THE SECOND CENTURY 1802-1904

PRELUDE

1.20 *The restoration of the Lasallian mission in France initiated a century of extraordinary growth in the land of its origin, saw its expansion beyond France into 35 different countries of the world and the development of a missionary policy far beyond anything which De La Salle and the first generation of Brothers could ever have envisaged. The 160 Brothers in France and in Italy in 1810 were to become some 14,631 Brothers by the end of the century that culminated in the solemn canonization of its founder.*

The mission of the Institute has to be understood against the social and political events in France, especially in relation to the role of the Church. Favored by Bonaparte and by the restored Bourbons in the early years of the century, the Institute, along with other educational works of the Church, was to suffer from the anti-clericalism of the latter part.

1.21 Restoration and development of the Institute in France

The restoration of the mission of the Institute in France was a response to the needs expressed by ordinary people, the hierarchy, and the government. The Institute was at first the only congregation authorized to resume its work through schools but in accord with the centralization that marked many Napoleonic reforms, the Brothers' schools were placed under the direct control of the University. This privileged position under the University accorded to the Brothers by imperial decree in 1808 may not have always left them as free as they wished but ensured cooperation with government and freedom from the forces opposed to their restoration. In a nation that was to see 17 religious congregations of women and 4 congregations of men devoted mainly to education founded by 1830, the Brothers of the Christian Schools played an important role in restoring a great deal of what they had already pioneered before the Revolution, as well as being pathfinders in responding to new needs in education at a national level.

The most notable achievements are the following:

• the struggle to maintain gratuity in some form or another so that the poor could have schools;

> *"For the 150 years that we have been teaching, our pupils have never owed us money ... . . . We teach them for God and for the State and not for ourselves. We require docility and virtue but no money. They are our children, not our contributors."* Brother Anaclet, Supenor General, November 11, 1833

• the accepting of responsibility for a large number of communal (i.e., government) primary schools which helped to provide the model for the national system of elementary schools;

> *"There is an example known by everyone, the schools of the Brothers of the Christian Schools. It cannot be denied that they have multiplied, brought about a great deal of good, adopted the best methods, in a word, played an important role in the progress of education."* Guizon, Minister of Education, 1833

• the insistence on maintaining their traditional methods, based on the continuing editions of the *Conduite des Ecoles*, against the attempt to impose the so-called Mutual, Monitorial or Lancastrian system. *(In this system, a master teacher controlled some 10 or more monitors, each of whom was responsible for 10 or more pupils.)* This was felt by the Brothers to be contrary to the close relationship between teacher and pupils that they thought essential. If the Brothers were judged "conservative" in this regard, nevertheless:

> *"Despite the conservative spirit which distinguishes them, the Brothers are prepared to introduce important improvements into their pedagogy."* Pierre Lorain, Inspector, 1837

• the provision of evening classes for adults, especially between 1830-1848 when a total of 48,500 workmen were received in evening classes as students, a system studied and subsequently widely imitated by government;

• corrective work in institutions for delinquents (St. Yon model) and instructional work in prisons 1840-1882;

• the Teachers' College on the Lower Seine, opened at Rouen in 1829, re-established the lifelong concern of De La Salle to provide for the training of teachers and became the first of what was to become one of the consistent works of the Brothers throughout the world to the present day;

• after 1830, there was the gradual restoration of boarding schools such as had existed prior to the Revolution until there were 38 by the end of the century. It was in these schools, especially, that the Brothers, accepting the prohibition on teaching Latin, made a notable contribution to the development of technical schools, schools of agriculture and schools of design, which were usually developed in response to local needs;

> *"The gentlemen of your Committee wish you to teach... geography, history, chemistry, mineralogy and popular physics. Let them know that we are going to reply in the affirmative and that the Brothers, friends of the people and dedicated to the service of youth. will always be ready to do whatever is useful, especially if it concerns extending knowledge and spreading the sciences."* Frère Philippe, later Superior General 1838-1874, replying to a request from Rheims in 1831

• the development of special professional or commercial schools (business methods, double-entry book-keeping, etc.) was extended almost naturally to the development of what became known officially after 1867 as *Secondary Modern Schools* where modern languages were part of the curriculum;

> *"It is to De La Salle that France owed, if not the first idea, at least the putting into practice and the popularizing of this kind of instruction (i.e. secondary modern schools). From the first attempt there emerged a teaching which, if it had been generalized, would have advanced by one century, the organization of specialized secondary education."* Duruy, Minister of Education, 1867

• the composition and publication by Brothers of text books for primary schools, secondary schools and for evening professional courses became one of the most widely diffused aspects of the various Lasallian schools. Late in the century, a decision was taken to set up and maintain a separate printing press, known subsequently from the opening letters of its title, *Librarie Generale de L'Enseignement libre*, LIGEL.

1.22 Missionary efforts

The missionary expansion of the Institute, in the classic sense of going into foreign countries to help establish a Christian society where the Gospel was being newly preached, is a clear example of "responding to needs." The Brothers usually began by opening schools for the children of government employees, but increasingly these schools, with their catechism classes, catered to local people as well (e.g., the involvement of Blessed Brother Scubilion with the slaves in Reunion). The first efforts were, quite naturally, in French-speaking countries. The initiative usually came mainly from government or Church officials who sought schools in French colonial possessions as, for example, had occurred with the unsuccessful attempt of the Brothers in Martinique in 1776. In 1815, when the institute was struggling to re-establish itself in France, a combination of factors, including the interest of the French government and the concern of the Church reinforced by a direct appeal from Pope Pius VII, saw schools founded in the island of Bourbon (now called Reunion), as well as in the "Louisiana Territory" in what is now called the United States. Both these ventures eventually failed, probably because of the tendency to use the Brothers individually or in groups of two, rather than respecting their traditional way of working as a community. Successive Superiors General, Brothers Guillaume and Anaclet, wrote important letters to the Brothers reflecting on these "failures." Their call for volunteers prepared to face the difficulties of life as missionaries as they saw it, saw practically all the Brothers offer themselves!

Following the failed attempt to send Brothers to Canada in 1718, a new group was eventually sent to Montreal in 1837. Other developments in North America were largely due to the important role played by French priests, often members of religious orders, who, dispersed during the French Revolution and Napoleonic wars, had gone to the help of various Catholic immigrant groups in the United States. Their requests for Brothers, often forwarded through the Propagation of Faith Congregation in Rome (which was responsible for missionary efforts), usually brought a positive response especially during the long period of Brother Philippe Bransart as Superior General from 1838-1874. The Foreign Missions Societies of Paris and Lyons as well as the expansion of the Propagation of the Faith movement launched by Pauline Jaricot played important roles in the invitations made to the Brothers throughout the century.

The first missionary efforts in the Eastern Mediterranean and in other countries of Asia came about through similar circumstances. Without any single formulation of a missionary policy, the Institute moved out of the French-speaking world into parts of the then British Empire (Penang and Singapore, 1852) and in 1863 prepared Brothers to learn Spanish in order to open schools in Ecuador. During Brother Philippe's generalate, there were some 1,002 new foundations, more than a quarter of which were outside France. By the turn of the century, one-tenth of the Brothers were classified as teaching in what were then called "the missions."

1.23 Relationships with the great religions

The expansion of the Institute into the Balkans and the Eastern Mediterranean brought the Brothers for the first time into contact with Islam and Judaism and the schools in Penang and Singapore included Moslem, Hindu and Buddhist pupils. The pupils of religions other than Catholic Christians could attend the Brothers' school but usually had to attend the catechism lesson that was seen as indispensable to the overall curriculum. But the experience of the Brothers in such mission countries usually modified the "conversion" model of mission that was the common theology of the time. Thus, for example, the prospectus written by Pere Beurel (Missions Etrangères) in 1848 announcing the opening of the Brothers' school in Singapore, included the following wording:

> *"The principles upon which (the Brothers' school) is based will be as liberal as possibly can be: thus it will be open to everyone, whatever his creed may be; and should, for instance, a boy of a persuasion different from that of Roman Catholics wish to attend it, no interference whatever will take place with his religion, unless his parents or guardians express their wishes to have him instructed in the Catholic religion. Public religious instruction will be given to Roman Catholic boys either before or after school hours; but at all times, the Masters will most carefully watch over the morals of the whole, whatever their religious persuasion may be."*

1.24 Expansion outside of France

In the introduction to his eighth volume of the Histoire Generale de L'Institut des Frères des Ecoles chrétiennes, M. Georges Rigault writes as follows:

> *"The disciples of the saintly educator, already present in Italy, Belgium, Canada and the island of Bourbon before the time of Brother Philippe as General (1838-1874), spread into Central Europe, England, the United States, the republic of Ecuador, Turkey, Egypt, Algeria, Tunisia, Madagascar, India and Indo-China during the glorious "era" which ended with the death of the leader known everywhere (i.e., Brother Philippe). This peaceful conquest of the globe was to be stabilized, organized and even extended further in the generalates of Brothers Irlide and Joseph. After 1904, it allowed their successor, Brother Gabriel-Marie, to open up paths of the missionary apostolate to a good number of the French Brothers who became victims of persecuting laws."* (Page 1)

This helps to explain why the General Chapter of 1894 (the official meeting of elected delegates periodically) included 25 elected members representing the following groupings: England-Ireland. Austria-Germany. North Belgium. South Belgium, Barcelona, Madrid. Rome, Turin, Algeria-Tunisia, India-China-Vietnam, Reunion-Madagascar-Mauritius, Orient (i.e. Eastern Mediterranean), Montreal, Toronto, Baltimore, New York, Saint Louis, San Francisco, Ecuador-Colombia-Chili-Argentine.

1.25 Difficulties over the "Latin question"

The Brothers' schools in France were in continuity with the Lasallian tradition but particular difficulties had already appeared in a number of other European countries because of the traditional ban on the teaching of Latin. This "ban" effectively prevented the Brothers' pupils from being qualified to enter seminaries to study for the priesthood or from matriculating for universities where Latin was usually a condition of entry into many faculties. The difficulty was particularly acute in most of the English-speaking countries where Catholics were generally poor, a religious minority, and their access to higher education in practically all fields necessitated Latin. The Bishops, therefore, frequently requested the Brothers to teach Latin. In the traditional spirit of *"responding to needs,"* the Brothers attempted to do this but their particular situation was not well understood by the Superiors in Europe. This difficulty was felt in England, Ireland and Australia but became most severe in the United States and at one stage even seemed to threaten the links between these schools and the Institute. This was the first major manifestation of the difficulty experienced by the Institute in understanding itself as an international movement.