindness and courtesy which would radiate the kindness of Christ. For him this was not easy, for he had an eager and impatient temperament which he had to work hard to master. How well he succeeded, with the grace of God, is amply evidenced by the various people whose words we have recorded here.

And there is even more.

After his death, some of his close friends wrote of his « *love for his enemies* ». This way of speaking has a good Gospel precedent. However, it is unlikely that Fr. Chevalier would have classified those who opposed him as enemies.

As l'Abbé Belleville remarks:

« Trials are naturally inevitable and supernaturally necessary. Fr. Chevalier met them on his way; he was neither surprised nor discouraged by them ».

« That is just human nature », he said once, when he was informed by the Archbishop of Bourges that a certain priest had been very critical of him, saying that he was not running the parish properly. He went on immediately to recommend strongly that this man be given ecclesiastical honours in the diocese²⁴. In fact those who knew him used to say that the surest way to receive a favour from him was to be offensive to him first. He was kindness itself if ever any of the free-masons who had worked against the church in general and his undertakings in particular came to him for help. In these matters he simply put into practice what he had written:

« If sometimes others make you suffer, bear with them in punishment for your sins, seeing the hand of God in those who afflict you, for they are only instruments of his justice »²⁵.

During the time of the crisis in his own MSC society, this extraordinary charity comes out most clearly. Fr. Klotz was the chief cause of all his woes and Fr. Lanctin was among those who opposed him. Yet, in the midst of the whole « battle », in 1891, Fr. Chevalier proposed and got the General Council to approve a grant of 1200 francs to the Lanctin family because they were in financial difficulties. On March 4th of the same year, he got the Council to increase the financial aid they were giving to the family of Fr. Klotz.

Actions like this draw forth the judgement: he was indeed a big man in every way.

Before leaving this point, there is one further testimony we should consider:

« He had, alas, enemies in his own congregation among his children. Many of these subjects, either through jealousy or ambition, dared to denounce him infamously either to the Archbishop or even to Rome.

« At the ceremony of confirmation in 1895 Cardinal Boyer called me to his room and for a good hour questioned me about Fr. Chevalier and asked if I knew him intimately. 'Your Eminence', I said, 'for twenty years I've been his curate and I know him better than anyone'. 'Well, what do you think of him?' 'I think', I replied, 'that he's a holy man, humble, modest, regular in all things, charitable and with a great dedication for the good of all'. 'What do you think of his morals?' 'Why do you ask a question like that, Your Eminence?' 'I ask it. Answer it well.' 'Your Eminence, you ought to hope that all the priests of your diocese were of equal integrity to Fr. Chevalier!' 'Then you have nothing with which to reproach your Superior!' 'One thing only, Your Eminence, that he is too kind'.

« Thereupon his Eminence embraced me and said: 'Dear Father you are the only one who has spoken to me in this way. A great number have denounced him to me: some have even soiled (sic!) his grey hairs. It is infamous. I believe you, father; and I shall see that justice is done'. In fact, after the death of Cardinal Boyer, which took place the following year, Mgr. Bardel, Auxiliary of Bourges and today Bishop of Sées came to see Fr. Chevalier and said to him: 'Father, all your priests are not your friends. Before leaving Bourges, I bring you all the letters which were written to Mgr. Boyer against you. I did not want this dossier to remain in the files of the Archbishop's House. I bring it to you. You can read it and see what they reproach you with'. Fr. Chevalier thus knew all his enemies, even those who had been guilty of the indignity of calumniating his morals. (Both of them are dead - a priest and a brother). The good God has judged them. Fr. Chevalier kept this dossier until he died...

« He revenged himself on his enemies by receiving them with kindness and charity. He invited them to his table and treated them better than his friends. I have seen several sitting at table with him who did not even suspect that he had in his possession their letters denouncing him to Cardinal Boyer. Reading this famous dossier, he kept repeating: 'May the good God forgive them' »²⁶.

A strong man's meekness.

Jules Chevalier was a strong man - strong with that extraordinary strength which, based on confidence in God, can go ahead in the face of seemingly insurmountable difficulties. In this we see that he was more than a man of action. A man of merely natural action can not wait in hope and patience over the long empty years as he could. « In all these circumstances, he leant much more on his confidence in God than on his own resources »²⁷. In spite of the political persecutions, because of his drive and determination, his congregation grew and flourished while others fared badly. Some smaller ones disappeared altogether. Others, larger and more widespread, lost all their French Provinces. He could persevere, disappointed but not discouraged, when new Archbishops of Bourges, unfavourably influenced by reports about him, were openly hostile to him. Usually, as they came to know his true worth, these prelates were converted into admirers, as were Archbishops Marchal and Boyer.

« It was the same during the difficult and even dangerous phases through which the Congregation had to pass... (notably in the most terrible of all: the one provoked by the events which occurred from 1891 to 1894) ...At this sad time, the majority thought that the Society was definitely going to founder. Fr. Chevalier, I believe, never shared these sentiments; he seemed to me to have a complete and absolute confidence in a happy outcome of these events. History has proved him right »²⁸.

Fr. Chevalier was a strong man and in his own personal

life this strength was brought to bear on acquiring the virtue of meekness. How remarkably he succeeded is proved by everything that has been said about him, and especially by the incidents recorded in the last few pages. But let us remember that it was a strong man's meekness — as meekness is a strong man's virtue; for it is strength directed and controlled. Christ did not cease to be meek when he drove the money-changers from the temple — for his Father's glory. He did not fail in meekness when he branded the Pharisees as whited sepulchres and sons of Satan.

Chevalier had a fighter's temperament. From his seminary days he had refused to fight to defend himself or his good name. He had controlled and directed his energy to fight against the difficulties confronting his congregation. Even calumniated, he would not fight to defend himself. But in the critical years of the Congregation there was a lot more at stake than his personal reputation. For instance. Fr. Jouët was, in the words of Pipéron, 'the victim of crying injustice'. Pipéron would deplore the injustice; Chevalier set out to fight against it. Guyot and Delaporte were two men who, in public debate and in private letters to the Founder, attacked Jouët. Because of their age and reputation, they could have more influence than others in seeing that injustice prevailed. In replies to their letters, Fr. Chevalier not only defends his friend and confrere; he sets forth in strong language the reasons why they are not entitled to throw stones at Jouët.

Pipéron also saw in some of the young men 'schoolboy rancour, lack of obedience and charity'. For a Society whose very survival depended on 'obedience in charity', Chevalier saw some of these men as attacking the very existence of his congregation, which he believed to be God's work and for God's glory. He could not sit back smiling to let them destroy it. Fr. Klotz, in his own words, had declared himself armed from head to foot, ready to rush into battle. This he did in numerous ways, exhorting to disobedience, sowing discord among the students. And when he shattered his lance on Chevalier's shield and got slapped about the ears

for his pains, there were cries that Chevalier hit too hard. Reading some of his letters, out of their time and out of the context, some people have felt that they indicate that Chevalier was hard. This is to forget some of the Gospel; it is to fail to see that any such letters were written only to defend people against crying injustice, or to defend the Society itself. These things do not take away anything from Chevalier's charism of kindness. They illustrate that his was a strong man's meekness; meek, kind, considerate through most things in life, but strong against rancour and injustice. Chevalier, wrote Belleville, was the man of an idea and a work. The work we have seen. The idea « is a *mystic idea* ... Having taken his place so to speak, in the Heart of Christ, he will never leave it, come what may »²⁹.

In these words l'Abbé Belleville rather beatifully describes what he considers the mystic quality of Fr. Chevalier's spirituality. Of course, if you identify « mysticism » with the passing of long hours in contemplative prayer, you will find it impossible to apply the term to Fr. Chevalier's life. His writings, even his *Notes Intimes*, are certainly not the writings of a mystic. And Fr. Piperon, by nature a more 'contemplative soul' than Chevalier, thought that there was not enough prayer in his life to fit Piperon's picture of the perfect Founder³⁰. Fr. Guyot expressed the same opinion - although Fr. Chevalier's reply suggests that more of his night-hours were passed in prayer than others ever knew³¹.

However, the term mystical is often enough used to indicate the conscious living of the spiritual life as God's gift experienced, rather than as our own effort at asceticism or the practice of virtue. A certain mystic quality was present in Fr. Chevalier's living of charity. After he passed through the stage of obvious ascetical effort, there was the rather remarkable transformation when he seemed to live the mystery of Christ-living-in-him and acting and loving through him. Conscious as he was of Christ before his eyes in his meditation, and Christ in his heart in his prayer and exercise

of charity, he seemed to live a conscious union with Christ « in his hands » - Christ working with him in his apostolic efforts. He was as conscious of the presence and action of Christ in his activity as he was in his prayer. And he would write in his Rules:

« The missionaries will have a tender devotion to the adorable Heart of Jesus; they will not forget that it is the source of all graces, a hearth of light and of love, an abyss of mercy; they will have recourse to it often in their trials, their temptations, their tedium, their difficulties »³².

Furthermore, he would find Christ in the people for whom he worked, seeing them always as « the souls who were so dear to Christ »³³. He had, in a sense, a mystique of mission, conscious of sharing in the mission of Christ, High-Priest and Apostle, conscious of the love of God given to every man whom he met. This did not mean that he thought one could find God in others and not make efforts to meet him regularly in prayer, and especially in the eucharist. In his own busy life, his assiduous practice of the religious exercises of his religious community is stressed by those who knew him. We have seen Fr. Maillard's testimony. Fr. Hériault gives his own account:

« His regularity:

« During the thirty years that I had the honour of being his curate and of living with him, he always gave the example of the greatest regularity. Apart from rare exceptions, he was always the first at morning prayer at 5.00. If one of his religious was missing from prayers, he would take hold of the cord of the internal bell, and I assure you that he woke up the man who had not heard the alarm. If someone missed out on meditation, at breakfast at a propitious moment, he would say: 'Well, dear Father, you must have been very tired, since we did not see you at prayers this morning', or 'you were out on a sick-call last night - which would have made you miss prayers this morning?'. In this way, he gave a little lesson to his religious, without appearing to touch on it. In spite of his

many calls, he was always very regular at the particular examination of conscience. He was regular too for the time of Mass. He could not understand how anyone could make the faithful wait. On the vigil of feasts or the mornings of the great solemnities when he was kept in his confessional by penitents who forced him to delay Mass a little, he could hardly bear it. And so he used to counsel the faithful not to wait to the last minute for confession so as not to hold up the priest who was to celebrate the Mass.

« *His piety:*

Unlike certain saints, Fr. Chevalier did not have what I would call a demonstrative piety. His piety consisted above all in one's duty accomplished. In spite of his many duties, he neglected none of his spiritual exercises... He said Mass very well with much devotion. In his last illness, he said it right up to the last...

« After Mass he went to his confessional and stayed there for a long time. Punctually he made his visit to the Blessed Sacrament every evening. He recited his breviary piously. To say Matins and Lauds he went to the confessional, every evening from 5.30 until 7.00. Many a soul in difficulties, or tormented by remorse profited by his assiduousness in the confessional to unburden themselves to him.

He went to confession regularly once a week unless his confessor was away or unavailable... He had an altogether special devotion to the Sacred Heart. Daily he recited an act of Reparation to the Sacred Heart as well as the Litany of the Sacred Heart. Many times a day he recited the Memorare to Our Lady of the Sacred Heart. He never went to bed without having said his rosary. He often made the Novena to Our Lady of the Sacred Heart... It was in his little instructions on the Sacred Heart or on Our Lady that his solid piety was noted and in his talks in the confessional, according to the accounts of many of his penitents »³⁴.

Conclusion

We could write more; we could repeat things already written in other chapters. But all this would hardly improve the portrait. Perhaps our last testimony can best be that of Fr. Maillard, given in the difficult times of 1891, and given as a solemn testimony to the Sacred Congregation of Bishops and Regulars:

« I can affirm that during the eighteen years that I have had the good fortune to belong to our society, I have been forced to admire the zeal and the devotedness of our venerated Fr. General and Founder; but my admiration has increased to become veneration in the last five years, because in that time, seeing it at closer quarters and studying it every day, I have been able to appreciate better the life of abnegation and perpetual sacrifice of our venerated Superior General »³⁵.

Fr. Chevalier died on October 21st, 1907.

His death was « gentle calm and serene »³⁶. Strength and serenity had marked his life: he was strong and serene in death.

« His death was very moving and very beautiful. At the bedside of the dying, ordinarily one feels an immense pity for so much suffering and so much weakness, and one needs to care for them as for little children. Fr. Chevalier, on the contrary, seemed to die in the full strength of his faith and his will; there was no feebleness, but a serenity and a calm which inspired respect and did good to the soul »³⁷.

Notes Chapter 11

¹ Letter Vaudon to Chevalier, August 26th, 1892.

² Belleville in *L'Univers*, November 1907.

³ Piperon, Ms « Le T.R.P. Jules Chevalier », p. 36, quoted by Vermin, pp. 74-75. Cf. Ch. V.

⁴ Bertin MSC, Memoire, November 16th, 1907.

⁵ L. Jourdain in *Annales Issoudun*, 1907, p. 443.

⁶ Chevalier, « *Ecole du Sacré-Coeur* », p. 246.

⁷ *Ib.*, p. 245.

⁸ *Ib.*

⁹ *Ib.*

¹⁰ Memoire Sister M. Gertrude, F.N.D.S.C.

¹¹ Fr. Hériault, Memoire.

¹² *Ib.*

¹³ Fr. X. Maillard, Memoire, written in 1923.

¹⁴ *Ib.*

¹⁵ *Ib.*

¹⁶ Cf. 2 Cor. 12, 10.

¹⁷ Letter Guyot to Chevalier, January 24th, 1891.

¹⁸ In writing his *Notes Intimes* and *Annales de la Petite Société*, he recalls all these things.

¹⁹ Piperon, Ms *Le T.R.P. Jules Chevalier*, p. 85, quoted by Vermin, p. 212.

²⁰ Hériault, Memoire.

²¹ *Ib.*

²² « *Le Reveil de l'Indre* », Chateauroux, Sunday, October 27th, 1907. In his « *Testament pour la Paroisse d'Issoudun* » Chevalier had written:

« N.B. Je désire qu'on ne dépose aucune fleur, aucune couronne sur mon cerceuil, que mes obsèques soient simples et qu'on n'y prononce aucun discours. Ce que je demande c'est de prier beaucoup pour moi ».

²³ Chevalier, « *Ecole du Sacré-Coeur* », p. 245 ff.

²⁴ Hériault, Ms *Vertus du R.P. Chevalier*, pp. 17-18.

²⁵ Chevalier, « *Ecole du Sacré-Coeur* », l.c.

²⁶ Hériault, Ms *Vertus du R.P. Chevalier*, pp. 18-22.

²⁷ Maillard, Memoire.

²⁸ Ib.

²⁹ Belleville in *L'Univers*, November 1907.

³⁰ Piperon, *Retreat Notes*, November 1893.

³¹ Letter Guyot to Chevalier, January 28th, 1891.

³² *Premières Règles manuscrites des Missionnaires du Sacré-Coeur*, 1857, Ch. III, art. 6, 1.1.

³³ Ib., introduction.

³⁴ Hériault, *Ms Vertus du R.P. Chevalier*, suite.

³⁵ Letter to Cardinal Prefect of the S. Congregation of Bishops and Regulars, May 4th, 1891.

³⁶ Letter Meyer to Jouët, October 22nd, 1907.

³⁷ Letter Meyer to J. Vandel, November 15th, 1907.

Contents

INTRODUCTION	7
CHAPTER I. PERSON AND PLACE	9
1. Issoudun.	9
2. Jules Chevalier.	17
CHAPTER II. THE FIRST THREE WORKS	25
1. Missionaries of the Sacred Heart.	25
2. Our Lady of the Sacred Heart.	31
3. Secular Priests of the Sacred Heart.	36
CHAPTER III. SHOW ME YOUR FRIENDS	43
1. Charles Piperon.	43
2. Jean-Marie Vandel.	47
3. Victor Jouët.	55
CHAPTER IV. AMETUR UBIQUE	65
1. Consolidation.	65
2. Expulsion and expansion.	79
3. Foreign Missions and further expansion.	91
CHAPTER V. SPIRITUALITY, CHARISM, MISSION	103
CHAPTER VI. A SPIRIT SHARED	141
1. Daughters of Our Lady of the Sacred Heart.	141
2. MSC Sisters.	150
3. The Third Order.	155

CHAPTER VII.	WORTHY OF SPECIAL MENTION	161
	1. The Reluctant Novice-Master.	161
	2. Scholar and Gentleman.	164
	3. MSC Brothers.	166
	4. A Multiplicity of Founders.	170
	5. Lucien Cattin.	171
	6. Jean Captier.	172
	7. Quito - a Dream of Eldorado.	175
CHAPTER VIII.	MSC CRISIS	181
	1. General Considerations.	181
	2. A partial Analysis.	198
CHAPTER IX.	THE HUMAN DRAMA	213
	1. The Crisis of Victor Jouët.	213
	2. A Father and his Sons.	226
CHAPTER X.	MISSION ACCOMPLISHED	245
	1. Life in the Local Church.	245
	2. The Laws of the Land.	258
	3. Facts and Figures.	274
CHAPTER XI.	JULES CHEVALIER - PERSONALITY AND PROFILE	281

Printed in Italy
Grafica - Perugia 1975