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EIN BRIEF DES HL. KLEMENS M. HOFBAUER

aus dem Jahre 1802

SUMMARIUM

S. Clemens dedit epistolam fidei suo amico sac. Aloisio Virginio (olim SI), Vindobonae degenti, die 9 mensis maii (ita dies in epistula adscribitur, probabiliter tamen est mensis *iunii*; certo litterae non sunt missae ante diem 8 iunii) an. 1802. « Dilacerato corde » loquitur de quadam nefanda societate nuper Varsaviae detecta, in cuius secretis conventiculis horrenda sacrilegia et abominationes perficerentur. Et petit ab amico consilium (Doc. 1). Virginio epistolam nuntio apostolico apud Aulam Imperialem Austriacam, Antonio Severoli, monstravit, qui die 30 iunii exemplum ad cardinalem Herculem Consalvi, publicis Ecclesiae negotiis praefectum, Romae, misit (Doc. 2). Die 14 augusti eiusdem anni s. Clemens in alia epistula Virginio data ad argumentum revolvitur (Doc. 4). Etiam has litteras Virginio nuntio tradidit, qui paragraphum circa nefandam societatem epistolae suae die 20 novembris cardinali Consalvi datae adiunxit (Doc. 5).

Is vero epistolam s. Clementis diei 9 maii (iunii) et excerptum epistolae diei 14 augusti ad S. Congregationem de Propaganda Fide mittere iussit ut de re deliberaret (Doc. 3 et 6). Die 7 ianuarii 1803 secretarius huius Congregationis, Dominicus Coppola, communicavit cardinali Consalvi pro nunc circa rem procedi non posse, utpote non satis probatam. Necessarium enim iudicabatur opperiri ultteriores notitias rem abundantius illustrantes (Doc. 7).

Notatu dignum est, ea quae s. Clemens de nefanda societate *modo privato* suo amico Virginio communicaverat, potius ut consilio eiusdem

frueretur, apud auctoritates ecclesiasticas, tam Vindobonae, apud nuntium, quam Romae, apud Secretariam Status et apud S. Congregationem de Propaganda Fide, attente esse considerata. Modus agendi auctoritatis ecclesiasticae in hac re confirmat factum, iam alioquin notum, nempe narrationes Sancti circa statum religiosum in regionibus Europae centralis et septentrionalis omni cura Romae esse perpensas.

EINLEITUNG

In den Jahren 1794-1795 war Erzbischof Lorenzo Litta als Nuntius in Warschau tätig¹. Dort hat er P. Hofbauer kennengelernt, der seit 1787 mühsam aber erfolgreich daselbst in der Seelsorge arbeitete. Litta hat bald, wie sein Amtsvorgänger Erzbischof Ferdinando Maria Saluzzo², eine grosse Hochschätzung für das selbstlose Wirken der Redemptoristen — oder Bennoniten, wie sie damals in Warschau hiessen — gefasst. Aus den einschlägigen Dokumenten der Jahre 1794-1795 geht dies zwar nicht klar hervor. Um so deutlicher ergibt es sich aber aus vielen späteren Schriftstücken.

In seinem Brief vom 11. Januar 1800³ an den Generalobern der Redemptoristen, P. Pietro Paolo Blasucci, spendet Litta dem P. Hofbauer und seinen Mitarbeitern hohes Lob, obgleich er — wohl unter dem Einfluss der Patres Joseph Passerat und Jacques Vannelet⁴ — auch einige kritische Bemerkungen hinzufügt. « Quanto al

¹ Lorenzo Litta (1756-1820) wurde am 15. November 1793 zum Nuntius beim König von Polen, Stanislaus II. (August Poniatowski), ernannt. Nach der dritten Teilung Polens (1795) blieb er noch eine Zeitlang in Warschau und wurde am 11. Februar 1797 zum ausserordentlichen Gesandten beim Kaiser von Russland ernannt (bis 1799). 1801 von Pius VII. zum Kardinal ernannt, war Litta 1814-1818 Präfekt der Kongregation 'de Propaganda Fide'; als solcher hatte er noch öfters mit Hofbauer und den Redemptoristen zu tun. Biographische Notizen über Litta in R. RITZLER-P. SEFRIN, *Hierarchia catholica medii et recentioris aevi*, Bd. VI (1730-1799), Padova 1958, 400, und Bd. VII (1800-1846), ebd. 1968, 8, 39, 44, 50. Viele Einzelheiten über Littas Leben, Wirken und Persönlichkeit in der Einleitung bei M. J. ROUET DE JOURNAL, *Nonciatures de Russie. II. Nonciature de Litta, 1797-1799* (Studi e Testi 167), Città del Vaticano 1943.

² Ferdinando Maria Saluzzo (1744-1816) wurde am 30. Juli 1784 zum Nuntius beim König von Polen ernannt (bis 1793). Er wurde am 23. Februar 1801 von Pius VII. zum Kardinal ernannt; im selben Konsistorium fand die Kardinalsernennung von Litta statt, der dann aber 'in pectore reservatus' blieb. Biographische Notizen in RITZLER-SEFRIN, a. a. O. VI 150 u. 402. VII 7, 40, 43, 50, 135. Hofbauer fühlte sich Saluzzo gegenüber sehr verpflichtet, da dieser die offizielle Zulassung der Kongregation bei der Regierung Polens erwirkt hatte. *Monumenta Hofbaueriana* (im folgenden: MH), Bd. VIII, Toruń 1936, 39. Der Generalobere, P. Pietro Paolo Blasucci, nannte Saluzzo darum « praeclarissimum insignemque totius Congregationis benefactorem »; ebd. 40.

³ Original im Generalarchiv der Redemptoristen in Rom (im folgenden: AGR) IX B 31; herausgegeben in MH VIII 202-205.

⁴ Der Brief von Passerat, den Litta seinem Schreiben beifügte, ist verlorengegangen (einer gewissen Ueberlieferung nach, absichtlich vernichtet worden). Im folgenden Jahr trug Passerat seine Beschwerden über die Lage im Warschauer Kloster

P. Hofbauer debbo dir con verità che lo credo un uomo apostolico pieno di zelo per la gloria di Dio e pieno di carità per la salute dell'anime. E ben vero ch'io l'ho osservato più fatto per operare che forse per governare. Esso è tutto nell'opere esteriori e nella vita attiva »⁵. Darum hat er den P. Hofbauer — und auch den Rektor des Hauses P. Hübl — darauf hingewiesen « che un missionario dee molto spere nella orazione ed attendere non meno a giovar agli altri che al coltivar lo spirito interiore, senza il quale è difficile che la parola riesca efficace ». Es könnte sein, dass sie zuviel arbeiten, andererseits aber ist die Not dermassen, dass Litta sagt, nicht den Mut zu haben den Patres zu raten « di lasciar alcuna delle opere che fanno, vedendo che ciascuna di queste riesce con molto frutto »⁶.

Es ist gut möglich, dass sich zwischen den beiden nahezu gleichaltrigen Männern, die jeder auf seinem Gebiet sich vorbehaltlos dem Reiche Gottes gewidmet hatten, eine Art Freundschaftsverhältnis angebahnt hat⁷.

nochmals dem Generalobern vor. Dieser Brief ist folgendermassen verzeichnet in einem um 1830 aufgestellten Katalog der von jenseits der Alpen empfangenen Briefe (*Archivio delle Lettere Oltramontane*, p. 4): « 1801, 20 Gennaio; Varsavia. Relazione del P. Passerat sulla condotta del P. Vicario Generale, P. Hofbauer, e sull'inosservanza ». Vannelet gab nicht lange nachher, am 18. April d. J. seine Klagen an Blasucci bekannt; veröffentlicht in MH XIV, Roma 1951, 94-97.

Blasucci meinte dann, etwas energischer vorgehen zu müssen, und schickte am 14. Juli ein Schreiben an die Mitbrüder in Warschau, wie sie ihr apostolisches und religiöses Leben — nach dem Muster des Lebens der Patres im Königreich von Neapel — gestalten sollten, wobei er Hofbauers Vorgehen indirekt tadelte. Text in MH VIII 82-87. Dieser verstand das sehr wohl und suchte sich, mit Hinweis auf die Verschiedenheit der Lage, zu rechtfertigen; der Brief vom 1. Oktober ebd. 87-90. Am 5. Dezember schickte Passerat nochmals ein Schreiben an Blasucci, das im oben erwähnten Katalog mit folgendem Eintrag vermerkt ist: « 1801, 5 Dicembre; Varsavia. Il P. Passerat informa il P. Rettore Maggiore sugli effetti prodotti in P. Hofbauer dalla correzione fattagli ».

Die beiden Briefe Passerats sind seit Jahr und Tag aus dem Archiv verschwunden, und konnten trotz wiederholter Suchaktionen nicht aufgefunden werden. Es will uns vorkommen, dass sie nicht durch reinen Zufall oder Nachlässigkeit verlegt worden bzw. verlorengegangen sind, sondern dass man diese Dokumente des Inhalts wegen der Nachwelt für immer hat entziehen wollen.

⁵ Allerdings lobt Litta in einem Brief, den er einen Monat später (11. II. 1800) an Hofbauer schrieb, seine Umsicht bei Ablehnung oder Annahme von Neugründungen; unterlässt aber nicht, einige gute Ratschläge beizufügen. Der Brief ist veröffentlicht in MH VIII 193-195.

⁶ In seinem Brief an Hofbauer vom 15. Februar 1800 gibt Blasucci — mit Rücksicht auf Littas Schreiben — ihm den Rat, sich in der apostolischen Tätigkeit etwas zu mässigen und besser zu sorgen für die geistliche und wissenschaftliche Ausbildung der jungen Mitglieder. Er solle mehr auf Ordnung schauen, und zwar nach der Regel. MH VIII 67-69.

⁷ Hofbauer war Ende Dezember 1751 geboren, Litta im Februar 1756; ein Altersunterschied von gut vier Jahren. Beide starben kurz nacheinander, am 15. März und am 1. Mai 1820.

So ist es nicht verwunderlich, dass Litta in einem Brief vom 14. November 1801⁸ — geschrieben also kurz nachdem seine Ernennung zum Kardinal am 28. September d. J. bekanntgegeben war — an den neu ernannten Nuntius in Wien, Erzbischof Antonio Gabriele Severoli⁹, diesen auf Hofbauer hinwies mit einer warmen Empfehlung. Es war ja so, dass infolge der gänzlichen Auflösung Polens 1795¹⁰ und der damit gegebenen Aufhebung der Nuntiatur in Warschau der Wiener Nuntius einen Grossteil des ehemaligen Königreichs im Auge zu behalten hatte¹¹. Am selben Tag (14. XI. 1801) schrieb Litta auch an Hofbauer¹²: Er könne sich zu jeder Zeit an Severoli wenden, wenn er etwas brauche, und sich dabei seines Namens bedienen, denn der Nuntius sei sein Freund¹³.

Im nächsten Jahr, 1802, traten Severoli und Hofbauer miteinander in Verbindung. Im Februar oder März d. J. hatte Hofbauer den Nuntius anscheinend gebeten, 50 Gulden nach Rom an Kardinal Litta überweisen zu wollen¹⁴. Am 3. April antwortete Severoli, es sei ihm eine Freude, diesen Dienst zu leisten, und er hoffe, auch weiterhin sich nützlich erweisen zu können. Andererseits, wenn sich

⁸ Text des Briefes in MH III 88. An zwei Stellen gekürzt.

⁹ Antonio Gabriele Severoli (1757-1824) wurde im Oktober 1801 zum Nuntius beim Kaiser von Oesterreich ernannt (bis 1816). Am 8. März 1816 wurde er von Pius VII. zum Kardinal ernannt, besorgte aber doch noch einige Monate die Angelegenheiten der Wiener Nuntiatur. Biographische Notizen in RITZLER-SFRIN, a. a. O. VI 213, VII 11, 43, 303, 398. Siehe auch G. DE MARCHI, *Le nunziature apostoliche dal 1800 al 1956* (Sussidi Eruditi 13), Roma 1957, 45.

¹⁰ Für die Auflösung Polens (dritte Teilung zwischen Oesterreich, Preussen und Russland) findet man verschiedene Daten, welche sich resp. auf die Abkommen der drei Mächte und deren tatsächliche Durchführung beziehen. Vgl. *Histoire de Pologne*, Warszawa 1972, 422.

¹¹ Aus der Korrespondenz Severolis mit den römischen kirchlichen Behörden geht hervor, dass er auch die kirchlichen Belange in Norddeutschland überwachte. In seinem Brief vom 24. Dezember 1802 an die Kongregation 'de Propaganda Fide' schreibt er, dass er sich bemüht habe um Berichte über die kirchliche Lage « e nell'interno della mia nunziatura, e nei luoghi ad essa limitrofi, attualmente mancanti di un ministro apostolico, il quale vegli su gli affari religiosi ». Sekretariatsabschrift im Vatikanischen Geheimarchiv, Nunziatura di Vienna, vol. 228, fo 287v-290r (ursprüngliche Seitenzahl 698-703). Der Brief ist veröffentlicht in MH XV, Roma 1951, 116-117, aber ohne den einleitenden Absatz, in welchem die oben angeführte Stelle vorkommt. Vgl. J. HOFER, *Der hl. Klemens M. Hofbauer*², Freiburg/Brsg. 1923, 149.

¹² Text des Briefes in MH VIII 199-200.

¹³ In seinem Brief vom 14. August 1802 an Severoli beruft Hofbauer sich auf diesen Rat Littas, « qui me hortatur in negotiis occurrentibus ad R. mam Excellentiam Tuam recursum facere velim cum plena fiducia, attenta diuturna amicitia, qua Tuae Dominationi Excell. mae devinctus est ». MH V 4.

¹⁴ Das diesbezügliche Schreiben Hofbauers ist bis jetzt nicht gefunden. Es mag aber sein, dass er die Bitte durch Vermittlung von Don Luigi Virginio dem Nuntius hat zukommen lassen. Auf Virginio als Vermittler von Nachrichten Hofbauers an Severoli kommen wir noch zu sprechen.

auf kirchlichem Gebiet in jenen Gegenden etwas von Bedeutung ereignen würde, so wäre ihm eine diesbezügliche Nachricht sehr angenehm¹⁵. Am 14. August d. J. schrieb Hofbauer dann seinen ersten uns bekannten Brief an Severoli¹⁶. Er dankt für die im April durchgeführte Ueberweisung an Litta, sagt, dass er schon längst hätte schreiben sollen, es aber immer wieder hinausgeschoben habe wegen anderer dringlichen Beschäftigungen, und bittet sodann um Empfehlungsschreiben für die geplante Niederlassung auf dem Berg Tabor bei Jestetten¹⁷. Ueber diese Angelegenheit könnte der Nuntius nähere Auskunft beim hochw. Herrn Virginio einholen.

Sozusagen postwendend antwortete Severoli am 25. August¹⁸. Er werde sein Möglichstes in der Sache tun und die Empfehlungsschreiben besorgen, möchte aber gern etwas genauer über Hofbauers Institut und dessen Arbeit in Nordeuropa informiert werden. Mit einem ausführlichen Bericht vom 6. Oktober kam dieser dem leicht verständlichen Wunsch des Nuntius entgegen¹⁹. — Inzwischen hatte Severoli aber sicher schon von Virginio das Wesentliche über Hofbauer, sein Institut, dessen gesegnete Wirksamkeit in Warschau und über die Pläne zur Ausbreitung desselben in den deutschsprachigen Ländern vernommen.

Da Don Luigi Virginio in den Jahren 1800-1804 in der Geschichte Hofbauers öfter vorkommt und er der Adressat des Hofbauerbriefes ist, der weiter unten herausgegeben wird, halten wir es für gut, hier einige biographische Details über den Mann zu geben; zumal auch, da es uns scheint, dass diese Person in der Geschichte Hofbauers, so wie diese bis jetzt geschrieben wurde, zu wenig hervorgehoben worden ist²⁰.

Luigi Virginio²¹ wurde geboren zu Cuneo (Piemonte; jetzt Provinzhauptstadt) am 5. Juli 1756. Am 10. April 1771 trat er in das Noviziat der Jesuiten zu Chieri ein und legte vermutlich zwei Jahre darauf die einfache

¹⁵ Text des Briefes in MH V 99.

¹⁶ Text des Briefes in MH V 3-6.

¹⁷ Diese erste Gründung der Redemptoristen auf deutschem Boden kam am 30. Dezember 1802 zustande. Im Herbst 1805 war Hofbauer gezwungen, sie wieder aufzugeben. Siehe *Spic. hist.* 10 (1962) 270 u. 274.

¹⁸ Text des Briefes in MH V 6.

¹⁹ Text des Briefes in MH V 6-7 u. II 47-50 (der Bericht über die Kongregation und ihre Arbeit in Warschau).

²⁰ Vgl. HOFER, a. a. O. 456 (Personenregister). Im Personenregister bei E. HOSP, *Der hl. Klemens M. Hofbauer, 1751-1820*, Wien 1951, wird Virginio nicht erwähnt. Siehe auch MH XV, Roma 1951, 201 (Index personarum, mit 16 Verweisen).

²¹ Virginios Personalien finden sich am ausführlichsten in [A. P. FRUTAZ], *Positio super introductione causae et super virtutibus Servi Dei Pii Brunonis Lanteri* (S. Rituum Congregatio, Sectio Historica, n. 63), Città del Vaticano 1945, 82-83.

Profess ab, also einige Monate vor der Aufhebung der Sozietät (21. VII. 1773). Er kehrte dann in seine Vaterstadt zurück und wurde Weltpriester der gleichnamigen Diözese. In den 90er Jahren finden wir ihn in Wien, wo er nach dem Tode des schweizerischen Exjesuiten Nikolaus Josef Albert von Diessbach²² das von diesem am Ende der 70er Jahren in Turin gegründete Werk der 'Christlichen Freundschaft' (*Amicizia Cristiana*) leitete. Auch in anderen geheimen christlichen Genossenschaften der Zeit, wie die 'Genossenschaft der Freunde' (*Association des Amis* [*Assemblée des Associés?*]); in den zeitgenössischen Dokumenten stets bezeichnet mit dem immer noch nicht einwandfrei gedeuteten Sigel AA oder Aa) und die 'Priesterliche Freundschaft' (*Amicizia Sacerdotale*), war Virginio tätig und sogar führend. Nachdem Don Giuseppe Sineo della Torre²³, auch ein italienischer Exjesuit, Wien verlassen hatte, amteete Virginio als Rektor der italienischen Nationalkirche, der alten Minoritenkirche.

Bei der Betreuung verwundeter Soldaten (Drei-Kaiser-Schlacht bei Austerlitz, 2. XII. 1805) zog Virginio sich eine tödliche Infektion zu und starb in Wien am 31. Dezember 1805. Er wurde auf dem Friedhof von Maria-Enzersdorf, der Herrschaftspfarrei des Freiherrn Josef von Penckler, beigesetzt²⁴. Dort hatte auch Diessbach Ende Dezember 1798 seine letzte Ruhestätte gefunden²⁵.

²² Kurze biographische Notizen über Diessbach (1732-1798) bei HOFER, a. a. O. 95, Anm. 2, und bei C. SOMMERVOGEL, *Bibliothèque de la Compagnie de Jésus*, Bd. III, Bruxelles-Paris 1892, 56, wo auch seine Werke verzeichnet sind; Nachträge in den Bdn. IX-XI. Ausführlichere Notiz bei FRUTAZ, a. a. O. 76-81 (Doc. XX).

Wie sein Geistesgenosse, Don Pio Brunone Lanteri, der Gründer der Kongregation der Oblaten der Jungfrau Maria (Congregatio Oblatorum Mariae Virginis; OMV), hat Diessbach sich sehr eingesetzt, um die Verehrung von Alfons von Liguri zu fördern und seine Werke zu verbreiten. Es würde sich lohnen, Diessbachs Aktivität in dieser Beziehung eingehender zu studieren; einiges darüber in einem Aufsatz von J. HOFER, *P. J. A. von Diessbach*, in *St. Klemens-Blätter* (Wien) 4 (1932) 40-42, 74-76.

²³ P. Sineo della Torre (1761-1843) war ebenfalls mit Hofbauer bekannt. In seinem Brief von 18. Dezember 1795 an Blasucci bat Hofbauer, bestimmte Bücher an Sineo in Wien schicken zu wollen, der diese dann auf sicherem Weg nach Warschau weiterleiten würde. MH VIII 53-54.

²⁴ HOFER, a. a. O. 148 u. 178. Das Todesdatum Virginios in MH XII 334.

²⁵ Eine Studie über Hofbauers Verhältnis zu den Exjesuiten in Wien könnte vermutlich helfen, seine geistliche Physiognomie besser zu verstehen. Dass sie einen bestimmten Einfluss auf ihn ausgeübt haben, kann wohl kaum geleugnet werden. Vielleicht ist dieser Einfluss sogar in wichtigen Momenten entscheidend gewesen. So ist gelegentlich die Vermutung geäußert worden, Hofbauers Eintritt bei den Redemptoristen sei auf eine Anregung von Diessbach zurückzuführen. Im Zusammenhang sollte auch Hofbauers Verhältnis zu den Paccanaristen (Societas de fide Jesu; 1797 in Rom gegründet) und den oben erwähnten Geheimgenossenschaften (AC, Aa, AS) näher erörtert werden. Nicht unwahrscheinlich hat deren Zielsetzung und Wirksamkeit ihn zu gewissen Apostolatsformen inspiriert, besonders auch bei der Gründung seiner Oblatensodalität, die verschiedene ähnliche Züge aufweist.

Ueber Hofbauer und die Paccanaristen finden sich einige Angaben bei HOFER, a. a. O. 105, Anm. Es ist angenommen worden, Hofbauer sei Mitglied der Geheimgenossenschaft der 'Christlichen Freundschaft' gewesen; FRUTAZ, a. a. O. 128. HOFER, a. a. O. 96 behauptet: «Der Heilige rechnet sich selbst zu diesem Kreise», womit er u. E. nur im allgemeinen sagen will, Hofbauer gehörte zum Kreis, der sich um Diessbach in Wien gebildet hatte. Die französische Uebersetzung (*Saint Clement-M. Hofbauer, 1751-1820*, Louvain 1933, 104) ist hier irgendwie irreführend.

Dass Virginio als einer der Pfeiler der Kirche Wiens galt, geht auch daraus hervor, dass Litta ihn im Brief vom 14. November 1801 — in demselben also worin er Hofbauer empfiehlt — dem neuen Nuntius Severoli vorstellte²⁶.

Die vier in diesem Brief wegen ihrer treu katholischen Gesinnung genannten Personen kannten einander schon seit längerer Zeit. Wie und wann Virginio und Hofbauer mit einander Bekanntschaft gemacht haben, entzieht sich unserer Kenntnis. Es ist möglich, dass sie sich kennen lernten im Zusammenhang mit den oben erwähnten geheimen Genossenschaften. Vielleicht hat der gemeinschaftliche Freund, Freiherr Josef von Penckler, die Bekanntschaft vermittelt. In den Jahren 1800 bis 1804 standen sie in Briefwechsel, aber es ist durchaus sicher, dass dieser schon früher angefangen hat. Der älteste erhaltene Brief ist der von Hofbauer vom 3. Februar 1800, worin er aber auf einen anderen, wenige Wochen vorher abgeschickten, verweist²⁷. Virginios Antworten an Hofbauer sind nicht bekannt, wohl aber sein Brief vom 18. Oktober 1800 an Blasucci²⁸, den er um einen Pater als Prediger an der italienischen Kirche in Wien bittet. Aus Hofbauers Brief an Blasucci vom 19. August d. J. geht hervor, dass Virginio ihm von diesem Antrag Mitteilung gemacht hatte²⁹, und er befürwortet ihn aufs wärmste³⁰.

In diesem Schreiben spendet Hofbauer seinem Freund hohes Lob. Er kenne ihn zwar nicht persönlich, stehe aber in lebhaftem Briefwechsel mit ihm, « et in negotio pro bono Ecclesiae artissimum inter nos ab aliquibus jam annis existit vinculum ». Bei seinen Besuchen in Wien 1795 und 1797 ist Hofbauer Virginio also nicht begegnet, woraus man geneigt wäre zu schliessen, er habe ihn damals noch nicht gekannt. Es ist aber möglich, dass Virginio gerade abwesend war. Immerhin wird die Bekanntschaft sicher bis 1798 zurückgehen, sonst könnte Hofbauer nicht im Jahre 1800 sagen, dass er sich schon verschiedene Jahre mit ihm verbunden weiss³¹.

²⁶ Der Text des Briefes in MH III 88 ist aber gekürzt, und dabei sind die Namen der drei Personen, welche zusammen mit Hofbauer Severoli vorgestellt wurden, ausgelassen. Es sind Don Luigi Virginio, Freiherr Josef von Penckler und Baron Josef von Beroldingen, Domherr der Diözesen Speyer und Hildesheim, aber für gewöhnlich in Wien verweilend. HOFER, a. a. O. 148 erwähnt die Namen.

²⁷ Text des Briefes in MH XIV 92.

²⁸ Text des Briefes in MH XIV 93-94.

²⁹ Text des Briefes in MH VIII 76-81.

³⁰ Am 28. Oktober 1800 antwortete Blasucci an Hofbauer, er könne Virginios Gesuch nicht erfüllen. Es wäre nicht tunlich, einen einzelnen Pater nach Wien zu senden, der dazu noch eine Art Pfarrdienst zu leisten hätte. Der Text des Briefes in MH VIII 81-82.

³¹ HOFER, a. a. O. 148 scheint zu denken, die Bekanntschaft zwischen Hofbauer

Es sind noch vier weitere Briefe von Virginio an italienische Redemptoristen erhalten³²: einer aus dem Jahre 1803 an P. Antonio Tannoia, den ersten Biographen des hl. Alfons, dem er Auskünfte vom hochw. Herrn Henri Rigolet vermittelte³³, und drei aus dem Jahre 1804 an den Vizeprokurator der Kongregation in Rom, P. Vincenzantonio Giattini. In all diesen Briefen handelt es sich nahezu ausschliesslich um Bücher und Schriften über Alfons sowie um Werke von ihm³⁴, die Virginio haben möchte und teils auch bekommen hat. Nicht nur für ihn selber waren diese bestimmt, sondern auch für andere wie den Wiener Nuntius Severoli und den General der Jesuiten in St. Petersburg, P. Gabriel Gruber³⁵. Die Briefe sind ein beredtes Zeugnis von Virginios Hochschätzung und Verehrung für den Gründer der Redemptoristen.

Es scheint, dass Hofbauer sich besonders in schwierigen Angelegenheiten an Virginio gewendet hat, teils um sein Herz einem vertrauten Freund auszuschütten und sich so wieder etwas Luft zu machen — welcher Mensch hat nicht gelegentlich ein Bedürfnis darnach? —, teils auch um bei einem frommen und weisen Mitbruder

und Virginio sei erst 1800 zustande gekommen. Aufgrund der oben angeführten Aussage Hofbauers aus seinem Brief vom 19. August 1800 können wir Hofer in diesem Punkt nicht bepflichten.

³² Die Briefe sind resp. vom 21. Oktober 1803 und vom 2. Mai, 30. Juni, 5. September 1804. Originale im AGR IX A 18^a; herausgegeben in MH XIV 98 (der Brief von 1803) und in *Spic. hist.* 7 (1959) 32-35.

³³ Im Brief vom 21. Oktober 1803 teilte Virginio dem P. Tannoia mit, seinen Brief an Rigolet nach Klagenfurt weitergeleitet zu haben. Inzwischen hatte dieser schon am 3. Dezember 1802 — unter Bezugnahme auf Virginios Vermittlung — direkt an Tannoia nach Neapel geantwortet. Rigolets Brief in *Spic. hist.* 7 (1959) 28-29. Als er darauf keine Empfangsbestätigung bekam, wandte Rigolet sich am 2. April 1803 an P. Blasucci; ebd. 30. Auch bei Hofbauer hat er sich beklagt; denn dieser schrieb am 3. Februar 1803 aus Jestetten an Blasucci, er möge sich bei Tannoia erkundigen, ob dieser Rigolets Brief bereits bekommen habe, und ihm sagen, er solle doch von sich hören lassen. MH VIII 106.

³⁴ Im Schreiben vom 30. Juni sagt Virginio, davon gehört zu haben, dass man daran sei, eine Gesamtausgabe der Werke vor Alfons herauszubringen. Er bittet zwei Exemplare für ihn vorzumerken. Am 5. September gibt er den Rat, die Ausgabe in zwei Teile zu trennen, nämlich in theologische und asketische Schriften. Die Möglichkeit sollte dann gegeben werden, auf diese Serien getrennt zu subscribieren, da nicht bei allen — Geistlichen und Laien — für beide das gleiche Interesse bestehe. Wie wir vor wenigen Jahren dargelegt haben, dachte Giattini derzeit wirklich an eine Gesamtausgabe der Werke von Alfons, die dann aber nicht zustandekam. *Spic. hist.* 22 (1974) 226-228.

³⁵ Es gibt einen Brief von Gruber an Hofbauer vom 22. (?) Mai 1802; in MH VIII 209. Darin nimmt der Generalobere Bezug auf ein Schreiben Hofbauers, das nicht bekannt ist. Unsere Versuche, etwas Näheres über mögliche Verbindungen zwischen Hofbauer und Gruber in Erfahrung zu bringen, sind bis jetzt erfolglos geblieben.

guten Rat einzuholen. Der Inhalt der wenigen Briefe Hofbauers an Virginio, die wir besitzen ³⁶, berechtigt uns zur obigen Annahme. So sagt der Heilige im Schreiben vom 14. August 1802 ausdrücklich, er spüre das dringende Bedürfnis, sich einmal ganz bei seinem Freund auszusprechen. Am Ende des Briefes heisst es: « Ignosce prolixitati meae, quae e magno desiderio Tibi diu loquendi et multa dicendi oritur. Utinam tandem semel saltem in vita mea os ad os Tuae Paternitati colloqui mihi liceat! Ineffabile desiderium sentio Te aliquando videndi » ³⁷.

Hier steht nicht der sture Hofbauer vor uns, so wie er für gewöhnlich in den Dokumenten hervortritt, sondern er zeigt sich — wie nur selten — als ein Mensch, dem tief gefühlte Freundschaft ein grosses Gut und eine feste Stütze im Leben war ³⁸.

Zum besseren Verständnis der weiter unten veröffentlichten sechs Dokumente und deren Zusammenhang sollen folgende Angaben, teils archiv-technischer Art, dienen.

Von Hofbauers Brief an Virginio vom 9. Mai 1802 ³⁹ ist uns weder das Original noch die von Severoli an den päpstlichen Staatssekretär, Kardinal Ercole Consalvi ⁴⁰, geschickte Abschrift bekannt.

³⁶ Die Briefe sind datiert von Warschau am 3. Februar 1800, 9. Mai und 14. August 1802. Der erste und der letzte sind bereits veröffentlicht in MH XIV 92 u. V 1-3; der vom 9. Mai 1802 wird weiter unten veröffentlicht. Sie sind erhalten im Vatikanischen Geheimarchiv (im folgenden: ASV), zum Teil auch im Archiv der Kongregation 'de Propaganda Fide' (im folgenden: APF). Dies dank dem Umstand, dass Virginio sie an Severoli übergeben hat, der die Dokumente dann ins Archiv der Wiener Nuntiatur einverleibte (1921 ins ASV aufgenommen), teilweise sie auch mit seinen Depeschen sofort an die zuständigen römischen Behörden weiterleitete.

³⁷ Hofbauer sagt weiter, sobald er einen festen Sitz in den deutschsprachigen Ländern bekommen habe, werde sein erster Ausflug (*excursio*) nach Wien sein « ad videndum Paternitatem Tuam venerandissimam et reliquos amicos et venerandi spiritum nostri Patris D. in respectabili coetu eiusdem sollicitudine et cura pro gloria Dei collecto ». Im letzten Satzteil sind sicher Pater Diessbach und die von ihm gegründete 'Christliche Freundschaft' gemeint. Dem geheimen Charakter der Genossenschaft entsprechend werden keine Namen genannt. Zu bemerken ist, dass Hofbauer nicht in irgendeiner Weise andeutet, er sei Mitglied derselben (siehe oben, Anm. 25).

³⁸ Dies ist durchaus im Einklang mit Hofbauers geistigem Gepräge, wie es von seinen Biographen beschrieben wird. HOFER, a. a. O. 47: « Eine ähnliche Mischung von Kraft und Zartheit offenbart sich in seinem Seelenleben. Neben einer stahlharten Willenskraft ein ungemein empfindsames Gemüt ». O. WEISS, *Klemens M. Hofbauer, Repräsentant des konservativen Katholizismus und Begründer der katholischen Restauration in Oesterreich*, in *Zeitschrift für bayerische Landesgeschichte* 34 (1971) 212: « Hinter seinem bäuerlich derben Wesen verbarg sich eine tiefe Empfindsamkeit ». Dieselbe Aussage bei O. WEISS, *Die Redemptoristen in Bayern, 1790-1909*, München 1977, I 193.

³⁹ Der im Briefdatum angegebene Monat ist der *Mai*, vermutlich aber irrtümlich für *Juni*. Siehe weiter unten Anm. 3 zu den Dokumenten.

⁴⁰ Ercole Consalvi (1757-1824) wurde am 11. August 1800 von Pius VII. zum Kardinal ernannt, Staatssekretär 1800-1806 u. 1814-1823, Präfekt der Propaganda 1824.

Eine unvollständige Abschrift findet sich im Register der von Severoli nach Rom geschickten Briefe (jetzt im ASV); diese ist nach dem Original gemacht. Der vollständige Text ist im APF erhalten; es ist eine Abschrift der von Severoli an Consalvi geschickten Abschrift.

In keiner dieser Kopien sind die Namen des Briefschreibers und des Adressaten erwähnt. Trotzdem ist es aber sicher, dass es sich um ein Schreiben von Hofbauer an Virginio handelt ^{40a}. Es gibt dafür mehrere Indizien, und mit Sicherheit kann man darauf schliessen, da Hofbauer in seinem Brief vom 14. August 1802 an Virginio deutlich auf einen vorhergehenden verweist (Dok. 4), der nur das Schreiben vom 9. Mai (Juni) sein kann, wenn auch das Datum nicht erwähnt ist.

Das Original haben wir im ASV nicht gefunden. Es ist aber sehr wohl möglich, dass es sich nicht dort befindet, weder im Archiv des Staatssekretariats, noch in dem der Wiener Nuntiatur. Severoli schrieb nämlich am 30. Juni d. J., er lege eine Abschrift bei und werde das Original dem kurz vorher beim Zar ernannten Nuntius übergeben, wenn dieser in Wien vorbeikomme (Dok. 2). Ob Severoli wirklich das Original dem Erzbischof Tommaso Arezzo ⁴¹, der wider Erwartung und Wunsch sich über ein halbes Jahr in Wien aufhalten musste, zur Verfügung gestellt hat, und inwiefern dieser es verwendet hat, wissen wir nicht. In den herausgegebenen Dokumenten der Nuntiatur Arezzos ist darüber nichts zu finden ⁴².

Die von Saluzzo an Consalvi geschickte Abschrift sollte aber im ASV sein, wie auch das Original des Briefes von Severoli an den Staatssekretär vom 30. Juni 1802. Leider haben wir diese beiden Schriftstücke nicht gefunden. Es mag sein und ist sogar zu hoffen, dass sie gefunden werden, wenn einmal jemand das ganze Archiv des Staatssekretariats systematisch nach Dokumenten, die irgendwie für Hofbauer von Bedeutung sind, durchsieht ⁴³.

Da es aber momentan so aussieht, als werde dieses Unternehmen wohl noch auf unbestimmte Zeit in der Sphäre der frommen

^{40a} HOFER, a. a. O. 146-147 kennt den Brief und bringt einen langen Auszug in deutscher Uebersetzung; gibt aber keine Fundstelle. Er ist irrtümlicherweise der Ansicht, es handle sich um ein Schreiben Hofbauers an den Wiener Nuntius.

⁴¹ Tommaso Arezzo (1756-1833) wurde am 27. April 1802 zum Nuntius in St. Petersburg ernannt (bis 1806; war 1804 genötigt Russland zu verlassen), am 8. März 1816 von Pius VII. zum Kardinal ernannt, zugleich mit Severoli.

⁴² M. J. ROUET DE JOURNAL, *Nonciatures de Russie*. III 1. *Nonciature d'Arezzo, 1802-1804* (Studi e Testi 168), Roma 1922.

⁴³ Schon 1972 haben wir darauf hingewiesen, dass es zur Vervollständigung der *Monumenta Hofbaueriana* notwendig wäre, die Bestände des Staatssekretariats im ASV für die Jahre 1785-1820 genau durchzuarbeiten. *Spic. hist.* 20 (1972) 392.

Wünsche verbleiben, haben wir uns entschlossen, den Hofbauerbrief vom 9. Mai (Juni) 1802 nach den oben erwähnten Abschriften herauszugeben. Wir glauben, das ist unter den gegebenen Umständen vertretbar, da der Text doch immerhin genügend sicher wiedergegeben wird. Handelt es sich ja um zeitgenössische und von amtlichen Stellen gefertigte Abschriften. Zwischen den Kopien im ASV und im APF gibt es einige, ziemlich unbedeutende Varianten, die wir in den Anmerkungen verzeichnen werden.

Der Brief Hofbauers an Virginio vom 9. Mai (Juni) 1802 ist offenbar in einer gewissen geistigen Erschütterung geschrieben: am vorhergehenden Tag hat er so ziemlich Sicherheit darüber bekommen, dass es in Warschau eine Gruppe von Leuten (*secta*) gibt, die am ersten Sonntag des Monats und an höheren Festtagen nachmittags zusammenkommen, in diesen Konventikeln das Altarsakrament sakrilegisch entehren und sich weiter sehr unsittlich benehmen. Auch Geistliche, darunter sogar von höherer Stellung, sollten zu den Teilnehmern gehören.

Es ist genügend und allgemein bekannt, dass solche geheime Veranstaltungen — wie Satanskult und schwarze Messen, für gewöhnlich verbunden mit sexuellen Ausschweifungen — immer wieder im Laufe der Zeit vorgekommen sind und auch jetzt noch vorkommen⁴⁴. Nichtsdestoweniger versteht man leicht die Entrüstung Hofbauers, dem dies alles ein unerhörter Greuel war; um so mehr da er es für notwendig hielt, unverzüglich dagegen einzuschreiten ohne zu sehen, wie dies tatsächlich geschehen sollte⁴⁵. Ausser seinen Mitbrüdern hat er niemanden an Ort und Stelle, dem er völlig vertrauen kann, und so wendet er sich an seinen treuen Freund Virginio um Rat (Dok. 1).

Es ist begreiflich, dass dieser ebenso von der Nachricht bestürzt war und nicht ohne Rücksprache mit anderen etwas tun wollte. Uebrigens, was konnte er eigentlich tun? Das einzige war wohl, die höheren kirchlichen Autoritäten einzuschalten. So übergab er den Brief an Severoli, der am 30. Juni d. J. eine Abschrift an den Kardinal Staatssekretär weiterleitete mit der Bemerkung, es schein ihm, die Kongregation des Hl. Offiziums solle sofort von der « schreck-

⁴⁴ Vgl. die Artikel von F. Bak, *The Church of Satan in the United States*, in *Antoniano* 50 (1975) 152-193, und *La chiesa di Satana negli Stati Uniti*, in *Rassegna di teologia* 16 (1975) 342-353.

⁴⁵ Dass es damals in Warschau auf kirchlichem Gebiet bisweilen sonderbar herging, hatte Hofbauer schon in seinem Brief vom 3. Februar 1800 an Virginio mitgeteilt. Er berichtet da von einem Ordensgeistlichen, der zum Judentum überging und « solemmiter et publice » beschnitten wurde. MH XIV 92.

lichen Entdeckung » unterrichtet werden (Dok. 2). — Ob dies geschehen ist wissen wir nicht ⁴⁶.

Auf jeden Fall leitete das Staatssekretariat Hofbauers Brief an den Sekretär der Propaganda, Erzbischof Domenico Coppola ⁴⁷, weiter, mit der Bitte, angeben zu wollen, welche Antwort man dem Nuntius geben sollte. Obwohl im Billett vom 10. November nicht das Datum von Severolis beigeschlossenem Brief angegeben steht, müssen wir doch wohl annehmen, es sei der vom 30. Juni, wobei er Hofbauers Schreiben an Virginio vom 9. Mai (Juni) hinzugefügt hatte ⁴⁸ (Dok. 3).

Am 14. August schrieb Hofbauer wieder an Virginio und kommt am Ende des Briefes nochmals auf die « frevle Gesellschaft » zu sprechen. Vielleicht weist Gott selber den Weg, sie zu zerstören. Denn heute hat ein Prälat, der zu den vornehmsten Mitgliedern derselben gehört, einen seiner Patres gebeten, ihm ausserhalb der Stadt die Beichte abzunehmen. Allerdings traut Hofbauer der Sache nicht ganz; er fürchtet, unter der schönen Decke könnte eine verräterische Hinterlist verborgen sein (Dok. 4). Der Name des Mitbruders wird nicht genannt, aber man denkt unwillkürlich an den Rektor von St. Benno, P. Thaddäus Hübl, den man einmal unter dem Vorwand, eines seiner Beichtkinder verlange ihn ans Krankenlager, aus der Stadt führte und dann schwer verprügelte ⁴⁹.

Auch diesen Brief Hofbauers übergab Virginio an Severoli, der den Abschnitt über die « frevle Gesellschaft » seiner Depesche an Consalvi vom 20. November hinzufügte, mit der Bemerkung, es sei dies ein Zusatz zum am 30. Juni übersandten Brief ⁵⁰. Severoli nimmt an, dass inzwischen das Hl. Offizium oder die Kongregation 'de Propaganda Fide' die angebrachten Massregeln getroffen habe. Wenn er mit der Zeit Weiteres über die Angelegenheit erfahre, werde er es nicht unterlassen, Meldung davon zu erstatten (Dok. 5).

⁴⁶ Im Archiv des Staatssekretariats fanden wir nicht, dass die 'Suprema Congregatio' verständigt wurde. Das Archiv des Hl. Offiziums ist für historische Nachforschungen noch immer nicht zugänglich.

⁴⁷ Domenico Coppola (1752-1807), zum Titularerzbischof von Myra ernannt am 20. Oktober 1800, Sekretär der Propaganda 1801-1807. RITZLER-SEFRIN, a. a. O. VII 274 gibt den Namen « Ioannes ».

⁴⁸ Der betreffende Dokumentenband im APF ist sehr unordentlich zusammengebunden. Die Schriftstücke (Originale u. Abschriften), Begleitschreiben und Notizen sind dermassen durcheinander, dass es schwer ist festzustellen, was zusammengehört.

⁴⁹ P. Hübl war in Warschau als Beichtvater sehr gesucht, sowohl beim einfachen Volk wie bei den höheren Ständen; HOFER, a. a. O. 133-134. Ueber die dem heiligmässigen Mann gestellte Falle, ebd. 206-207.

⁵⁰ Severoli hat also am 20. November 1802 nicht den Brief Hofbauers an Virginio vom 14. August, sondern nur einen Auszug desselben an Consalvi geschickt. Das

Wie Severolis Brief vom 30. Juni, wurde auch der vom 20. November vom Staatssekretariat an die Propaganda weitergeleitet, und zwar am 19. Dezember; allerdings mit der Bitte, ihn nach beliebiger Verwertung zurückzusenden (Dok. 6).

Die Propaganda hat sich dann über die « frevle Gesellschaft » in Warschau beraten. Am 7. Januar 1803 teilte Coppola das Ergebnis der Beratung dem Staatssekretär mit. Der Präfekt der Kongregation, Kardinal Stefano Borgia⁵¹, sei der Ansicht, man könne momentan aus verschiedenen Gründen nichts unternehmen, besonders auch da die Angelegenheit ungenügend belegt sei. Man solle darum warten bis man nähere Auskunft bekommen hat. Mit seinem Brief schickte Coppola die vom Staatssekretariat empfangenen Dokumente zurück, nachdem davon eine Abschrift gemacht worden war (Dok. 7).

Es darf wohl angenommen werden, dass nicht lange nachher Consalvi gemäss der Meinung des Kardinals Borgia an Severoli berichtet hat.

Obwohl Hofbauers Informationen in dieser Angelegenheit also anscheinend keinen praktischen Erfolg gezeitigt haben, so geht aus den Dokumenten dennoch klar hervor, dass seine diesbezüglichen Mitteilungen von den kirchlichen Behörden sehr ernst genommen worden sind; und nicht nur vom Wiener Nuntius, sondern auch von den höchsten römischen Stellen, wie Staatssekretariat und Propagandakongregation. Wir haben hier somit eine klare Bestätigung der schon längst bekannten Tatsache, dass Hofbauers Berichte über die kirchliche und religiöse Lage in Zentral- und Nordosteuropa in Rom aufmerksame Beachtung fanden. Es gibt mehrere Fälle, wo sie die von den zuständigen Behörden getroffenen Entscheidungen wesentlich mitbestimmt haben.

Damit ist die Angelegenheit der « frevlen Gesellschaft » in Warschau, insofern Hofbauer damit zu tun hatte, abgeschlossen; oder richtiger gesagt, mehr ist uns darüber nicht bekannt. Man möchte natürlich gerne etwas Genaueres über ihre Geschichte und ihren Bestand wissen. Wenn schon Notizen darüber zu finden sind, dann in den Warschauer Archiven, die uns aber nicht zur Verfügung stehen.

Betreffs Hofbauers Bemühen bleiben allerdings auch einige Fragen offen. Seine Briefe vom 9. Mai (Juni) und 14. August 1802 waren an Vir-

Original des Briefes hat er ins Archiv der Wiener Nuntiatur einverleibt. Jetzt im ASV, Nunziatura di Vienna, vol. 211, fo 213rv; veröffentlicht in MH V 2-3.

⁵¹ Stefano Borgia (1731-1804) wurde am 30. März 1789 von Pius VI. zum Kardinal ernannt, Präfekt der Propaganda 1802-1804.

ginio gerichtet, der sie dann dem Wiener Nuntius übergeben hat. Man fragt sich, ob der Heilige und Severoli nicht auch direkt Fühlung mit einander wegen der Angelegenheit genommen haben. Am 14. August schickte Hofbauer ebenfalls einen Brief an Severoli, ohne die Angelegenheit zu erwähnen⁵². Kein Wort darüber auch in seinem Schreiben an den Nuntius vom 6. Oktober⁵³. Severoli berührt das Thema ebensowenig in seinen Briefen an Hofbauer vom 25. August und 6. November⁵⁴.

Das letzte Schreiben wird der Heilige nicht mehr in Warschau empfangen haben; denn am 11. d. M. verliess er mit Hübl und zwei Klerikern die Stadt, um seine dritte Gründungsreise nach Deutschland anzutreten⁵⁵. Die Reise ging zunächst nach Wien, wo Hofbauer und Severoli einander nun persönlich kennen lernten, bei welcher Gelegenheit Severolis hohe Meinung von Hofbauer nicht nur bestätigt, sondern noch bedeutend vermehrt wurde⁵⁶. Man wird kaum fehlgehen mit der Annahme, dass in ihren wiederholten vertrauten Gesprächen auch die «frevle Gesellschaft» von Warschau zur Sprache gekommen ist. Konnte diese ja als ein deutliches Zeichen des Verfalls der religiösen Lage in der Stadt, die Hofbauer dem Nuntius in ziemlich dunkeln Farben beschrieben hat, gedeutet werden⁵⁷.

⁵² Text des Briefes in MH V 3-6.

⁵³ Text des Briefes in MH V 6-7 u. II 47-50.

⁵⁴ Text der Briefe in MH V 6 u. 7-8.

⁵⁵ Siehe *Spic. hist.* 10 (1962) 270 u. HOFER, a. a. O. 150.

⁵⁶ Severoli gibt ein sehr lobendes Urteil über Hofbauer in seinen Briefen vom 10. Dezember an Wessenberg und vom 11. d. M. an Consalvi. Die Texte in MH V 9 (an Wessenberg) u. III 89 (an Consalvi). In seiner Antwort an Severoli vom 29. Dezember macht Wessenberg sich dessen Urteil über Hofbauer durchaus zu eigen.

⁵⁷ Die Schilderung der religiösen Lage und besonders des Klerus, so wie Hofbauer sie dem Nuntius darlegte, war betäubend. Im Brief vom 11. Dezember 1802 an Consalvi sagt Severoli: «Quanto mi sono rallegrato al conoscere in questo religioso un uomo veramente apostolico, altrettanto ho dovuto affliggermi per la relazione ch'egli mi ha fatta del nostro clero e de' nostri affari religiosi negli Stati Prussiani». MH III 89. In seinem Brief vom 24. Dezember an die Propaganda gibt Severoli kein sehr erfreuliches Bild von der kirchlichen Lage in Warschau (Stadt u. Diözese), was bestimmt wohl grossenteils auf Mitteilungen Hofbauers zurückgeht, wenn dieser auch nicht genannt wird. Der Bischof ist zwar ein guter Mann, aber seiner Aufgabe nicht gewachsen. Das Konsistorium besteht aus verdächtigen Personen; der königliche Kommissar, ein Protestant, ist noch der Beste. Die Kanoniker, einen einzigen ausgenommen, führen ein unerbauliches Leben. Die Weltpriester sind im allgemeinen unwissend und lasterhaft; es werden nur vier eifrige und fromme Priester mit Namen genannt. Von den Klosterorden sind einige in Verfall; alle leiden darunter, dass der Nachwuchs zu spärlich ist. Unter den Ordensleuten gibt es aber auch verschiedene achtbare Personen, fromm und gelehrt, wovon einige mit Namen genannt werden. MH XV 116-117. — Für die Namen siehe auch die Notiz von P. Hübl in MH XIII 326.

DOKUMENTE

1. - Brief des hl. Klemens M. Hofbauer an den hochw. Herrn Luigi Virginio in Wien; Warschau, 9. Mai 1802. — Abschrift im APF, SRC MP¹, vol. 18 (1800-1810), f^o 211r-214r. Unvollständige Abschrift im ASV, Nunziatura di Vienna, vol. 228² (1802), f^o 104v-106r (ursprüngliche Seitenzahl 202-205).

Warsaviae, die 9^a Maji 1802³

Amantissime Pater

Nescio quomodo exordiar praesentem meam pagellam. Et pudet me et abhorreo in hoc argumenti genere verba facere, in quo tamen necessarium mihi tuum consilium est. Non minus tuum dilaceratum iri cor praevideo quam revera meum, dum haec, quae scribo, perlegeris.

Grassatur in hacce nostra civitate, quam incolimus, secta quaedam, quam quomodo compellem revera nescio. Hanc contigit mihi die hesterna adeo detegere, ut de existentia illius nullum fere⁴ mihi supersit dubium. Quantum mihi constat, suas habet gradationes, quarum passim quatuor numerantur. Quemadmodum expertum habeo, fundamentalia ejusdem dogmata sunt: Atheismus et materialismus. Quid de politicis sentiat, nondum experiri potui. Nonnulla mihi innotescunt de ritibus, quos in conventiculis suis observare solent. Conventus istos celebrare solent prima semper Dominica cujusvis mensis, intra horam primam et quintam post meridiem; et praeter Dominicas etiam singulis festivitatibus majoribus. Hinc celebratus fuit

¹ Scritture riferite nei Congressi. Moscovia, Polonia e Ruteni. Wie schon früher bemerkt, sind die Schriftstücke in diesem Band ziemlich durcheinander geraten.

² Vorne im Band steht angegeben, was darin enthalten ist: « Registro delli dispacci di Sua Ecc.za R.ma Monsig. Nunzio Severoli alla Segreteria di Stato nell'anno 1802 ». Es sind aber auch einige Briefe an die Propaganda aufgenommen.

³ Das Datum ist in den beiden zur Verfügung stehenden Abschriften, die nicht von einander abhängig sind, durchaus klar. Im Briefe werden aber zwei Ereignisse erwähnt, die an späteren Daten stattgefunden haben, am 2. Bittag vor Christi Himmelfahrt (25. Mai) und Pfingsten (6. Juni). Wir müssen also annehmen, dass Hofbauer entweder im Briefdatum irrümlich Mai für Juni geschrieben hat, oder den Brief zwar am 9. Mai angefangen aber erst etwa einen Monat nachher abgeschlossen hat. Da Pfingsten schon am Anfang des Briefes erwähnt wird, neigen wir zur Annahme, dass im Briefdatum eine Monatsverwechslung unterlaufen ist.

⁴ Das Wort « fere » nur in der Abschrift im ASV.

conventus talis die Dominica proxime transacta Pentecostes⁵ et alter feria II subsequente.

Inter ritus observari solitos in quolibet conventu magis execrabilis, abominandi⁶, impii et sacrilegi sunt sequentes: in introitu conculcatio Crucifixi imaginis; spoliatio vestium usque ad nudum inter personas utriusque sexus, promiscue conversantes, sive laicae sive ecclesiasticae sint. Praeterea horrendus et inauditus sacrilegusque abusus SS. Altaris Sacramenti — nescio tamen, ob quem proprie id fieri soleat finem — quod tali modo fieri solet: Foeminae, quae intervenire consueverunt his conventibus, tenentur singulis primis Dominicis mensis et festis majoribus in ecclesia a statutis jam designata, nimirum hic Warsaviae in Ecclesia Cathedrali, hora determinata ad Communionem accedere; quam cum acceperit, tenetur clam ex ore eximere, repositam conservare ac⁷ demum in conventum post meridiem celebrandum afferre. Ubi postquam jam sunt omnes congregati, quaelibet foemina sibi accerset aliquem ex viris, nudis jam omnibus, dividit sacram particulam, datque dimidium viro, et vicissim vir foeminae alterum dimidium cum hoc formulae effato: *Accipe, manduca, conjungere⁸ et multiplicare.*

Non potui plures hucusque⁹ in hoc genere impietatis colligere notitias, nondum enim 18 horae elapsae sunt a tempore, quo de tali existentia documenta accepi, licet quidem a longiore tempore jam diversae conjecturae apparebant. Hanc vero notitiam a persona quadam accepi, quae eosdem adibat conventus, et complex olim fuerat earundem abominationum. Reperiuntur in manibus meis diversae epistolae, partim in transumpto, partim originales, quarum praecipue una, quae originalis est et proprio cognomine complicitis istius subscripta, istam infernalem sectam describit; aliae epistolae, quae tantum copiatas sunt, ad eandem personam a quodam Praelato magnae auctoritatis in Ecclesia nostra Warsaviensi tunc temporis datae, cum haec persona de conversione sua cogitaret ejusque libidini ultro deservire detrectaret, nihil aliud probare videntur quam ejus lasciviam, et magnam dant probabilitatem, quod et ipse, ut originalis illa, quam habeo, indicat epistola, ad eandem inscriptus sit sectam¹⁰.

⁵ Pfingsten fiel im Jahre 1802 auf den 6. Juni.

⁶ « abominandi » fehlt in der Abschrift im ASV.

⁷ « et » in der Abschrift im ASV.

⁸ « manduca, conjungere » fehlt in der Abschrift im ASV.

⁹ « hucusque » fehlt in der Abschrift im ASV.

¹⁰ Diese Briefe sind nicht bekannt. Bei der Beschlagnahme des Archivs von St.

Tres personae ecclesiasticae mihi sunt notissimae, quae mihi indicatae fuerunt ut membra talis sectae. Personae istae tales sunt, ut ex earum gerendi sese more externo valde probabile esse credam, illas suspicionis notam talem¹¹ effugere non posse. Ut alia reticeam, an non probabile est talem personam ad hanc pertinere posse sectam, ad quam pertinere mihi defertur, quae constituta a superioribus ad examinandam vocationem puellarum, quae desiderant in claustra monialium recipi, has puellas examini sese subjicientes solus absque arbitris in locum separatum conducit, ubi¹² praetextu cujusdam mandati superiorum quod nusquam existit, jubet innocentes istas juvenculas denudari coram se, in ordine revisionis cujusdam etc. etc. Tres tales infamiter prostitutas virgines sistere possem in testimonium¹³.

Haec serviant solummodo ut notificatio. Quaero consilium, quid in hac re agendum mihi sit¹⁴. Ut fatear candide, hic prorsus neminem invenio cum quo consilium inire audeam. Ad superiores ecclesiasticos deferre — cribro aquam haurirem; ollam apud cacabum accusarem quod nigra esset¹⁵. Saltem id citius facere non possem, antequam certo mihi constet illa, quae de ipsis superioribus affirmantur in hoc genere, omnino falsa esse. Rem ad superiores saeculares devolvi permittere — qualis confusio pro ministerio ecclesiastico talia nefanda ad iudices acatholicos denuntiare! Est hic praeter curiam episcopalem etiam iudicium adpellationum 3^{ae} instantiae a Sede Apostolica constitutum, in quo tres designati sunt iudices; sed etiam inter istos, ut ex relationibus audio, dari dicuntur complices.

Tacere et permittere continuationem hujus sectae, quae ab aliquot annis jam consistentiam suam habere dicitur, conscientia ipsa natura reclamatur, si certo certius vera sint, quae mihi deferuntur.

Quaeso quid agere debeam casu quo, post diligenter institutam investigationem, de veritate rei mihi verissime constaret? Nam, ut dixi, summae probabilitatis indicia alioquin patent¹⁶. Et deventum est, ut egomet ipse de ore cujusdam Praelati eminentis dignitatis si-

Benno 1808 wurden sie nicht gefunden; vgl. MH VII 56. Es ist durchaus wahrscheinlich, dass Hofbauer sie wegen des kompromittierenden Charakters rechtzeitig vernichtet hat.

¹¹ « talem » fehlt in der Abschrift im ASV.

¹² « ubi » nur in der Abschrift im ASV.

¹³ « in medium » in der Abschrift im ASV.

¹⁴ Hier schliesst die Abschrift im ASV ab.

¹⁵ Sprichwörtliche Ausdrücke, die in verschiedenen Sprachen vorkommen, um die Aussichtslosigkeit eines Unternehmens anzudeuten.

¹⁶ Hofbauer zeigt sich hier etwas weniger sicher als am Anfang des Briefes.

moniam audiverim compellare peccatum stultorum. Denuntiationes confessoriorum sollicitantium absque ullo manent effectu. Operariorum aliquorum, qui zelo Dei agunt, fervor in conversationibus Praelatorum coram saecularibus ut fanaticus vituperatur; quidquid animarum saluti proficuum esse potest, ipsorum opera aut destruitur aut saltem impediti tentatur.

Parochus ecclesiae S. Andreae hujus civitatis¹⁷, qui unicus vir dignissimus erat, de quo jam in alia quadam epistula laudes enumeravi¹⁸, in Societate Jesu olim zelantissimus missionarius per Pomeraniam, Russiam, Lituaniam et Poloniam, indefessus et laboriosus in servitio Ecclesiae, ut semper fuerat, secunda Rogationum die¹⁹, post Missae solemniter peracta in ipsa recitatione litaniarum majorum, quam ipse efficiebat, apoplexia tactus, spiritum Deo reddidit, prope nonagenarius. Cum isto solo in rebus majoris momenti consultare solebamus. Exceptis meis fratribus, nemo nunc remanet qui plenam mereatur confidentiam²⁰. R. D.nus Edgworth de Firmont²¹, qui confortabat animam Ludovici XVII in executione ejus ferali Parisiis et nunc familiae Ludovici XVIII a confessionibus est, vir praestantissimus, eruditus et sanctus, pro nunc abest a Warsavia et nescio quando revertetur, amicus meus intimus est, cui cor meum totum patet.

¹⁷ Der Exjesuit Tomasz Grodzicki (geb. am 21. Dezember 1718 in Litauen, gest. am 25. Mai 1802 in Warschau), Pfarrer der St. Andreaskirche seit dem Rücktritt des Exjesuiten Karol Wyrwicz (1717-1793) im Jahre 1780. Weitere Notizen über Grodzickis Leben und Wirksamkeit in J. BROWN, *Biblioteka pisarzy asystencyi polskiej Towarzystwa Jesuwego*, Poznań 1862, 185-186; C. SOMMERVOGEL, *Bibliothèque de la Compagnie de Jésus*, vol. III, Bruxelles-Paris 1892, 1848-1849; *Podręczna Encyklopedia Kościelna XIII-XIV* (1907) 350; J. POPLATEK, *Komisja Edukacji Narodowej*, Kraków 1973, 248. Die St. Andreaskirche in Warschau war 1722 als hl. Kreuzkapelle für die Jesuiten gebaut worden, und wurde nach der Aufhebung der Gesellschaft Jesu 1773 zur Pfarrkirche erhoben unter dem Titel des hl. Andreas. Die Pfarrei wurde 1817 in die Kirche des hl. Antonius verlegt.

Nach dem Tode Grodzickis wurde noch im Jahre 1802 der Exjesuit Jan Bartsch zum Pfarrer der St. Andreaskirche ernannt, dessen priesterliche Wirksamkeit von Hofbauer ebenfalls hochgeschätzt wurde; siehe MH XIII 326 u. XV 16. Eine biographische Skizze von Bartsch (geb. am 15. Juli 1747 in Reszel, gest. am 26. Januar 1810 in Warschau) in POPLATEK, a. a. O. 99-100.

Ich danke verbindlichst Frau Dr. Krystyna Sadowska vom Pont. Istituto di Studi Ecclesiastici in Rom für ihre freundliche Hilfe, die mir ermöglichte, die Namen der drei obenerwähnten Exjesuiten festzustellen.

¹⁸ Dieser Brief Hofbauers an Virginio ist nicht bekannt.

¹⁹ Am 25. Mai.

²⁰ Im Brief Severolis an die Propaganda vom 24. Dezember 1802, der sicher grossenteils auf Mitteilungen Hofbauers zurückgeht, werden verschiedene andere würdige Warschauer Geistliche genannt. MH XV 116-117. — Die selben Namen in einer Notiz von P. Hübl, die darum wohl 1802 zu datieren ist. MH XIII 326.

²¹ Henry Essex Edgeworth de Firmont (1745-1807). Biographische Skizze von J. LEFLON in *Dict. d'hist. et de géogr. ecclés.* XIV (1960) 1435.

Precor itaque me tuis a longinquo saltem instruere dignare consiliis. Quod si vera sint omnia, uti mihi relata fuerunt, plurimi etiam ex Magnatibus complices reperientur.

2. - Letzter Absatz eines Briefes des Wiener Nuntius, Erzbischof Antonio Severoli, an den Staatssekretär Kardinal Ercole Consalvi; Wien, 30. Juni 1802. — Sekretariatsabschrift im ASV, Nunziatura di Vienna, vol. 228, f° 104r (ursprüngliche Seitenzahl 201).

Acciudo all'E. V. in copia una lettera di Varsavia scritta ad un ottimo ecclesiastico di qui²², sembrandomi che non si debba ritardare alla suprema Congregazione del Sant'Offizio l'orribile scoperta, che in essa viene accennata. A Monsig. Nunzio di Moscovia consegnerò nel suo passaggio l'originale ed a voce gli dirò quel di più che è a mia notizia relativamente alla nuova sua legazione ed ai disordini che vi regnano.

A' dì 30 Giugno 1802.

3. - Brief des Staatssekretariats an den Sekretär der Propaganda, Erzbischof Domenico Coppola; Rom, 10. November 1802. — Original im APF, SRC MP, vol. 18 (1800-1810), f° 207r.

Dalle Stanze del Quirinale, 10 Nov. 1802

Trasmette il Cardinal Segretario di Stato a V. S. Ill.ma l'annesso dispaccio di Mons. Nunzio Apostolico in Vienna²³, ad oggetto che si compiaccia di favorirgli la risposta da darsi allo stesso Prelato. In attenzione de' suoi riscontri, con distinta stima le bacia di vero cuore le mani.

ohne Unterschrift

Mons. Coppola
Segretario della S. Cong.ne di Propaganda Fide

4. - Auszug aus einem Brief des hl. Klemens M. Hofbauer an den hochw. Herrn Luigi Virginio in Wien; Warschau, 14. August 1802. — Original im ASV, Nunziatura di Vienna, vol. 211, f° 213rv. Abschrift des Auszuges im APF, SRC MP, vol. 18 (1800-1810), f° 210r. Der Brief ist herausgegeben in MH V 2-3.

Puto quod Deus dabit ipse²⁴ modum dissipandi et destruendi nefandam illam societatem hic, de qua in una alia mearum epistola-

²² Der unter Nr. 1 abgedruckte Brief Hofbauers an Virginio.

²³ Obwohl nicht angegeben ist, welcher Brief vom Nuntius übermittelt wird, kommt nur der unter Nr. 2 abgedruckte vom 30. Juni in Betracht.

²⁴ Im Original und in der Abschrift: dabit ipse. In MH V 2: ipse dabit.

rum nuper Paternitati Tuae notitiam dedi. Hodierna enim die quidam e coetu Praelatorum, qui inter primarios complices numeratur, significavit uni meorum sacerdotum, se desiderare coram illo conscientiam suam sacramentali lavacro abluere; et ideo illum constituit pro proxima feria secunda, ut secum proficisceretur duobus milliaribus ab hac urbe. — Revera nescio, quid de hac invitatione censeam; vereor ex parte, ne aliqua sub hoc pallio fraus vel traditio lateat. Haec tam²⁵ repentina mutatio istius viri, ignoro²⁶, an vera vel simulata censenda sit; quidquid sit, eventus, quem Deo commendo, docebit.

5. - Brief des Wiener Nuntius, Erzbischof Antonio Severoli, an den Staatssekretär Kardinal Ercole Consalvi; Wien 20. November 1802. — Sekretariatsabschrift im ASV, Nunziatura di Vienna, vol. 228, fo 248r (ursprüngliche Seitenzahl 619)²⁷.

Con una mia Cifra dei 30 dello scorso Giugno diedi conto a V. E. d'una nuova infame setta scoperta in Varsavia, su la quale si saranno, m'immagino, prese le opportune misure o dalla S. Congregazione di Propaganda o da quella del Sant'Offizio. A proseguimento di tale materia mi fo un dovere di annettere in copia un paragrafo di lettera del Padre Hoffbaver, con cui mi sono posto in corrispondenza, relativo a quest'oggetto. E non lascerò in avvenire di fare lo stesso, quando mi riesca di avere ulteriori notizie.

6. - Brief des Staatssekretariats an den Sekretär der Propaganda, Erzbischof Domenico Coppola; Rom, 19. Dezember 1802. — Original im APF, SRC MP, vol. 18 (1800-1810), fo 218r.

Dalle Stanze del Quirinale, 19 Xbre 1802

Avendo il Sig. Card. Segretario di Stato ricevuto da Mons. Nunzio di Vienna l'annesso dispaccio in data dei 20 dello scorso Novembre, lo trasmette a V.S. Ill.ma, pregandola a ritornarglielo dopo fattone l'uso conveniente, ed intanto con distinta stima le bacio di vero cuore le mani.

ohne Unterschrift

Mons. Segretario di Propaganda Fide

²⁵ Im Original und in der Abschrift: tam. In MH V 3: tamen.

²⁶ Im Original und in der Abschrift: ignoro. In MH V 3: ignosco.

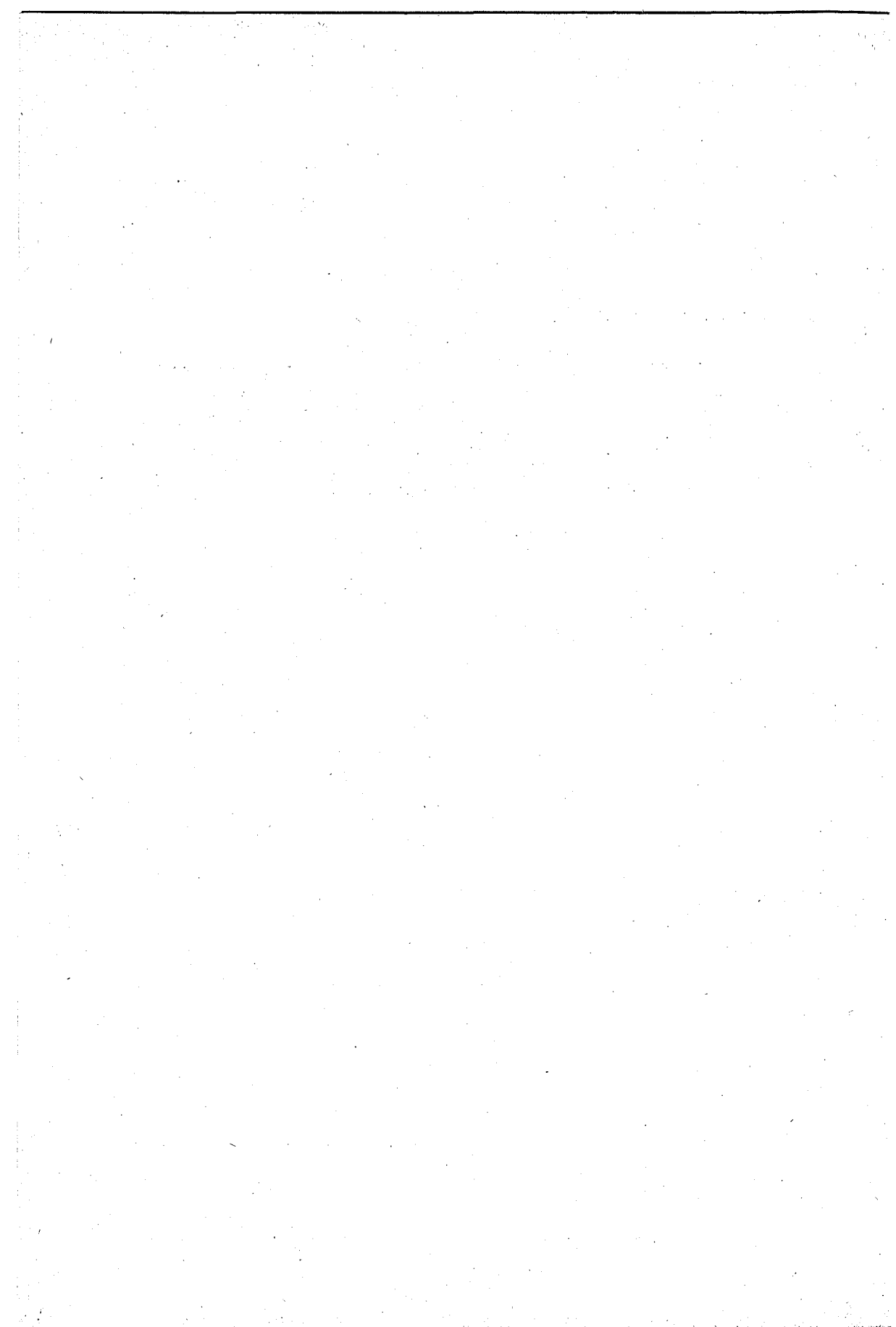
²⁷ Abschrift des Briefes im APF, SRC MP, vol. 18 (1800-1810), fo 209r. Auf der letzten (sonst leeren) Seite (fo 216v) hat ein Beamter der Propaganda folgendes vermerkt: « Polonia, Varsavia, 20 9bre 1802. Il Nunzio di Vienna manda un paragrafo di lettera del P. Hofbaver concernente un'infame setta scoperta in Varsavia ».

7. - Erster Absatz eines Briefes des Sekretärs der Propaganda, Erzbischof Domenico Coppola, an den Staatssekretär Ercole Consalvi; Rom, 7. Januar 1803. — Sekretariatsabschrift im APF, SRC MP, vol. 18 (1800-1810), f° 217r.

Propaganda, 7 del 1803

E.mo Sig. Card. Segretario di Stato

Il Segretario di Propaganda rimanda a V. Em.za qui accluse le carte riguardanti la nuova infame setta scoperta in Varsavia, dopo averne presa la copia. Ha il tutto comunicato all'E.mo Borgia Prefetto; ma il medesimo crede che ora nulla possa farsi per tale oggetto, non solo per la qualità del politico governo, ma anche perché nulla è documentato sinora, e che perciò convenga attendere ulteriori schiarimenti.



STUDIA

GIUSEPPE ORLANDI

BENEDETTO XIV, S. ALFONSO MARIA DE LIGUORI E I REDENTORISTI

Nessun papa è stato tanto amato dai Redentoristi come Benedetto XIV¹. A nessun altro pontefice le loro costituzioni capitolarie — in vigore fino alla riforma promossa dal Concilio Vaticano II — attribuivano il titolo di « insigne e speciale benefattore »². Egli apriva la lista delle persone benemerite, in suffragio delle quali veniva celebrata ogni anno una messa nell'ottava dei defunti³. A testimonianza della profondità e della sincerità dell'affetto nutrito per lui si potrebbero addurre anche altre prove: ad esempio i suoi ritratti, in cui frequentemente ci si imbatteva fino ad anni recenti visitando le case della Congregazione del SS. Redentore. Le costituzioni davano anche la motivazione della profonda venerazione inculcata per detto Papa: la gratitudine, « sì per l'approvazione delle Regole dell'Istituto, come per la comunicazione de' privilegi a noi accordata con le altre congregazioni »⁴. Se ne poteva aggiungere anche un'altra, inespresa ma

Questo che pubblichiamo è il testo di una comunicazione presentata a Bologna il 7 XII 1979, durante il Convegno Internazionale di Studi Storici su Benedetto XIV, promosso dal Centro Studi « Girolamo Baruffaldi » di Cento (6-9 XII 1979).

¹ Per la bibliografia su Benedetto XIV cfr. T. BERTONE, *Il governo della Chiesa nel pensiero di Benedetto XIV*, Roma 1977; M. FANTI, *Il « pastorale governo » del cardinale Lambertini*, in *Strenna Storica Bolognese* 9 (1959) 61-119; Id., *Prospero Lambertini (Benedetto XIV) nel terzo centenario della nascita*, in *Il Carrobbio* 1 (1975) 119-133; J. GELMI, *La Segreteria di Stato sotto Benedetto XIV (1740-1758)*, Trento 1975; E. MORELLI, *Tre profili: Benedetto XIV, Pasquale Stanislao Mancini, Pietro Roselli*, Roma 1955, 1-45; M. ROSA, *B. XIV*, in *Dizionario biografico degli italiani*, VIII, Roma 1966, pp. 393-408.

² *Codex regularum CSSR*, Romae 1896, pp. 391-392, n. 1051.

³ *Acta capitulorum generalium CSSR*, I, Romae 1899, p. 447, n. 919, 9.

⁴ *Codex regularum CSSR* cit., loc. cit.

reale: il ricordo della stima reciproca che aveva uniti Benedetto XIV e S. Alfonso Maria de Liguori, fondatore dei Redentoristi.

Come è noto, l'elezione del card. Prospero Lambertini al pontificato avvenne il 17 agosto 1740, al 255° scrutinio. Fu così posto fine ad un conclave durato più di sei mesi, « il più lungo di tutto il secolo, anzi il più lungo di tutti, dal grande scisma in qua »⁵. A Napoli dovette impressionare favorevolmente il fatto che il nuovo pontefice avesse assunto il nome di Benedetto, in segno di gratitudine verso il napoletano Benedetto XIII — Pierfrancesco Orsini di Gravina — che lo aveva promosso alla porpora (1728). Ma quali erano i sentimenti di Benedetto XIV per il Regno di Napoli? E' stato scritto che quella corte fu — con la corte di Firenze — una delle maggiori sorgenti di preoccupazioni e di sofferenze per Papa Lambertini. Che, se nutriva per Carlo di Borbone « una simpatia personale »⁶, dei ministri del giovane monarca riteneva al massimo di poter dire, « cristianamente parlando, ciò che disse Cristo de' suoi discepoli: *mundi estis, sed non omnes* »⁷. Non sono mancati gli autori che hanno affermato che Papa Lambertini amò « moltissimo » Napoli⁸. Ma è pur vero che nel suo epistolario si trovano anche espressioni dure contro i napoletani, definiti « cervelli inquieti e cattivi, e sempre contrarj a chi gli comanda »⁹. E se è vero che la metropoli partenopea gli appariva « piena d'uomini letterati », si trattava pur sempre di gente « senza Religione, e che tirano all'ateismo »¹⁰. Come scrive Emilia Morelli, a lui « persino l'irrequietezza di alcuni ordini religiosi, come il certosino, sembrava nata a Napoli, o per lo meno, protetta da quel governo »¹¹. Ma quali che fossero le sue personali inclinazioni, Benedetto XIV dovette ben presto occuparsi del Regno di Napoli, concludendo le trattative già in corso da tempo per il concordato, che venne sottoscritto il 2 giugno 1741¹².

Dei successivi interventi relativi a tale area geografica — sulle condizioni religiose della quale si teneva costantemente informato —

⁵ L. PASTOR, *Storia dei papi*, XVI/1, Roma 1933, 3.

⁶ BERTONE, *op. cit.*, 23; MORELLI, *op. cit.*, 31.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 29.

⁸ R. DE MAIO, *Società e vita religiosa a Napoli nell'età moderna*, Napoli 1971, 206, 366.

⁹ BENEDETTO XIV, *Le lettere di Benedetto XIV al card. de Tencin*, a cura di E. MORELLI, I (1740-1747), Roma 1955, p. 438.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*

¹¹ MORELLI, *op. cit.*, *loc. cit.*

¹² [A. MERCATI], *Raccolta di concordati su materie ecclesiastiche tra la Santa Sede e le autorità civili*, Roma 1919, 338-364.

in questa sede ci preme segnalare la lettera *Gravissimum supremi apostolatus* dell'8 settembre 1745¹³. Il documento era diretto ai vescovi napoletani, a cui suggeriva l'incremento delle missioni popolari come strumento di rinascita spirituale per il loro gregge.

Premesso che il pesantissimo ufficio del pontificato comporta due compiti principali — condurre alla vera religione i popoli che non la conoscono o che l'hanno dimenticata, conservare puri ed incontaminati la fede e i costumi dei buoni cattolici —, il Papa nota che sia i predecessori che lui stesso si sono occupati di tali compiti in vari modi¹⁴.

Se nelle città il popolo è quasi sempre abbastanza assistito dal punto di vista religioso, nelle località di campagna distanti dalla sede vescovile — e specialmente in montagna — la cura d'anime incontra maggiori difficoltà. C'è da sperare che le popolazioni mantengano salda la fede, mentre bisogna constatare che i costumi sono fin troppo spesso corrotti¹⁵. Che rimedi adottare? Il Papa dice di aver riflettuto a lungo sulla risposta da dare a tale domanda (« de opportunis remediis diu cogitavimus »), e di aver anche chiesto lume a Dio e alla Beata Vergine, nella cui festa — l'8 settembre si celebra la Natività di Maria — la lettera viene pubblicata¹⁶.

Come promotore della Fede presso la S. Congregazione dei Riti, Benedetto XIV ha avuto modo di esaminare le virtù di grandi pastori¹⁷: Giovenale Ancina, vescovo di Saluzzo¹⁸; Roberto Bellarmino, arcivescovo di Capua¹⁹; Alessandro Sauli, vescovo di Aleria, poi di Pavia²⁰. Tali vescovi si sono spesso serviti delle missioni popolari nelle rispettive diocesi. Il Papa ricorda inoltre che i suoi predecessori hanno canonizzato due grandi missionari: S. Vincenzo de' Paoli²¹ e

¹³ BENEDICTUS XIV, *Bullarium*, I, Venezia 1778, pp. 248-250.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 248, § 1.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, § 2.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, § 3.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, §§ 4, 6.

¹⁸ Giovenale Ancina (1545-1604) fu vescovo di Saluzzo dal 1602 al 1604. C. GASBARRI, A.G., in *Bibliotheca sanctorum*, I, Roma 1961, 1087-1091.

¹⁹ Roberto Bellarmino (1542-1621), arcivescovo di Capua dal 1602 al 1605, era stato nominato cardinale nel 1599. Fu beatificato nel 1923, canonizzato nel 1930, e proclamato dottore della Chiesa nel 1931. I. IPARRAGUIRRE, R.B., *ibid.*, XI, Roma 1968, 248-259.

²⁰ Alessandro Sauli (1534-1592), vescovo di Aleria (1570-1591) poi di Pavia (1591-1592), fu beatificato da Benedetto XIV nel 1742 e canonizzato nel 1904. A.M. ERBA, *ibid.*, I, 808-811.

²¹ Vincenzo Depaul (1581-1660) venne beatificato nel 1729 e canonizzato nel 1737. L. CHEROTTI, V. D., *ibid.*, XII, Roma 1969, 1155-1168.

S. Giovanni Francesco Regis²². Menziona inoltre alcuni prelati napoletani di santa vita, nella biografia dei quali è detto che erano promotori delle missioni: per esempio, il card. Innico Caracciolo, vescovo di Aversa²³, e mgr Emilio Cavalieri²⁴, zio materno di S. Alfonso, « qui Troyae Ecclesiam summa pietate, ac studio religionis administravit »²⁵. Anche Benedetto XIII aveva grande stima delle missioni popolari, a cui da vescovo aveva fatto spesso ricorso²⁶. Dal canto suo, Papa Lambertini ricordava che — allorché era segretario della S. Congregazione del Concilio — lodava sempre quei vescovi che nelle relazioni trasmesse in occasione della visita *ad Limina* informavano le autorità romane di servirsi abitualmente di tale strumento pastorale²⁷. Egli stesso — come arcivescovo di Ancona (1727-1731) prima, e di Bologna (1731-1740) poi — aveva toccato con mano « nihil magis conferre, quam alienam opem ac vires implorare, videlicet Sacrae Missiones ubique indicare, praesertim in iis locis, quae magis a Civitatibus sejunguntur »²⁸.

A detta di Benedetto XIV, i missionari sono paragonabili a S. Giovanni e agli altri Apostoli chiamati in aiuto da S. Pietro, la cui barca non era in grado di raccogliere tutto il pesce catturato il giorno della pesca miracolosa²⁹. Tra i grandi missionari il Papa menziona anche il p. Paolo Segneri (« Concionatoris, Scriptoris, ac Missionarii laude clarissimus »)³⁰, del quale riporta il seguente principio di strategia missionaria, che per la verità avrebbe trovato S. Alfonso dissen-

²² Giovanni Francesco Regis (1597-1640) venne beatificato nel 1716 e canonizzato nel 1737. F. BAUMANN, *G.F.R.*, *ibid.*, VI, Roma 1965, 1002-1007. Cfr. nota 53.

²³ Innico Caracciolo (1642-1730), fu vescovo di Aversa dal 1697 al 1730 e cardinale nel 1715. R. RITZLER-P. SEFRIN, *Hierarchia catholica*, V, Patavii 1952, 30, 109-110.

²⁴ Emilio Cavalieri (1663-1726) fu vescovo di Troia dal 1694 al 1726. G. ROSSI, *Della vita di Monsignor Don Emilio Giacomo Cavalieri della Congregazione de' Pii Operarij, Vescovo di Troja*, Napoli 1741; L. OSBAT, *C.E.G.*, in *Dizionario biografico cit.*, XXII, Roma 1979, 664-666; *Id.*, *L'Inquisizione a Napoli. Il processo agli ateisti, 1688-1697*, Roma 1974, 150-152, 192 e *passim*.

²⁵ BENEDICTUS XIV, *Bullarium cit.*, p. 249, § 8.

²⁶ Allorché vi era vescovo (1680-1686), Benedetto XIII chiamò ad operare a Cesena i missionari delle *Apostoliche Missioni* di Napoli. Tale associazione fu attiva anche nelle diocesi di Montefiascone, Padova, Roma, Treviso e Venezia. L. ZUCCALA, *Le sante missioni del clero di Napoli secondo il metodo di S. Alfonso M^a dei Liguori*, Napoli 1938, 101-104.

²⁷ BENEDICTUS XIV, *Bullarium cit.*, p. 248, § 7.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, § 4.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, § 5.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 249, § 9. Sul metodo missionario di Paolo Segneri Sr, SI (1624-1694), frutto di una lunga attività apostolica (1665-1692), cfr. G. ORLANDI, *Missioni parrocchiali e drammatica popolare*, in *Spicilegium Historicum CSSR* 22 (1974) 324-347. Cfr. nota 54.

ziente³¹: « Ex illis autem Missionibus magis copiosum fructum dimanare, quibus majori frequentia populus intersit; ea, prorsus ratione, qua ignis magis augetur, si plures in unum locum carbones congerantur »³². Tali parole potrebbero far pensare che Benedetto XIV fosse un fautore del tipo di missione che vien detta « penitenziale »³³, e che ebbe proprio nel Segneri uno dei massimi teorici, a scapito dell'altro tipo di missione che vien detta « catechetica »³⁴. Ma tale errata impressione viene subito dissipata dalla seguente massima: « Instructio Fidelium potissimus Missionis scopus »³⁵. A questo proposito il Papa dice che, essendo giunta al suo orecchio la voce dell'esistenza di fedeli ignari persino delle verità di necessità di mezzo, bisogna inviare loro dei missionari dotti, che siano veramente in grado di istruire gli ignoranti, e non di alimentare soltanto il loro entusiasmo religioso³⁶. Altra caratteristica dei missionari prescelti sarà il disinteresse: non dovranno chiedere nulla in compenso della loro opera, proprio come gli Oblati di S. Carlo³⁷, operanti nella diocesi di Milano³⁸.

La città di Napoli non manca di missionari zelanti e capaci³⁹, come quelli della Congregazione del P. Pavone⁴⁰, i Pii Operai⁴¹ e i Lazzaristi⁴². L'arcivescovo, il card. Spinelli, dovrà coordinare la loro attività, e a tal fine gli vengono concesse le opportune facoltà⁴³. In via

³¹ S. ALFONSO, *Selva di materie predicabili ed istruttive (Opere ascetiche, 3)*, Torino 1867, 279-283.

³² BENEDICTUS XIV, *Bullarium* cit., p. 249, § 9.

³³ Sulle caratteristiche della missione « penitenziale », cfr. ORLANDI, *art. cit.*, 317-318.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 317-318, 342-348.

³⁵ BENEDICTUS XIV, *Bullarium* cit., p. 249, § 11.

³⁶ *Ibid.*

³⁷ Loro fondatore era stato Giorgio Maria Martinelli (1655-1727), fautore della missione di tipo catechetico. B. BORGONOVO, *P. Giorgio Maria Martinelli*, Milano 1912; M. CHIODI, *Le missioni al popolo dei padri di Rho: storia di un metodo*, in *Rivista del clero italiano* 54 (1973) 230-234; [A.P. FRUTAZ], *Positio super introductione causae et super virtutibus, ex officio concinnata, Servi Dei Georgii Mariae Martinelli, Fundatoris Collegii Missionariorum Rhaudi († 1727)*, (Sacra Rituum Congregatio, Sectio Historica, 80), Città del Vaticano 1952.

³⁸ BENEDICTUS XIV, *Bullarium* cit., p. 249, §§ 12, 16.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, § 13. Sulle varie associazioni missionarie napoletane, cfr. A. MEIBERG, *Historiae missionis paroecialis lineamenta*, [Romae] 1953, 47-62, 234-263.

⁴⁰ Il p. Francesco Pavone SI (1569-1637) era fondatore della cosiddetta *Conferenza*. *Ibid.*, 52-54.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 234-243.

⁴² I Lazzaristi giunsero a Napoli nel 1668. [P. SILVA], *La Congregazione della Missione in Italia (1642-1925)*, Piacenza 1925, 96-114.

⁴³ Giuseppe Spinelli (1694-1763) fu arcivescovo di Napoli dal 1734 al 1754. Cfr. DE MAIO, *op. cit.*, 201-209, e *passim*; BENEDICTUS XIV, *Bullarium* cit., p. 249, §§ 14-15.

del tutto eccezionale — spinto dall'urgenza dell'intervento e dalla necessità di superare difficoltà particolarmente gravi — Papa Lambertini dice di aver provveduto direttamente a reclutare i missionari per due provincie del Regno: il Sannio e la Calabria. Da accordi presi con i rispettivi generali, alla prima provincia erano destinati missionari domenicani⁴⁴, e alla seconda missionari gesuiti⁴⁵. I vescovi, anche nella promozione di questa importante forma di apostolato straordinario, avrebbero dovuto dare l'esempio. In caso di necessità potevano rivolgersi al re, « ut suam auctoritatem et gratiam, si pro missionibus recte gerendis opus fuerit, liberaliter interponat »⁴⁶. Della disponibilità della massima autorità politica c'era da essere certi, essendo stato Carlo di Borbone in persona a sollecitare l'intervento del Papa. Lo apprendiamo da Benedetto XIV stesso, che il 29 settembre 1745 scriveva al card. Tencin: « A proposito poi delle applicazioni, avendoci il buon re di Napoli fatto sapere che sarebbero state necessarie le missioni nel suo Regno, e che da Noi come di moto proprio nostro s'eccitasse il zelo de' vescovi a farle fare, abbiamo composta l'annessa lettera che mandiamo a lei, non perché meriti d'esser letta, ma acciò ella abbia col titolo della nostra antica confidenza quanto si va componendo da Noi »⁴⁷.

Tali parole, specialmente quelle contenute nell'ultima parte della frase, potrebbero ingenerare il sospetto che il Papa nutrisse nel suo intimo ben scarsa stima per le missioni popolari, dato che non riteneva nemmeno degno di esser letto il documento da lui pubblicato per la promozione delle medesime. Sospetto che sembrerebbe confermato da ciò che egli aveva scritto appena qualche giorno prima ad un amico bolognese, il canonico Francesco Peggi: « Per la solita strada del Marchese Magnani riceverà il nostro buon Canonico Peggi una nostra Lettera stampata, che non è dottrinale, ma oratoria. Si manda a Lui, non perché sia degna di Lui, ma acciò abbia tutto »⁴⁸. A dissipare ogni nostra perplessità in merito, basteranno tuttavia alcune considerazioni. Il Papa conosceva gli interessi dei suoi corrispondenti, e sapeva quindi benissimo che l'argomento trattato nella *Gravissimum supremi apostolatus* doveva essere di ben scarso rilievo per un uomo

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, § 16. Cfr. MEIBERG, *op. cit.*, 262-263.

⁴⁵ BENEDICTUS XIV, *Bullarium cit.*, *ibid.*; ORLANDI, *art. cit.*, 319; R. TELLERIA, *San Alfonso Maria de Ligorio*, I, Madrid 1950, 378-379.

⁴⁶ BENEDICTUS XIV, *Bullarium cit.*, pp. 249-250, § 17.

⁴⁷ BENEDETTO XIV, *Le lettere cit.*, 276.

⁴⁸ BENEDICT XIV, *Briefe an den Canonicus Francesco Peggi in Bologna (1727-1758)*, hrsg. v. F.X. KRAUS, Freiburg i. B. — Tübingen 1884, 29-30.

impegnato nell'alta politica come il porporato francese⁴⁹, o per un professore di filosofia come il canonico bolognese⁵⁰. Benedetto XIV voleva quindi prevenire lo stupore che i due destinatari avrebbero provato al momento di ricevere un documento relativo ad un argomento che esulava completamente dal loro orizzonte.

Si aggiunga poi che il Papa aveva espresso pubblicamente la sua stima per le missioni già da anni. Ne è la prova la notificazione pubblicata a Bologna il 21 marzo 1733 (*Intimazione della Missione da farsi nella Chiesa Metropolitana di S. Pietro da' PP. della Missione della Fondazione del Beato Vincenzo de Paulis*)⁵¹. In tale documento — che venne in parte rifiuto nella *Gravissimum supremi apostolatus* — egli aveva tracciato uno schizzo storico delle missioni popolari, delle quali illustrava l'utilità. Pur senza misconoscere i meriti dei missionari della Compagnia di Gesù⁵² — anzi, erano particolarmente elogiati Giovanni Francesco Regis⁵³ e Paolo Segneri⁵⁴ — o di altri Istituti-

⁴⁹ Pierre Guérin de Tencin (1680-1758), cardinale nel 1739, fu arcivescovo di Embrun (1724-1740), poi di Lione (1740-1758). BERTONE, *op. cit.*, 41.

⁵⁰ Sul Peggi (1688-1780) cfr. BENEDICT XIV, *Briefe cit.*, 169-188.

⁵¹ P. LAMBERTINI, *Raccolta di alcune notificazioni, editti, ed istruzioni*, a cura di G. SCARSELLI, I, Bologna 1733, 210-219. Sulle *Notificazioni* del card. Lambertini, cfr. FANTI, *Il « pastorale governo » cit.*, 68-74.

⁵² Sull'atteggiamento di Benedetto XIV verso i Gesuiti, cfr. BERTONE, *op. cit.*, 30-31; MORELLI, *op. cit.*, 16. Nei rapporti della Provincia Veneta — e in particolare delle case di Bologna, che da quella dipendevano — vengono naturalmente comunicati al generale i segni di benevolenza verso la Compagnia di Gesù da parte dell'arcivescovo Lambertini. Questi nel maggio del 1735 ha preso parte agli esercizi in forma di missione tenuti dai Gesuiti nella chiesa di S. Lucia in Bologna [cfr. *Notitiae earum rerum quae ab anno 1731 usque ad annum 1737 a Patribus Collegii Bononiensis ad animarum salutem peracta sunt, quarum specialis mentio habenda visa est*, in ARCHIVUM ROMANUM SOCIETATIS IESU (d'ora in poi: ARSI), Ven. 108, f. 37]. Il 13 II 1737 ha pubblicato una notificazione con cui esorta il clero a compiere un corso di esercizi spirituali presso i Gesuiti (ARSI, *loc. cit.*, ff. 22-25; cfr. LAMBERTINI, *Raccolta di alcune notificazioni cit.*, III, Bologna 1737, 127-130), mentre con altra notificazione del 21 I 1740 ne ha fatto obbligo agli ordinandi (*Ex annuis Provinciae Venetae Societatis Jesu ab anno 1740 ad annum 1743*, in ARSI, *loc. cit.*, f. 98; cfr. LAMBERTINI, *Raccolta di alcune notificazioni cit.*, V, Bologna 1740, 159-161). L'arcivescovo Lambertini era anche un ammiratore dell'insigne oratore gesuita p. Pietro Filippo Mazzarosa (1658-1743), tanto da esortare, « ad futurorum concionatorum exemplum, atque in Societatis nostrae et Italici nominis decus, ad conciones suas typis edendas ». *Res memoratu dignae quae in ha Bononiensi primae probationis domo evererunt ab anno 1734 ad decurrentem annum 1737*, in ARSI, *loc. cit.*, f. 19.

⁵³ Cfr. nota 22.

⁵⁴ Cfr. nota 30. Nelle *Annuae literae Provinciae Venetae ab anno 1673 ad 1682* si legge: « Pater Paulus Segnerus intra hoc novennium, ab anno 1677 ad 1682 habuit missiones in Regiensi agro, in Mantuano, in Faventino. Nunc habet in Bononiensi ». ARSI, Ven. 106-II, f. 305. Nel 1677 Segneri aveva predicato a Bologna una missione di otto giorni, alla quale aveva partecipato una folla di circa 40.000 persone. Insomma, il successo conseguito aveva oscurato quello di qualsiasi altra missione, « etiam computata celeberrima, quam dederat Divus Bernardinus Senensis ». Naturalmente si era svolta secondo il metodo segneriano, in cui si inseriva anche la distruzione di

ti⁵⁵, Lambertini confessava la sua predilezione per i Lazzaristi, che si esercitavano « particolarmente nelle Missioni de' poveri sventurati Villani con beneficio inesplicabile di quell'Anime, alla cura delle quali non è bastante l'industria di un Sacerdote Curato, benché diligente »⁵⁶. Dei Preti della Missione si era già servito ad Ancona, chiamandoli da Macerata⁵⁷. Passato a Bologna, aveva ingaggiato i loro confratelli della casa di Forlì a fargli da battistrada nella visita pastorale della diocesi⁵⁸. E nel 1733 li aveva scelti per la missione da predicare nella chiesa metropolitana di S. Pietro in Bologna. Diceva anche di avere eletto per suo « speciale Avvocato per lo felice esito delle Sante Missioni » il « Beato Vincenzo de Paulis », i cui figli erano stati attivi nel Bolognese già dal tempo del card. Boncompagni. E la fiducia in loro era stata ben riposta, se Lambertini poteva aggiungere: « non abbiamo potuto senza lagrime agli occhi leggere le relazioni de' Nostri Vicarj Foranei, e de' Curati, nelle quali erano pienamente descritti i lunghi Viaggi, le permanenze ne' luoghi più inospiti delle Montagne, e delle Valli, le gravi, e lunghe fatiche da essi sofferte, l'allegrezza spirituali de' Popoli, ed il gran profitto spirituale per misericordia del Signore ricavato »⁵⁹.

Ci sembra che quanto detto finora sia la prova che l'interesse del Lambertini per le missioni popolari era autentico, e di data tutt'al-

dadi, carte da gioco, libri proibiti, ecc.: « Combusti sunt sub omnium oculis libri quam plurimi, qui vel superstitionem, vel magiam, vel quampiam aliam diabolicam impietatem docerent ». *Ibid.*, f. 306. Altri particolari si apprendono dal p. Antonio Vincenzo Porta, che il 12 V 1677 scriveva al generale: « Il P. Segneri in questa città ha fatto cose più tosto sovrumane che altro, mentre nel far le missioni ha mossa tutta la gente a penitenza; non [v'è] stato cuore, benché di pietra, che non si sia intenerito all'efficacia delle sue prediche, che non si sia convertito dall'esempio delle sue asprissime discipline, et ha fatto conoscere il leone di Bologna un mansuetissimo agnello, poi che sino la nobiltà più superba ha voluto soggiacere alle pubbliche penitenze, e la gioventù più sfrenata a spontanei flagelli ». ARSI, Ven-II, ff. 264-264'.

⁵⁵ Benedetto XIV nutrì grande stima per S. Leonardo da Porto Maurizio (1676-1751). Cfr. PASTOR, *op. cit.*, 228, 241-242; MEIBERG, *op. cit.*, 212-223; BERTONE, *op. cit.*, 18.

⁵⁶ LAMBERTINI, *Raccolta di alcune notificazioni cit.*, I, 213. Sull'affermarsi dei missionari Lazzaristi, a scapito di quelli della Compagnia di Gesù, cfr. G. ORLANDI, *Missioni parrocchiali predicate a Cento al tempo di Girolamo Baruffaldi*, in *Girolamo Baruffaldi (1675-1755). Atti del Convegno Nazionale di studi nel terzo centenario della nascita (Cento 5-8 XII 1975)*, Cento 1977, 867-882. Naturalmente i Gesuiti non dovevano gradire l'arrivo di nuovi concorrenti in un territorio che era stato a lungo campo di azione dei loro missionari. Cfr. *Quaedam relatu digna ex Provincia Veneta, pro annuis et historia Societatis (1754-1758)*, ARSI, Ven. 108, f. 175.

⁵⁷ [SILVA], *op. cit.*, 127-130.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 169. LAMBERTINI, *Raccolta di alcune notificazioni cit.*, 215-216. Sulle visite pastorali del card. Lambertini, cfr. FANTI, *Il « pastorale governo » cit.*, 63-68.

⁵⁹ LAMBERTINI, *op. cit.*, 217-219. Sul metodo missionario dei Lazzaristi, cfr. anche L. MEZZADRI, *Le missioni popolari della Congregazione della Missione nello Stato della Chiesa (1642-1700)*, in *Rivista di Storia della Chiesa in Italia* 33 (1979) 12-44.

tro che recente. Anche in ciò egli si poneva in perfetta sintonia con le istanze del tempo: la Chiesa era alla ricerca delle vie atte al recupero delle campagne, di cui aveva scoperto — o riscoperto — l'importanza. I mezzi messi in opera a tale scopo furono soprattutto due: la fondazione di nuove parrocchie, e la diffusione delle missioni popolari. Data la difficoltà di attuazione del primo mezzo — specialmente in alcune zone d'Italia, come il Mezzogiorno — si comprende l'importanza assunta dal secondo, cioè dalle missioni⁶⁰.

Tra le istituzioni missionarie napoletane segnalate dalla lettera pontificia *Gravissimum supremi apostolatus* non veniva inclusa quella fondata tredici anni prima da S. Alfonso, anche se il Santo e i suoi confratelli non si sottrassero all'invito di partecipare alla santa crociata. Infatti durante la campagna missionaria del 1745-1746 operarono nelle diocesi di Foggia, Troia e Bovino⁶¹, con il titolo di missionari pontifici riconosciutogli dal card. Spinelli⁶². Non sappiamo chi stese materialmente il suddetto documento pontificio, anche se abbiamo ragione di credere che alla sua compilazione non fosse estraneo il p. Tommaso Sergio, Pio Operaio napoletano⁶³. E' certo comunque che i principi ispiratori della lettera pontificia erano in singolare sintonia con quelli che avevano indotto S. Alfonso a dar vita alla sua Congregazione nel 1732. Il Santo era stato mosso anzitutto dalla constatazione dell'abbandono in cui versavano le popolazioni rurali, specialmente quelle più lontane dalle città e dedite all'agricoltura e alla pastorizia, che vivevano nella più completa ignoranza religiosa. Da qui la necessità di un intervento apostolico straordinario che facesse loro recuperare lo svantaggio accumulato nel tempo, per colpa di una pastorale ordinaria troppo carente. Intervento che non doveva restare un evento isolato, e quindi — a lungo andare — di scarsa efficacia, ma andava accompagnato ad una mobilitazione di tutte le forze disponibili: clero secolare e regolare, laici aggregati alle confraternite, ecc., che bisognava porre in condizione di continuare l'opera dei missionari allorché questi si sarebbero recati ad evangelizzare altre popolazioni⁶⁴.

⁶⁰ M. ROSA, *Religione e società nel Mezzogiorno tra Cinque e Seicento*, Bari 1976, 294-295.

⁶¹ TELLERIA, *op. cit.*, I, 379-388. Sulle missioni di questi anni, cfr. anche O. GREGORIO, *La « Nota delle Missioni » del P. Biagio Amarante (1744-1761)*, in *Spicilegium Historicum CSSR* 8 (1960) 322-327; A. SAMPERS, *Tabula Missionum et Exercitiorum an. 1777-1778*, *ibid.*, 342-343.

⁶² TELLERIA, *op. cit.*, I, 380.

⁶³ Sul p. Sergio, che Benedetto XIV chiamava « Nostro buon amico », cfr. *ibid.*, 458-459.

⁶⁴ MEIBERG, *op. cit.*, 256-257; P. HITZ, *L'annuncio missionario del vangelo*, Roma 1959, 112.

Benché fossero note le scarse simpatie di Benedetto XIV per i religiosi⁶⁵, si sapeva anche che era « prima di tutto e sopra tutto, un pastore di anime »⁶⁶. Incoraggiato dal favore manifestato dal Pontefice per le missioni popolari, e consigliato da Giuseppe Maria Puoti⁶⁷ — un sacerdote napoletano che Lambertini da cardinale aveva avuto come bibliotecario, e che da papa aveva nominato cameriere segreto e segretario d'ambasciata — S. Alfonso nel 1748 intraprese a Roma l'*iter* necessario per ottenere l'approvazione del suo Istituto. A tal fine stese un memoriale in cui ne illustrava la genesi, gli scopi e i mezzi per conseguirli. Come è stato giustamente osservato⁶⁸, S. Alfonso non omise di far vibrare le corde apostoliche dell'animo del destinatario: « Posti dunque a' piedi della V. Santità, esso Supplicante e suoi Compagni La supplicano per l'amore che V. Santità conserva della gloria di Gesù Cristo e della salute spirituale di tanti poveri contadini, che sono i figli più derelitti della Chiesa di Dio, a concedere il suo apostolico assenso, che la suddetta lor Compagnia si erigga e stabilisca in Congregazione di Preti Secolari sotto il titolo del Santissimo Salvatore, soggetta sempre alla giurisdizione degli Ordinarij de' luoghi ad instar delle Congregazioni de' PP. della Missione e de' PP. Pii Operarij, col distintivo di dover sempre abitare i Congregati fuori dell'abitato e nel mezzo delle Diocesi più bisognose, affine di meglio impiegarsi in beneficio de' contadini e d'esser così più pronti a porger loro ajuto. Degnandosi insieme la S.V. di approvare le Regole che a suo tempo s'umilieranno a' suoi piedi; sperando da V. Santità, che ha tanto zelo per la salute delle anime, specialmente di questa povera gente della campagna, come ha dimostrato colle sue Lettere Circolari inviate a' Vescovi del Regno di Napoli, procurando al possibile d'ajutarla colle sante missioni, che voglia stabilire colla sua autorità suprema un'opera non solamente sì utile, ma ancora sì necessaria per l'ajuto di tante povere anime, che ne' luoghi rurali di questo Regno così vasto vivono abbandonate di soccorsi spirituali »⁶⁹.

Il documento venne affidato al Puoti che, al rientro a Roma, lo consegnò al Papa. Questi a sua volta si limitò a trasmetterlo il 30 marzo 1748 alla S. Congregazione del Concilio⁷⁰. Era il primo passo

⁶⁵ BERTONE, *op. cit.*, 29; MORELLI, *op. cit.*, 17-18.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 15.

⁶⁷ Giuseppe Maria Puoti era originario di Arienzo. TELLERIA, *op. cit.*, I, 444-445.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 444.

⁶⁹ A. SAMPERS, *Duo libelli supplices...*, in *Spicilegium Historicum CSSR* 17 (1969) 222-223. Cfr. S. ALFONSO, *Lettere*, a cura di F. KUNTZ e F. PITOCCHI, I, Roma 1887, 151.

⁷⁰ TELLERIA, *op. cit.*, I, 445.

di un cammino che si prevedeva lungo ed irto di difficoltà. Il secondo passo fu la richiesta di informazioni, rivolta dalla S. Congregazione all'arcivescovo di Napoli ⁷¹. Il card. Spinelli — contrario in linea di massima al sorgere di nuovi Istituti religiosi — voleva documentarsi a dovere, prima di formulare un parere che, in pratica, avrebbe determinato la prosecuzione o la sospensione delle trattative anche a Roma. Per illuminare il porporato, nel settembre del 1748 S. Alfonso gli presentò uno scritto in cui spiegava le finalità della nuova Congregazione. Premesso che chiunque « è pratico un poco delle coscienze sa la scarsezza che vi è di veri operai, che cercano veramente la salute delle anime, e sa quante anime si perdono per mancanza di aiuto », se ne doveva trarre la logica conseguenza. Che cioè le missioni popolari erano di grande importanza: « se nelle città sono utili, ne' paesi della campagna sono affatto necessarie; poiché, in questi piccioli paesi, per lo più è mancanza di buoni sacerdoti, che spezzino il pane della Divina parola e che istruiscano quella gente incolta. Di più sono necessarie le missioni in questi luoghi rurali per ragione che vi sono pochi sacerdoti, e questi paesani; e perciò facilmente molte anime si trovano in sacrilegî di male confessioni, per la ripugnanza di confessarsi a quelli che le conoscono. Onde avviene che, se queste anime così cadute non hanno il comodo della missione per poter manifestarsi a sacerdoti forastieri, può ben dirsi con certezza morale che seguiranno a vivere nella disgrazia di Dio, e certamente si dannano. E si è osservato coll'esperienza il profitto più speciale che tal sorte di gente ha ricavato dalle missioni, essendosi vedute popolazioni intiere santificate » ⁷². Ma dato che il tempo tendeva fatalmente a ricondurre i fedeli alle antiche abitudini peccaminose, bisognava approntare i mezzi atti a sventare tale pericolo. A questo proposito, affinché « il frutto, che si raccoglie nelle missioni, sia perseverante » ⁷³, S. Alfonso voleva che le case dell'Istituto sorgessero in località donde fosse agevole raggiungere tutta la diocesi: dovevano « i Congregati abitare in mezzo alle diocesi più bisognose e fuori dell'abitato, affine di meglio impiegarsi in beneficio della povera gente abbandonata della campagna, e d'essere così più pronti a porgere loro aiuto e colle missioni, istruzioni, ed amministrazione de' sacramenti » ⁷⁴.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 445-446. Il « Votum » del card. Spinelli è stato pubblicato in *Documenta miscellanea ad Regulam et spiritum Congregationis nostrae illustrandum*, Romae 1904, 75-77.

⁷² S. ALFONSO, *Lettere cit.*, I, 156.

⁷³ *Ibid.*

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 157.

Tale documento valse a fugare le prevenzioni del card. Spinelli, che l'11 ottobre 1748 inviava infatti alla S. Congregazione una relazione assai positiva sul nuovo Istituto⁷⁵. Della cui regola elogiava soprattutto alcuni punti: l'obbligo di risiedere nelle zone da evangelizzare, e la norma che prevedeva il ritorno dei missionari nelle singole parrocchie in cui avevano operato per tenervi la cosiddetta « rinnovazione di spirito »⁷⁶. Suggeriva anche alcune lievi modifiche⁷⁷, che non sminuivano affatto il suo positivo giudizio sulle regole del nuovo Istituto.

Il parere dell'arcivescovo di Napoli contribuì in misura determinante alla felice, e straordinariamente rapida conclusione dell'*iter* per l'approvazione della nuova famiglia religiosa. Non essendo qui il caso di ripercorrere tutte le tappe del medesimo, ci limiteremo a ricordare che il p. Andrea Villani⁷⁸, inviato appositamente a Roma da S. Alfonso, riuscì — con la collaborazione prestatagli da Basiliiani, Gesuiti e Lazzaristi⁷⁹ — a far fissare la discussione relativa all'approvazione dell'Istituto al 25 gennaio 1749. Il parere dei cardinali della S. Congregazione fu favorevole, e venne confermato da Benedetto XIV con il breve *Ad pastoralis dignitatis fastigium* del 25 febbraio dello stesso anno. In tal modo la Congregazione del SS. Redentore — che aveva dovuto modificare così l'originaria denominazione di Congregazione del SS. Salvatore, per evitare confusioni con una preesistente famiglia religiosa — veniva ufficialmente approvata⁸⁰.

S. Alfonso avrebbe desiderato ottenere subito anche la comunicazione dei privilegi che già godevano altri Istituti. Per esempio, quello che autorizzava i Lazzaristi ad ordinare i loro chierici « a titolo di mensa comune », volto a facilitare l'opera di reclutamento⁸¹. Ma per il momento le richieste dei Redentoristi non vennero accolte. Si dovette attendere fino al 1756 per ottenere la comunicazione dei privilegi dei Pii Operai e dei Padri della Dottrina Cristiana⁸².

E' stato osservato che se — invece di mandarvi un procuratore

⁷⁵ TELLERIA, *op. cit.*, I, 446-447.

⁷⁶ MEIBERG, *op. cit.*, 258.

⁷⁷ *Documenta miscellanea cit.*, 77-78. Cfr. anche TELLERIA, *op. cit.*, I, 447.

⁷⁸ Su Andrea Villani (1706-1792) cfr. F. MINERVINO, *Catalogo dei Redentoristi d'Italia (1732-1841) e dei Redentoristi delle Province Meridionali d'Italia (1841-1869)*, Roma 1978, 181.

⁷⁹ TELLERIA, *op. cit.*, I, 449, 454.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 470.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 472.

⁸² *Ibid.*, 528; MEIBERG, *op. cit.*, 253.

a trattare presso Benedetto XIV l'approvazione dell'Istituto — S. Alfonso si fosse recato personalmente a Roma, si sarebbe realizzato l'incontro fra uno dei maggiori santi e uno dei maggiori pontefici del Settecento⁸³. A quella data a Papa Lambertini doveva già essere ben noto il nome del Santo. Questi nel 1747 era stato incluso tra i candidati alla sede arcivescovile di Palermo, promozione a cui riuscì a sottrarsi nonostante l'insistenza del re⁸⁴. Il che spiega perché in occasione dell'udienza concessa al p. Villani — che era andato a ringraziarlo dell'approvazione delle regole — Benedetto XIV gli chiese se era vero che nella Congregazione del SS. Redentore vi erano uomini degni di portare la mitra⁸⁵.

Con ogni probabilità il Papa aveva però sentito parlare di S. Alfonso fin dal 1741, allorché il Santo era stato posto a capo della grande missione di Napoli⁸⁶. In seguito (1744) S. Alfonso aveva pubblicato il catechismo per l'archidiocesi di Napoli, più noto come « Catechismo Spinelli »⁸⁷, di cui per la verità Benedetto XIV era rimasto « del tutto insoddisfatto ». Tanto che « con buone maniere » chiese al card. Spinelli di sostituirlo con il catechismo del Bellarmino fino allora in uso a Napoli⁸⁸.

Maggior considerazione S. Alfonso ottenne presso il Papa con le sue opere di carattere morale. Nel 1748, dando alle stampe la prima edizione del suo manuale di teologia morale, aveva posto sul frontespizio queste parole: « Accedunt in calce libri propositiones damnatae necnon omnes Epistolae encyclicae et pontificia decreta mores spectantia S.D.N. Benedicti PP. XIV, quae insuper omnia propriis in locis opportune adnotantur »⁸⁹. La seconda edizione dell'opera il Santo la dedicò addirittura a Papa Lambertini, dopo averne ottenuta discretamente l'autorizzazione per mezzo di un comune amico⁹⁰. Del gradimento di questo suo gesto S. Alfonso ebbe una conferma nella lettera indirizzatagli il 2 novembre 1753, in cui Benedetto XIV gli

⁸³ C.M. HENZE, *Benedetto XIV e S. Alfonso*, in *S. Alfonso* 20 (1949) 36.

⁸⁴ TELLERIA, *op. cit.*, I, 432-434.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, 468.

⁸⁶ DE MAIO, *op. cit.*, 280.

⁸⁷ Sul *Compendio della Dottrina Cristiana*, frutto di una collaborazione tra S. Alfonso e il ven. Gennaro Maria Sarnelli (1702-1744), cfr. *ibid.*, 267.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*

⁸⁹ La prima edizione dell'opera — dedicata all'arcivescovo di Conza, Giuseppe Nicolai — venne pubblicata a Napoli dal Pellicchia. M. DE MEULEMEESTER, *Bibliographie générale des écrivains rédemptoristes*, I, La Haye-Louvain 1933, 62-63.

⁹⁰ Era il p. Innocenzo Sanseverino. TELLERIA, *op. cit.*, I, 558-559.

diceva: « Abbiamo ricevuto il primo tomo della Teologia morale dedicata a Noi, che le rendiamo grazie dell'onore compartitoci, e dell'opportuna inserzione delle nostre Lettere encicliche nella predetta opera. L'assicuriamo che l'opera sarà letta da Noi nelle occasioni opportune, avendo Noi il dovuto concetto del di lei merito, diligenza ed equità nel giudicare »⁹¹. Analoghe parole di ringraziamento e di lode il Papa ebbe per S. Alfonso il 15 luglio 1755, in occasione dell'invio di un altro tomo dell'opera: « Abbiamo ricevuta una sua lettera degli otto di giugno, unitamente col secondo tomo della sua Morale, ed altri pure suoi libri di minor mole, ma di gran profitto per la salute delle anime. Noi la ringraziamo del regalo, ed avendo data una scorsa al libro della sua Morale (ch'è dedicato a Noi, del che rendiamo particolari grazie) l'abbiamo ritrovato pieno di buone notizie, ed ella può restar sicura del gradimento universale e della pubblica utilità. Tratto, tratto l'anderemo leggendo, e speriamo che quanto leggeremo corrisponderà a quanto abbiamo letto »⁹². Una terza lettera di Benedetto XIV era ancora diretta il 27 luglio 1756 a ringraziare S. Alfonso per l'omaggio di alcuni suoi scritti: « Per le mani del Cardinale Orsini riceviamo la di lei Dissertazione, della quale distintamente la ringraziamo. L'argomento non può essere più adatto ai correnti bisogni, e senza dubbio sarà stato maneggiato a dovere, essendo noto il di lei valore. A tempo e luogo lo leggeremo, e intanto preventivamente ce ne rallegriamo »⁹³. Nel suo *De synodo dioeclesiana* (lib. XI, cap. II, § XVII) Benedetto XIV volle riferire il punto di vista di S. Alfonso — da lui definito « prudens Auctor » — a proposito dell'assoluzione del chierico recidivo e consuetudinario⁹⁴. Talora indirizzava al Santo persone che erano ricorse a Roma per la soluzione di qualche dubbio di carattere morale⁹⁵.

⁹¹ S. ALFONSO, *Lettere cit.*, I, 241.

⁹² *Ibid.*, 287.

⁹³ *Ibid.*, III, Roma 1887, 35.

⁹⁴ BENEDICTUS XIV, *De synodo dioeclesiana*, Romae, J.G. Salomoni, 1755, p. 385. Le parole surriferite sono dunque presenti in un'edizione dell'opera risalente al tempo in cui Benedetto XIV era ancora in vita. A proposito di essa leggiamo in BERTONE (*op. cit.*, 54): « Questa edizione è riveduta e accresciuta dall'Autore e portata da 8 a 13 libri. Sarà la base delle edizioni successive ». Il Salomoni aveva chiesto al Papa di poter « stampare e pubblicare la famosa Opera de Synodo Dioeclesiana col Privilegio della Santità Vostra, e di concedergli la privativa per dieci anni rispetto agli Stampatori dello Stato della Santità Vostra ». Tali richieste erano state accolte il 19 XI 1755. ARCHIVIO SEGRETO VATICANO, *Epistolae ad Principes*, vol. 132, ff. 192-193, 195. Cfr. anche TELLERIA, *op. cit.*, I, 558-559.

⁹⁵ A. TANNOIA, *Della vita ed istituto del venerabile Servo di Dio Alfonso M.^a Li-guori*, I, Napoli 1798, 285.

S. Alfonso aveva invano sperato che l'appoggio di Benedetto XIV valesse ad ottenergli il riconoscimento regio per la sua Congregazione. Ma le risposte del Papa ai suoi ripetuti appelli in tal senso furono sempre evasive⁹⁶: i rapporti tra la corte di Roma e quella di Napoli non lasciavano alcuno spazio ad un intervento pontificio in simile materia, che avesse qualche prospettiva di successo. Anche dopo la morte del cappellano maggiore Celestino Galiani⁹⁷, le sue idee continuarono a far testo presso le autorità politiche borboniche. Di che orientamento esse fossero basterà ad indicarcelo il giudizio pronunciato dal Galiani contro la fondazione di una nuova congregazione detta « degli Esercizi »: « non mi par tempo di permettere che si pensi alla fondazione di nuove religioni e congregazioni, atteso che a parer di quanti vi ha di uomini più dotti e santi nella Chiesa, ve ne sia un sì gran numero che converrebbe abolirne almeno due terzi, come affatto inutili, per impiegarne le rendite sì in case di carità da riunire per badare all'educazione de' poveri fanciulli nel timor di Dio e nelle arti utili allo Stato, come ancora in ospedali per gl'infermi e per li poveri invalidi a procacciarsi il vitto colle proprie fatiche, et in altre simili opere di carità di pubblico beneficio »⁹⁸. Per il Galiani, S. Alfonso e i suoi primi compagni in particolare erano dei « preti semplici e malinconici », che vivevano sottraendo le elemosine ai « veri poveri »: « I medesimi si applicano principalmente a far le missioni, come se in questo Regno non vi fussero religioni tutte applicate ad un tal santo esercizio »⁹⁹.

Ad avvicinare Benedetto XIV e S. Alfonso contribuirono anche vari aspetti del loro carattere. Il Keusch include fra i tratti fondamentali della personalità del Santo i seguenti, che troviamo anche in

⁹⁶ Cfr. le note 91-93. Il 20 II 1756 il card. Domenico Orsini scriveva a S. Alfonso, a proposito dell'udienza concessagli qualche giorno prima dal Papa: « mi fece un degno elogio della sua persona, sì della pietà, che della dottrina, ed indi si passò a discorrere della bella Missione fatta in Benevento [1755], e finalmente mi assicurò, che avrebbe parlato al Signor Duca [Geronimo Sersale] di Cerisano efficacemente, perché si desse da Sua Maestà l'exequatur al breve di conferma della di Lei suddetta Congregazione, e tanto mi commise a scriverle ». Citato da HENZE, *art. cit.*, 38.

⁹⁷ Celestino Galiani (1681-1753) era stato abate generale dei Celestini (1728-1731), quindi arcivescovo di Tessalonica e cappellano maggiore (1732). C. TESTORE, G.C., in *Enciclopedia Cattolica*, V, 1869.

⁹⁸ Galiani a Carlo di Borbone, Napoli 6 VII 1740. Citato da G. DE ROSA, *Vesuvi, popolo e magia nel Sud*, Napoli 1971, 41.

⁹⁹ Galiani accusava la Ven. Crostarosa — da lui definita « visionaria o pur anche impostrice » — di « finger visioni ed apparenze celesti, siccome fu convinta da ecclesiastici dotti e dabbene ». Galiani a Tanucci, 16 IV 1736. *Ibid.*, 42. Sulla Crostarosa, cfr. l'importante studio di S. MAJORANO, *L'imitazione per la memoria del Salvatore: il messaggio spirituale di Suor Maria Celeste Crostarosa (1696-1755)*, (Bibliotheca historica CSSR, 7), Roma 1978.

Benedetto XIV: un temperamento collerico e sanguigno; una « volontà ferma e decisa, e l'animo ardente, [...] quella euritmia ed equilibrio, con i quali egli sapeva dominare le forze che lo agitavano »; talenti superiori alla media; rapidità e solidità nell'apprendimento; attività oltremodo varia; straordinaria tenacia e capacità di lavoro; scrupolosità nell'uso del tempo; zelo consumato; studio diligente; grande esperienza; longevità¹⁰⁰.

Il suddetto autore scrive ancora, a proposito dell'itinerario spirituale del Liguori: « Alfonso si occupò di mistica e nella sua gioventù e nella sua vecchiezza. Nella sua gioventù vi era portato più che negli anni successivi. [...] Ma egli sapeva distinguere assai bene, come si espresse egli stesso un giorno, " fra sogni e fantasie, e cose di Dio " »¹⁰¹. Anche Papa Lambertini conosceva quest'arte, benché temesse sempre di fare qualche passo falso, tale da attirargli la taccia « di credulo, di visionario, per non dire di superstizioso »¹⁰². Tuttavia, dobbiamo confessare che ci piacerebbe conoscere maggiori elementi sulla sua vita, sulla genesi della sua spiritualità, ecc. E' stato giustamente rilevato che troppo scarsi sono « i particolari che i biografi hanno lasciato sulla vita del Lambertini durante il quarantennio che trascorse a Roma nell'ascendere i gradi della Sacra Gerarchia »¹⁰³. Infatti i suddetti biografi « tutti intenti a raccogliere ed illustrare ogni suo atto da Cardinale e da Papa [...] non curarono d'investigare come si venisse formando quel temperamento vivace, quella perspicacia e prontezza di spirito, quell'ingegno versatile e poderoso che indistintamente tutti gli riconobbero da Papa »¹⁰⁴.

Nella speranza di portare un modesto contributo alla conoscenza del clima in cui si svolse la giovinezza del futuro Benedetto XIV, riteniamo utile, prima di concludere, riferire il frutto di qualche nostra ricerca in proposito.

Come è noto, Prospero Lambertini nel 1688, all'età di tredici anni, venne inviato a Roma, dove fu alunno del Collegio Clementino¹⁰⁵. In tale istituto, diretto dai Somaschi, era stato a suo tempo alunno anche suo

¹⁰⁰ C. KEUSCH, *La dottrina spirituale di Sant'Alfonso Maria de' Liguori*, Milano 1931, 37-38.

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*, 45-46.

¹⁰² BENEDETTO XIV, *Le lettere cit.*, II, Roma 1965, 19.

¹⁰³ G.M. BOFFA, *Benedetto XIV*, Roma-Alba 1938, 47.

¹⁰⁴ E. GUALANDI, *Il Card. F.M. Monti, Benedetto XIV e la biblioteca dell'Istituto delle Scienze*, Parma 1921, 22. Citato da BOFFA, *loc. cit.*

¹⁰⁵ « Contrariamente a quello che fu asserito da alcuni autori, e per l'esattezza storica, il Lambertini non ebbe qui a Bologna maestri somaschi, perché la nostra Congregazione assunse la direzione di questo collegio solo nel 1692, quando già si trovava a Roma ». M. TENTORIO, *Commemorando Benedetto XIV nel 2° centenario del-*

padre¹⁰⁶. Prospero vi rimase fino al 1692, allorché intraprese gli studi di teologia e di diritto canonico, materie in cui si addottorò nel 1694. In questo stesso anno entrò nello studio del concittadino Alessandro Caprara, a cui lo univa probabilmente un vincolo di parentela, per il comune legame con i Bentivoglio¹⁰⁷. In quel periodo il Caprara esercitava la carica di uditore di Rota a cui era stato promosso nel 1687, dopo essere stato avvocato concistoriale (1662), referendario di Segnatura e luogotenente nelle cause civili dell'uditore di Camera (1675). La sua intensa attività nella Rota — nei diciannove anni che corrono fino al 1707 (data della sua promozione alla porpora) istruì ben 762 cause — non gli impedì di prestare i suoi servizi anche alla corte di Modena, secondo una tradizione seguita da vari membri della sua famiglia¹⁰⁸. A Roma infatti esercitava le mansioni di consigliere della legazione estense. Il duca Francesco II gli affidò anche il compito di assistere sua madre — la duchessa Laura, dimorante nella Città Eterna —, che eleggerà il prelado per proprio esecutore testamentario¹⁰⁹. Tramite la duchessa, il Caprara era entrato in contatto con la corte d'Inghilterra — la regina Maria¹¹⁰, moglie di Giacomo II Stuart¹¹¹,

la morte, in *Rivista dell'Ordine dei Padri Somaschi*, vol. XXXIII, fasc. 126 (1958) 231; FANTI, Prospero Lambertini cit., 119.

¹⁰⁶ Lettere di Marcello Lambertini, padre di Prospero, si conservano anche in ARCHIVIO DI STATO, Modena (d'ora in poi: ASMò), Particolari, fil. 555. Per la famiglia Lambertini doveva essere una consuetudine affidare i suoi rampolli all'educazione dei Somaschi. Alunno del Clementino di Roma nel 1651 era Pier Luigi Lambertini, che il 17 ottobre di quell'anno scriveva al card. Rinaldo d'Este lamentandosi della direzione del collegio. *Ibid.* Non sappiamo se per Benedetto XIV il periodo trascorso nel Clementino fu un'esperienza positiva. Il 14 X 1752, in occasione della venuta a Roma del pronipote Giovanni per ragioni di studio, il Papa scriverà a Peggì: « Se i padri e le madri allevassero i figli come dovrebbero, i Gesuiti, i Somaschi e quelli delle Scuole Pie potrebbero chiudere i loro collegi. Tutti i predetti ricevono profitto e credito dalla poco buona educazione, che si dà dai padri e dalle madri nelle case ai loro figli. Vivendo Noi in questi infelici tempi, siamo necessitati a conformarci al secolo in cui viviamo; e questo è il motivo, per cui siamo vicini a bere l'amaro calice di vedere, non già nel luogo ove Noi abitiamo, ma nella Città in cui siamo, uno del Nostro sangue, che secondo le Nostre naturali idee avrebbe dovuto stare in casa sua, imparando ivi a vivere da cristiano e da galantuomo, essendo superfluo tutto quello che vi si mette di più ». BENEDICT XIV, *Briefe cit.*, 92.

¹⁰⁷ Su Alessandro Caprara (1626-1711) cfr. G. ANGELOZZI, C.A., in *Dizionario biografico degli italiani*, XIX, Roma 1976, 168-169. Madre del Caprara era la contessa Caterina Bentivoglio, mentre il patrigno di Prospero Lambertini era il conte Luigi Bentivoglio. *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁸ Cfr. G. ORLANDI, *L'educazione di un principe del Seicento. Cesare Ignazio d'Este discepolo di Richard Simon*, in *Spicilegium Historicum CSSR* 27 (1979) 161, 179-188. Il conte Gerolamo Caprara († 1687), fratello di Alessandro, era stato inviato a Parigi a ricoprirvi la carica di governatore dei principi Foresto e Cesare Ignazio d'Este (1669-1670). *Ibid.* I dispacci di Alessandro Caprara alla corte estense si conservano in ASMò, Ambasciatori a Roma, fil. 251 (anni 1662-1674) e 252 (anni 1675-1698).

¹⁰⁹ La duchessa Laura Martinuzzi morì a Roma il 19 VII 1687. Il suo ultimo testamento era del 14 marzo di quell'anno. Cfr. ASMò, Casa e Stato, fil. 399, fasc. 2049/III.

¹¹⁰ Su Maria Beatrice d'Este (1658-1718), cfr. G. BELTRAMI, *Il ducato di Modena tra Francia e Austria (Francesco II d'Este, 1674-1694)*, estratto da *Atti e Memorie della Deputazione di Storia Patria per le Antiche Provincie Modenesi*, S. VIII, vol. IX (1957) 12-13; M.V. MAZZA MONTI, *Le duchesse di Modena*, Reggio E. 1977, 100-103.

¹¹¹ Giacomo II (1633-1701) regnò in Inghilterra dal 1685 al 1689, anno in cui fu costretto a riparare all'estero. D. OGG, *England in the reigns of James II and William*

era figlia di Laura —, divenendone agente diplomatico a Roma¹¹². Tali mansioni non erano compatibili con il servizio alla corte estense, al quale il Caprara fu costretto a rinunciare¹¹³. Ma prima dovette assolvere a un ultimo compito, che stava molto a cuore al nuovo sovrano estense. Volendo rinunciare alla porpora per potersi sposare — onde assicurare la successione al trono di Modena, cui gli eventi lo avevano chiamato¹¹⁴ — Rinaldo I d'Este desiderava che le trattative con la Santa Sede fossero condotte da un uomo abile, quale appunto era il Caprara. La solenne rinuncia alla porpora da parte del duca avvenne il 21 marzo 1695¹¹⁵. Quel giorno a fianco di Alessandro Caprara era anche un altro prelado, anch'egli in qualità di procuratore di Rinaldo d'Este¹¹⁶: mgr Ranuccio di Marsciano, destinato a succedere al Caprara come consigliere della legazione estense. Il di Marsciano — che tra l'altro era chierico di Camera e canonico di S. Pietro — aveva tutti i requisiti per raggiungere la porpora, come avverrà per il Caprara. Ma un infortunio venne a troncarne definitivamente le speranze¹¹⁷. Nel 1698 si scoprì a Roma un centro quietista che comprendeva una trentina di adepti, e che talora si radunava a Tivoli, nella Villa d'Este, della quale era amministratore proprio mgr di Marsciano, anch'egli membro del suddetto centro. Lo scandalo suscitato da tale notizia fu enorme, tanto che ne giunse l'eco fino in Cina¹¹⁸. Se il prelado riuscì ad evitare la carcerazione — a differenza di un altro capo del centro che venne condannato all'ergastolo — lo dovette all'intervento in suo favore di altissimi personaggi, tra cui sovrani, cardinali, ecc. Ciò valse ad ottenergli la libertà, ma non certo a rimetterlo in grazia. Un prelado della

III, London 1955. Sul suo matrimonio con la principessa estense, cfr. P. DALLARI, *Il matrimonio di Giacomo Stuart Duca di York (poi Giacomo II Re d'Inghilterra) con Maria d'Este, 1673*, estratto da *Atti e Memorie della R. Deputazione di Storia Patria per le Provincie Modenesi*, Serie IV, vol. VIII (Modena 1896).

¹¹² ANGELOZZI (*art. cit.*, 169) scrive che il Caprara curò « gli affari di Giacomo II Stuart e di sua moglie, e, una volta cardinale, fu « protettore del regno », e si distinse per la sua carità nei confronti dei cattolici inglesi rifugiatisi a Roma ». Cfr. *Avvisi di Foligno* n. 52, del 27 XII 1697, in BIBLIOTECA CASANATENSE, Roma: Per. est. A, 2/2, *Avvisi stampati di Foligno*.

¹¹³ Già il 23 VIII 1673 la duchessa Laura aveva inviato all'ambasciatore estense a Roma un dispaccio, « ostensibile » al Caprara, in cui si legge: « Il Conte Caprara ha di molti interessi nella Corte di Roma, et camina perciò con più riguardi che non porterebbe il mio buon servizio, per non disgustare il Signor Cardinale Altieri, dal quale dipende la sua fortuna, e da cui li proviene e del bene e del male; e però sarà necessario ch'io facci spiccar di qui qualche ministro che non habbi interessi a quella Corte ». ASMO, Ambasciatori a Roma, fil. 252.

¹¹⁴ G. ORLANDI, *Il centro quietista romano-tiburtino scoperto nel 1698. In margine alla querelle Bossuet-Fénelon*, in *Spicilegium Historicum CSSR* 26 (1978) 281-282.

¹¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 382.

¹¹⁶ Caprara e di Marsciano vennero eletti procuratori da Rinaldo d'Este il 19 II 1695. *Ibid.*

¹¹⁷ Su Ranuccio di Marsciano (ca 1656-1705), cfr. *ibid.*, 375-382. Non sappiamo se esistesse qualche vincolo di sangue tra Prospero Lambertini e Antonio Maria Lambertini, collaboratore del conte Lodovico di Marsciano. Questi — che era fratello di Ranuccio, e braccio destro del duca di Modena — morendo a Bologna nel 1703 nominò tutore dei propri figli il predetto Antonio Maria Lambertini. ASMO, Particolari, fil. 555.

¹¹⁸ ORLANDI, *art. cit.*, 354, 373, 413.

Curia Romana all'inizio di maggio del 1698 scriveva a Bologna al card. Boncompagni che mgr di Marsciano si era ripresentato in Camera, « ove gran popolo era concorso per osservarlo ». E concludeva con una riflessione che doveva essere largamente condivisa a Roma: « Così appunto, per difetto di giudizio e forse di vanità, si perdono gli uomini »¹¹⁹. A perdere il di Marsciano era stata una credulità spinta a tal segno da renderlo facile preda di chi, col pretesto delle dottrine mistiche, voleva servirsene per i suoi secondi fini.

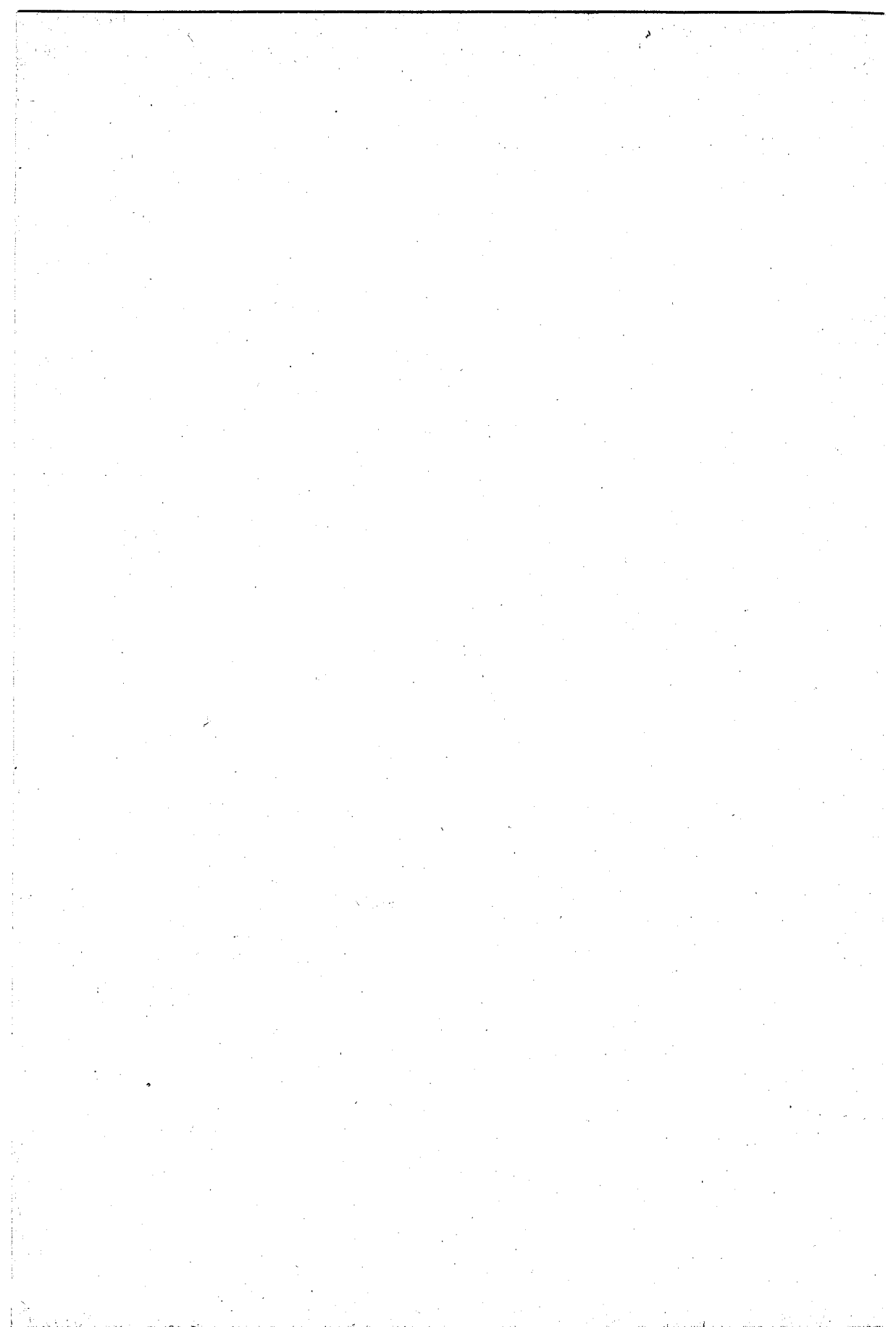
Si può facilmente immaginare quali furono in tale occasione le reazioni e i commenti della colonia *emiliana* a Roma. E particolarmente quelli del *clan* dei Caprara, al quale il di Marsciano era vicino, e del quale il giovane Lambertini era membro. Questi, all'età di 22 anni, era già in grado di valutare chiaramente le conseguenze irreparabili dell'infortunio in cui era incappato il prelado. Forse risaliva proprio a quel tempo il desiderio così radicato in lui di evitare di apparire « credulo », « visionario » o « superstizioso »¹²⁰. In fondo egli avrebbe potuto sottoscrivere pienamente le parole con cui l'agente estense a Roma informava Rinaldo I dei tentativi operati, anche se inutilmente, per staccare il di Marsciano dai suoi amici quietisti, specialmente dai religiosi che ne erano i capi: « più volte destramente gli ho insinuato che quella era una vita più da chiostro che da corte, che nel mondo conveniva esser huomo da bene nel fondo e nella sostanza, e nel resto fare quel che facevano gli altri, e che i Santi oggi giorno non vi erano, o non s'impiegavano in maneggi e cariche, volendo inferire che quel suo modo di governarsi era improprio et incompatibile con i fini delle Dignità et avanzamenti »¹²¹.

Al termine di questa lunga parentesi — che ci auguriamo contribuisca a meglio comprendere l'ambiente in cui Prospero Lambertini trascorse la giovinezza, ponendo le premesse di una luminosa carriera — è giunto anche il momento di concludere. Lo faremo dicendo che i rapporti di Benedetto XIV con S. Alfonso e i Redentoristi furono certo limitati e saltuari, ma più importanti e significativi di quanto ci si sarebbe potuti attendere. Affermazione che non sarà difficile condividere, se si pensa che al momento dell'elezione del Lambertini al soglio pontificio il Santo non aveva ancora iniziato quella attività di scrittore che un giorno gli avrebbe ottenuto il titolo di Dottore della Chiesa; e che, allorché venne approvato dalla Santa Sede, l'Istituto redentorista non contava neppure quaranta membri. L'uno e l'altro erano poi attivi in un'area geografica posta fuori dell'Italia centro-settentrionale, dove il Papa aveva vissuto ed operato. Di conseguenza gli erano mancate le occasioni di contatto, sia con S. Alfonso che con i suoi figli.

¹¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 424.

¹²⁰ Cfr. nota 102.

¹²¹ Giuseppe Francesco Fossi a Rinaldo I, Roma 24 V 1698. ORLANDI, *art. cit.*, 387, 432-433.



ANDRÉ SAMPERS

PRIMI CONTATTI DI S. ALFONSO E DEI REDENTORISTI
CON LA CALABRIA

Diocesi di Cassano allo Ionio, 1732-1758

SUMMARY

Very soon after having founded the Congrégation of the Redemptorists (Nov. 9, 1732) S. Alphonsus was asked by several bishops to send his companions to do apostolic work in their dioceses; and by the beginning of 1733 some had even applied for a foundation of the new Institute. One of these prelates was the bishop of Cassano allo Ionio (Calabria Citra, at present the Province of Cosenza), Mgr. Gennaro Fortunato, who had known Alphonsus since the time both had worked in Naples as members of the Congregation of the Apostolic Missions.

In the following years Mgr. Fortunato continually hoped for a Redemptorist house but — as far as we can conclude from the documents at our disposal — only in 1748 did he approach Alphonsus directly with a fairly concrete proposal to establish a house in Mormanno. Alphonsus raised several objections which the bishop tried to answer, but mainly due to lack of personnel the generous offer could not be accepted.

After Mgr. Fortunato's death the Redemptorists were asked again in 1753 to preach missions in the diocese of Cassano. This time the initiative, it would seem, was taken by Carmine Ventapane, a professor of medicine at Naples University. But once more the request could not be complied with.

Finally in the autumn of 1756 it was possible to send three Fathers to the diocese of Cassano where they preached with great success for seven months till they returned to Pagani at the beginning of June 1757. On their return journey they were accompanied by three Calabrian candidates who were professed the following year but later left the Congregation.

In the autumn of 1757 Alphonsus again sent three Fathers to Calabria. They first worked in the diocese of Cassano and then in the archdioceses of Santa Severina and Cosenza, in the feudal estates of the Principe della Rocca (Giovanni Batt. Filomarino) who had expressly applied for this work in his letter to Alphonsus of July 21, 1757. Also during this second term — which lasted till June 1758 — the apostolic labours scored a great

success, and as a result several houses were offered but for various reasons they were not established. It was not until 1790 that the Redemptorists — through direct intervention of the Neapolitan government — got their first houses in Calabria: at Catanzaro, Stilo and Tropea.

Nell'estate del 1975 mi fu rivolto dalla Prof.ssa Maria Mariotti il cortese invito a partecipare ad un Convegno di Studio, da tenersi a Reggio Calabria nei primi giorni di novembre di quell'anno, sugli « Aspetti e problemi di storia della società calabrese nell'età contemporanea ». Il tema propostomi era il seguente: « Azione religiosa e sociale dei Redentoristi in Calabria ».

Diversi impegni precedentemente assunti mi impedirono di aderire alla gentile richiesta, ma la possibilità di uno studio su « S. Alfonso-Redentoristi-Calabria » da allora mi è stata costantemente presente. Sembra che questa rivista sia una sede quanto mai adatta per pubblicare i primi risultati della ricerca sull'argomento. E ciò anche per onorare il compianto p. Oreste Gregorio, uno dei fondatori e per più di vent'anni (1953-1976) solerte redattore, nonché assiduo collaboratore dello *Spicilegium historicum CSSR*. Infatti, il Gregorio si mostrava sempre molto interessato e pronto a dare utili suggerimenti, quando nei nostri frequenti — per non dire giornalieri — colloqui il discorso cadeva su un eventuale studio da dedicare ai « Redentoristi e la Calabria nel Settecento ».

Da una lettera di s. Alfonso de Liguori del 29 dicembre 1732, scritta quindi meno di due mesi dopo la fondazione della Congregazione dei Redentoristi (9 XI 1732) — detti allora « Padri del SS.mo Salvatore » —, sappiamo che già allora il vescovo di Cassano allo Ionio si era rivolto a lui per poter usufruire dell'opera dei padri nella sua diocesi. Purtroppo questa lettera di Alfonso a mons. Tommaso Falcoia, vescovo di Castellammare di Stabia negli anni 1730-1743, è andata perduta, ma fortunatamente il primo biografo del Santo ce ne ha tramandato un brano. Dal quale risulta che i vescovi di Caiazzo, Cassano e Salerno desideravano avvalersi dell'opera apostolica del nuovo Istituto¹.

Prima di essere nominato nel 1729 vescovo di Cassano allo Ionio², mons. Gennaro Fortunato (1682-1751) era stato professore di teologia nel seminario arcivescovile di Napoli ed esaminatore sinodale³. E' quindi quanto mai probabile che sia stato in contatto con Al-

¹ [A. TANNOIA], *Della vita ed istituto del ven. Servo di Dio Alfonso M. Liguori*, vol. I, Napoli 1798, 85 (lib. II, cap. I, alla fine). Il brano è stato riprodotto, arricchito di alcune note, in *Spic. hist.* 25 (1977) 288-289.

² Cf. R. RITZLER - P. SEFRIN, *Hierarchia catholica medii et recentioris aevi*, vol. V (1667-1730), Padova 1952, 147.

³ G. SPARANO, *Memorie istoriche per illustrare gli atti della S. Napoletana Chiesa e gli atti della Congregazione delle Appostoliche Missioni eretta nel Duomo della*

fonso, quando questi negli anni 1723-1726 si preparava al sacerdozio⁴. Si conoscevano certamente negli anni successivi, essendo ambedue membri della stessa Congregazione delle Apostoliche Missioni⁵, detta anche della Propaganda⁶ (di Napoli). E, allorché Alfonso si trovò in difficoltà nei suoi rapporti con la direzione di detta Congregazione⁷, ebbe in mons. Fortunato un ottimo consigliere⁸. Tali contrasti erano sorti nel 1732, quando quest'ultimo era già da alcuni anni vescovo di Cassano. Sembra che Alfonso si consigliasse con lui anche a proposito della sua Congregazione, allorché stava per fondarla nello stesso anno, o poco dopo averla fondata⁹.

Pare probabile che ci sia stato uno scambio di lettere tra loro in quegli anni, ma di tale corrispondenza nulla è stato conservato. Indubbiamente mons. Fortunato si sarà recato a Napoli di tanto in tanto, e in tal modo i due amici avranno avuto la possibilità di continuare il contatto personale¹⁰.

Mons. Fortunato viene descritto come uomo di santa vita e pieno di zelo apostolico per il suo gregge¹¹. Non c'è quindi da meravi-

medesima, vol. II, Napoli 1768, 299-300; R. DE MAIO, *Società e vita religiosa a Napoli nell'età moderna, 1656-1799*, [Napoli 1971], 72.

⁴ Sugli studi teologici fatti da Alfonso come 'seminarista esterno' vedi D. CAPONE in *Santi Alfonso de Liguori; contributi bio-bibliografici*, [Brescia 1940], 167-175; R. TELLERIA, *San Alfonso M. de Liguori*, vol. I, Madrid 1950, 101-104.

⁵ Alfonso fece il suo noviziato nell'anno 1724-1725, e fu ricevuto come membro il 1° ottobre 1725, in seguito alla decisione favorevole della direzione presa il 17 settembre precedente. R. TELLERIA in *Spic. hist.* 8 (1960) 411-415. Mons. Fortunato era stato aggregato l'11 dicembre 1713; SPARANO, *op. cit.* I 300.

⁶ Cf. J. METZLER, *Das erste Weltpriesterinstitut im Dienste der Propaganda*, in *Neue Zeitschrift für Missionswissenschaft* (Beckenried, Schweiz) 17 (1961) 161-174.

⁷ Su queste difficoltà, connesse con il ruolo di Alfonso come fondatore di un nuovo istituto missionario, cf. TELLERIA, *art. cit.* 437-439.

⁸ T. FALCOIA, *Lettere a s. Alfonso, Ripa, Sportelli, Crostarosa*, ed. O. Gregorio, [Roma 1963], 113. Lettera del 26 novembre 1732 scritta ad Alfonso, nella quale Falcoia dice di «aderire ai sentimenti del prudentissimo mons. Fortunato». Cf. TELLERIA, *S. Alfonso* I 202.

⁹ Da un manoscritto autografo di Alfonso con appunti circa l'organizzazione (Regole e Costituzioni) del nuovo Istituto, della fine del 1732 o dell'inizio del 1733, appare che mons. Fortunato aveva dato il suo parere su come assicurare una base finanziaria alla Congregazione. Il documento è stato pubblicato in *Spic. hist.* 16 (1968) 436-438; il consiglio di mons. Fortunato a p. 437 (Limosine).

¹⁰ TELLERIA, *S. Alfonso* I 202 afferma senz'altro che Alfonso s'incontrò con mons. Fortunato a Napoli nel novembre-dicembre 1732, quando il Santo era nella capitale per la missione all'Annunziata. Cf. *Spic. hist.* 23 (1975) 35, nota 42.

¹¹ Fr. KUNTZ, *Commentaria de vita D. Alphonsi et de rebus Congr. SS. Red. VI 11*. Manoscritto cons. nell'archivio generale dei Redentoristi, Roma (d'ora in poi: AGR). Diverse notizie sulla vita e sull'opera svolta da mons. Fortunato nella diocesi di Cassano vengono date in F. RUSSO, *Storia della diocesi di Cassano al Jonio*, vol. III, Napoli [1968], 127-132.

gliarsi che, appena saputo che Alfonso era riuscito a fondare il suo Istituto, subito si rivolgesse a lui per ottenere un aiuto in favore dei fedeli della sua diocesi, scarsamente fornita di operai evangelici¹².

Mettendo insieme e comparando diversi dati forniti da varie fonti, sembra di poter concludere che mons. Fortunato non si limitò, alla fine del 1732, a chiedere ad Alfonso un aiuto temporaneo, cioè di mandare alcuni padri per qualche corso di predicazione, ma gli propose addirittura di realizzare nella sua diocesi una fondazione della nuova Congregazione¹³.

Nella prima riga della sua lettera del 18 maggio 1748 ad Alfonso egli dice di aver nutrito sempre il desiderio di avere in diocesi una casa dell'Istituto¹⁴. Non è il caso di dare troppo peso alla parola « sempre », ma il senso ovvio è certamente questo: dall'inizio dell'Istituto¹⁵. Questa interpretazione si accorderebbe molto bene con un'affermazione di Alfonso, contenuta in una lettera del 9 febbraio 1733 a mons. Falcoia: « molte fondazioni ci si fanno avanti, ma siamo troppo pochi »¹⁶.

La risposta di Alfonso a mons. Fortunato — orale o in iscritto — non la conosciamo. Forse fu inviata per mezzo di mons. Falcoia¹⁷, che anche alcuni mesi più tardi manifestò ad Alfonso l'intenzione di voler scrivere al prelado¹⁸. Certo è che dovevano passare ancora molti anni prima che la Congregazione cominciasse ad operare nella diocesi di Cassano (1756, quindi dopo la morte del vescovo); un periodo an-

¹² Durante tutto il tempo che mons. Fortunato fu vescovo di Cassano (1729-1751), operava nella diocesi, come catechista e missionario, il ven. Mariano Arciero (1707-1788). Cf. [A. SCOTTI], *Vita del ven. Servo di Dio D. Mariano Arciero*, Napoli 1830 e 21838. La seconda edizione del libro è dedicata al Redentorista mons. Celestino Cocle.

¹³ Lo affermano KUNTZ, *Commentaria* III 260, V 423, VI 11; TELLERIA, *S. Alfonso* I 602; GREGORIO in *Spicilegium* 16 (1968) 437, nota 3.

¹⁴ Questa lettera si pubblica *infra*, Doc. 1.

¹⁵ La parola « sempre » non può avere il senso: dall'inizio del mio episcopato. Nel 1729 Alfonso non aveva ancora fondata la sua Congregazione.

¹⁶ TANNOIA, *op. cit.* I 85. Il brano è stato riprodotto in *Spic. hist.* 25 (1977) 289. Anche da una lettera scritta qualche mese più tardi dal ven. Gennaro Sarnelli ad Alfonso segue che alcuni vescovi avevano chiesto una fondazione. Il documento del 9 luglio 1733 si trova al n° 1 in una raccolta di lettere autografe del Sarnelli, conservata nella postulazione generale dei Redentoristi.

¹⁷ Fino alla sua morte (20 IV 1743) mons. Falcoia tenne la direzione suprema del nuovo Istituto in qualità di 'Direttore dell'Opera'. Ammetteva i nuovi membri, designava i superiori, regolava l'attività apostolica ed aveva l'ultima parola anche quando si trattava di accettare e di sopprimere fondazioni. M. DE MEULEMEESTER, *Origines de la Congrégation du Très Saint Rédempteur*, vol. I, Louvain 1953, 71-76.

¹⁸ FALCOIA, *Lettere* 154. Lettera del 3 giugno 1733.

cora più lungo doveva trascorrere prima che si potessero realizzare le prime fondazioni dell'Istituto in Calabria (1790; Catanzaro, Stilo e Tropea)¹⁹.

Dopo il 1732-1733 le fonti di cui disponiamo, per una quindicina di anni non forniscono notizie su eventuali contatti diretti tra Alfonso e mons. Fortunato, benché questi continuasse a nutrire il desiderio di ottenere una fondazione dei Redentoristi²⁰. Per quanto sappiamo, è solo nel 1748 che il vescovo si rivolse direttamente al Santo, avanzando « di bel nuovo » la proposta di effettuare una fondazione nella sua diocesi, cioè a Mormanno.

In una lettera del 18 maggio di quell'anno il vescovo proponeva tale fondazione su una base abbastanza concreta, specificando i fondi e le rendite a disposizione dei padri per il loro mantenimento²¹. Esprimeva inoltre la ferma speranza che non sarebbero loro mancate donazioni assai consistenti, una volta che i diocesani benestanti avessero visto con i propri occhi il frutto salutare dell'opera dei padri. Questi avrebbero dovuto dedicarsi — in assoluta conformità con lo scopo specifico della Congregazione — alle missioni al popolo ed agli esercizi spirituali per il clero.

Anche se la risposta di Alfonso ci è ancora una volta sconosciuta²², dalla reazione di mons. Fortunato dell'8 giugno appare chiaramente che non fu favorevole²³. Alfonso aveva osservato che la fondazione per ora non era possibile, allegando probabilmente la mancanza di personale²⁴. Tuttavia egli intendeva lasciare aperta la possibilità di

¹⁹ Ci proponiamo di illustrare in altra sede la storia della fondazione di queste case, assai significativa anche per meglio comprendere la politica ecclesiastica del governo borbonico.

²⁰ Tanto si rileva dal poscritto di una lettera del ven. Gennaro Sarnelli al p. Giovanni Mazzini, scritta intorno al 1740: « Monsig. Fortunato, vescovo di Cassano, che tanto desidera la fondazione, sta male. Preghino per lui. Lo dica al P. Rettore »; cioè ad Alfonso, allora rettore della casa di Ciorani. Il documento si trova al n° 32 nella raccolta menzionata *supra*, n. 16.

²¹ La lettera originale, scritta però da altra mano, si conserva in AGR I D 35, 14. Si pubblica *infra*, Doc. 1.

²² Ringrazio sentitamente mons. Giuseppe Campana, archivista della curia di Cassano, per le diligenti ricerche fatte nell'aprile 1979, purtroppo rimaste infruttuose.

²³ La lettera originale, scritta però da altra mano, si conserva in AGR I D 35, 15. Si pubblica *infra*, Doc. 2.

²⁴ Nella primavera del 1748 vi era nella Congregazione appena una ventina di sacerdoti professi. Le case erano quattro: Ciorani (fond. 1735), Nocera de' Pagani (fond. 1742), Deliceto (fond. 1744), Caposele (fond. 1746). Il lavoro della predicazione di missioni e di esercizi spirituali era piuttosto intenso.

realizzare il progetto in seguito, forse fra una decina di anni. Ma tale prospettiva era di ben scarso conforto al vescovo, già avanzato di età e malaticcio²⁵.

Inoltre Alfonso aveva espresso la sua perplessità per la « tenuità delle rendite », giudicate insufficienti a garantire la fondazione proposta. Su questo punto mons. Fortunato si prese la libertà di dare una lezione amichevole al Santo, richiamandogli alla memoria le parole dello stesso Signore (Lc X 4 e XXII 35): dobbiamo confidare fermamente in Dio, la cui provvidenza non farà mancare il necessario a coloro che faticano per la sua gloria, e non nella « maledetta soverchia provvidenza umana, che languisce lo spirito dei religiosi ».

Il vescovo cercava di confutare anche alcune altre difficoltà mosse da Alfonso contro la fondazione: Mormanno era luogo « di ottima aria per esser situata sopra dei monti »²⁶. Se in realtà l'inverno vi era rigido, ciò non avrebbe molestato i padri, che in quella stagione si sarebbero trovati altrove, occupati a dare missioni. Secondo mons. Fortunato neppure il necessario consenso del re per la nuova fondazione avrebbe comportato serie difficoltà: il governo era perfettamente al corrente della penuria di buoni missionari di cui soffriva la Calabria, e quindi ben disposto ad appoggiare eventuali provvedimenti atti a rimediare a tale insufficienza.

Non sappiamo se e cosa Alfonso rispose alla seconda lettera del vescovo, né se questi insistette ulteriormente. In ogni caso, allorché alcuni anni più tardi, il 18 agosto 1751, mons. Fortunato morì a Castrovillari²⁷, non era stato ancora accontentato dal Santo.

Da una lettera di Alfonso al p. Francesco Margotta, procuratore generale della sua Congregazione, apprendiamo che nell'estate del 1753 fu avanzata una richiesta di missioni da predicare in Calabria²⁸. Questa volta l'iniziativa sembra sia stata presa da Carmine Ventapane, professore di medicina a Napoli, amico di Margotta²⁹. Ventapane era

²⁵ Nella lettera del 18 maggio 1748 mons. Fortunato dice di « ritrovarsi vicino al sepolcro ».

²⁶ G. ALFANO, *Istorica descrizione del Regno di Napoli*, Napoli 1795, 85 dice invece che Mormanno è « d'aria cattiva ».

²⁷ Il 18 agosto 1751 è la data dell'epitaffio nella cattedrale di Cassano, riprodotto in RUSSO, *op. cit.* III 131. L'iscrizione del ritratto di mons. Fortunato, conservato nella sagrestia del duomo, porta invece la data: « X Kal. Septembris an. 1751 », cioè il 23 agosto; *ibid.* 132. RITZLER-SEFRIN, *op. cit.* V 147 dà come giorno del decesso il 17 agosto (ex ASV, Proc. Episc. Datariae Apostolicae).

²⁸ ALFONSO M. de LIGUORI, *Lettere*, vol. I, Roma [1887], 232. Cf. TELLERIA, *S. Alfonso I* 602-603.

²⁹ Su Ventapane non abbiamo altre notizie oltre a quelle tramandate da TAN-

nativo di Maratea, località posta sul Tirreno, appartenente alla diocesi di Cassano. Da questa circostanza deduciamo che le missioni erano state richieste — almeno in primo luogo — per la diocesi di Cassano. Il vescovo, che secondo Alfonso doveva cercare di ottenere dal governo un sussidio per il mantenimento dei missionari, sarebbe allora il successore di mons. Fortunato, cioè mons. Giovanni Batt. Miceli³⁰.

Ma la scarsità di personale — espressamente rilevata da Alfonso nella sopraccitata lettera — impedì anche nel 1753 ai Redentoristi di allargare il loro campo d'attività alla Calabria³¹. E nemmeno nei prossimi due anni si riuscì a sistemare la faccenda, che era infatti di natura alquanto complicata.

Benché la Congregazione fosse impegnata in un'intensa attività missionaria altrove³², per esempio nel Beneventano³³, nella penisola Amalfitana³⁴ e in Basilicata³⁵, nella prima metà di novembre del 1756 Alfonso riuscì finalmente a spedire, « con sommo suo compiacimento, un grosso distaccamento de' suoi operai » in Calabria³⁶. Non conosciamo esattamente la consistenza del gruppo, e soltanto di tre padri ci sono noti i nomi³⁷: il superiore Lorenzo d'Antonio³⁸, Francesco

NOIA, *op. cit.* I 272 e 277. Riferendosi al Ventapane, Alfonso non lo nomina esplicitamente, ma lo chiama « l'Amico »; *Lettere* I 232. Sembra che questo sia stato anche l'uso più generale nella Congregazione; cf. ad es. la lettera pubbl. *infra*, Doc. 3. Forse in tal modo si voleva sottolineare che Ventapane era considerato l'amico *par excellence*. Infatti era un esimio benefattore dell'Istituto.

³⁰ Alcune notizie biografiche su mons. Miceli (1698-1763) in RITZLER-SEFRIN, *op. cit.* vol. VI (1730-1799), Padova 1958, 152; anche in Russo, *op. cit.* III 132-137.

³¹ Tuttavia la situazione nella Congregazione sotto l'aspetto numerico era molto migliorata rispetto a quella del 1748 (vedi *supra*, la nota 24). Cf. Fr. MINERVINO, *Catalogo dei Redentoristi d'Italia, 1732-1841, e dei Redentoristi delle Provincie meridionali d'Italia, 1841-1869* (*Bibliotheca Historica CSSR VIII*), Roma 1978, 340.

³² Nella lettera del 29 novembre (forse ottobre) 1756 al p. Gaspare Caione Alfonso dice: « Specialmente in questo anno, colle missioni di Calabria, sto con tali appletti che mi sento affannato. E bisognerà che esca io ancora, mezzo malato come sto ». ALFONSO de LIGUORI, *Lettere* I 364. Il brano surriferito è stato corretto sull'originale cons. in AGR, SAM III 123.

³³ Vedi la « Nota delle Missioni » del p. Biagio Amarante, ed. da O. GREGORIO in *Spic hist.* 8 (1960) 335-336.

³⁴ Nel novembre 1756 si tenne una missione generale ad Amalfi, diretta dallo stesso Alfonso. TANNIOIA, *op. cit.* I 273-274; cf. TELLERIA, *S. Alfonso* I 598, nota 12.

³⁵ Nei mesi di dicembre 1756 - gennaio 1757 si tennero missioni ad Avigliano e a Potenza. Vedi KUNTZ, *Commentaria* V 426-427 e 441-442.

³⁶ TANNIOIA, *op. cit.* I 272.

³⁷ I nomi sono menzionati in una lettera scritta da Mormanno l'8 gennaio 1757, che si pubblica *infra*, Doc. 3.

³⁸ Il p. d'Antonio (1711-1769) aveva fatto la professione religiosa nel 1744. Vedi MINERVINO, *op. cit.* 47 e *Spic. hist.* 2 (1954) 244, n. 34.

Pentimalli³⁹ e il giovane Pietro Paolo Blasucci⁴⁰. Dato che le fonti non parlano di altri componenti del gruppo⁴¹ — ripetutamente, invece, viene detto che erano pochi⁴² — ci si domanda se Tannoia non esagera parlando di « un *grosso* distaccamento ».

Benché le fonti non abbondino nei dettagli, possiamo seguire per sommi capi l'andamento delle missioni nella diocesi di Cassano negli anni 1756-1757. « A prima giunta si predicò la penitenza in Maratea, patria del Ventapane »⁴³. Poi i padri passarono a Cassano, quindi ad Aieta, ove forse la missione, che si tenne nel mese di dicembre del 1756, durò fino all'inizio di gennaio del 1757⁴⁴. La quarta missione fu predicata a Mormanno, probabilmente dal 5 al 22 gennaio. Su questa siamo un po' meglio informati, grazie alla 'Storia della vocazione' del suddiacono Bonifacio Galtieri, che decise di entrare nella Congregazione durante la missione⁴⁵. In una lettera scritta ad Alfonso l'8 gennaio i padri d'Antonio e Blasucci parlano di possibili vocazioni, lodano clero e popolo, e si mostrano ben contenti del frutto delle loro fatiche⁴⁶.

³⁹ Il p. Pentimalli (1714-1761) aveva fatto la professione religiosa nel 1751. Vedi MINERVINO, *op. cit.* 138 e *Spic. hist.* 5 (1957) 83, n. 17.

⁴⁰ Il p. Blasucci (1729-1817) aveva fatto la professione religiosa nel 1753 e l'anno seguente era stato ordinato sacerdote. Vedi MINERVINO, *op. cit.* 26 e *Spic. hist.* 2 (1954) 239, n. 12.

⁴¹ TELLERÍA, S. *Alfonso I* 603 è d'opinione che anche il p. Pasquale Caprioli partecipò alla prima spedizione missionaria dei Redentoristi in Calabria. Ma questo è da escludere in base alle notizie fornite dallo stesso p. Caprioli nel suo diario, cons. in AGR XXXVIII B 23. Sulla penultima pagina del quaderno, che comincia nel novembre del 1749 e finisce con una notizia del 12 ottobre 1757, Caprioli annota: « Da' 25 di Gennajo [prima era scritto: Febrajo] 1757 perfino al mese di Maggio sono stato nelle missioni della Puglia, e poi mi ritirai in Iliceto nel mese di Giugno ». Proprio nello stesso tempo finirono le missioni in Calabria (maggio 1757) e ritornarono i padri a Pagani (giugno), come vedremo in seguito.

⁴² *Infra*, Doc. 3.

⁴³ TANNOLA, *op. cit.* I 272.

⁴⁴ L'autografa 'Storia della vocazione' (*Curriculum vitae*) del novizio Vitan-tonio Papa, nativo di Aieta, scritta nel 1758, comincia così: « Nell'anno del Sig. 1756, nel mese di Dicembre, mandò Iddio la missione nel mio paese ». AGR XXXIX 135. - TANNOLA, *op. cit.* I 272 pone Aieta per ultimo nell'elenco dei luoghi missionati. KUNTZ, *Commentaria* V 426 e 440 suppone che la missione sia stata protratta fino all'inizio di gennaio.

⁴⁵ AGR XXXVIII B 69. Galtieri dice (p. 8) che il 5 gennaio fu il giorno, in cui sentì sbocciare la sua vocazione, e che i padri partirono « al giorno o alla vigilia di Maria SS., a' 23 Gennaro, che è dedicato al di lei spozalizio ». Da queste date possiamo dedurre con una certa approssimazione il giorno dell'inizio e della chiusura della missione. Galtieri non dà notizie sullo svolgimento e sui risultati della medesima.

⁴⁶ La lettera originale è conservata in AGR XXXVIII B 5. Si pubblica *infra*, Doc. 3.

Da Mormanno i padri andarono a Scalea⁴⁷, Castelluccia, Tortora, e forse anche in altre località non menzionate nelle fonti. Finite le missioni ritornarono — probabilmente dopo Pasqua (10 IV) — sui loro passi. Furono nuovamente nei paesi che avevano recentemente evangelizzati, per tenervi alcune prediche di rinnovamento di spirito, secondo l'antica usanza della Congregazione⁴⁸, volte a rassodare i risultati delle missioni⁴⁹.

L'8 giugno i padri rientrarono a Pagani⁵⁰, « cantando e portando i propri covoni » (Ps. 125,6); infatti, il Signore aveva benedetto largamente le loro fatiche, cosa di cui il santo fondatore oltremodo si rallegrava. « Consolavasi Alfonso vedendo pescare in alto mare la sua picciola navicella, e ritrarre de' pesci in quantità e nelle qualità eccellenti »⁵¹.

Al ritorno i missionari erano accompagnati dal summenzionato suddiacono Galtieri, che si era associato a loro in gennaio a Mormanno, ed aveva prestato d'allora in poi l'aiuto « confacente alla mia capacità », come egli stesso si esprime⁵². Inoltre due altri aspiranti si erano aggregati alla comitiva: il chierico Nicola Greco, anche lui di Mormanno, e il giovane Vitantonio Papa di Aieta⁵³.

Tannoia ci assicura che lo strepitoso successo delle missioni in Calabria provocò molte lettere di ringraziamento e di invito a ritornare: « Non così furono giunti [i missionari] in Nocera, che affollato [Alfonso] si vide, con doppia consolazione, dalle replicate lettere di ringraziamento e dalle tante suppliche de' poveri Calabresi, che abbandonati e famelici, cercavano e non avevano il pane evangelico »⁵⁴.

Di tutte queste lettere soltanto una è giunta sino a noi, cioè

⁴⁷ Nel poscritto alla lettera dell'8 gennaio 1757, p. d'Antonio dice che da Mormanno sarebbero andati a Scalea. Vedi *infra*, Doc. 3.

⁴⁸ Cf. O. GREGORIO, *Saggio storico intorno alla 'Rinnovazione di spirito'*, in *Spic. hist.* 15 (1967) 126-133.

⁴⁹ Nella precitata lettera (nota 46) dell'8 gennaio 1757 p. d'Antonio parla di queste rinnovazioni, da fare dopo le missioni. TANNOIA, *op. cit.* I 272 dice che furono tenute « in ogni paese ». Il novizio Vitantonio Papa racconta nella sua 'Storia della vocazione' che, dopo aver vinto certe tentazioni, « giunsi dove stavano li nostri Padri, che facevano rinnovazione di spirito ». AGR XXXIX 135 (p. 8).

⁵⁰ AGR XXXVIII B 69 (p. 8). TANNOIA, *op. cit.* I 277 è meno preciso: « Verso la fine di Maggio ritornarono i nostri dalle Calabrie ».

⁵¹ TANNOIA, *op. cit.* I 277.

⁵² AGR XXXVIII B 69 (p. 7).

⁵³ Furono ammessi tutti e tre al noviziato il 17 luglio 1757, e fecero la professione il 16 luglio dell'anno seguente. Più tardi uscirono tutti dalla Congregazione. AGR, Catalogo I, f° 21v. Cf. MINERVINO, *op. cit.* 82 (Galtieri), 91 (Greco), 134 (Papa).

⁵⁴ TANNOIA, *op. cit.* I 277.

quella del principe della Rocca, Giovanni Batt. Filomarino, che porta la data di Napoli, 21 luglio 1757⁵⁵. E' una testimonianza quanto mai eloquente dell'alta stima per il lavoro apostolico svolto dalla Congregazione. Purtroppo le risposte di Alfonso non ci sono note⁵⁶. Sappiamo comunque che, commosso dalle insistenti richieste, nell'autunno dello stesso anno mandò di nuovo un gruppo di suoi figli in Calabria.

Neanche questa volta conosciamo esattamente la consistenza del gruppo dei missionari. Come nel caso della spedizione precedente, solo di tre ci sono conosciuti i nomi⁵⁷: i padri d'Antonio, quale superiore, e Pentimalli⁵⁸, che potevano valersi dell'esperienza acquistata l'anno precedente⁵⁹, e il giovane p. Pasquale Caprioli⁶⁰. Quest'ultimo dice lui stesso di avervi partecipato nelle deposizioni rilasciate durante il processo di beatificazione di Alfonso, aggiungendo alcune interessanti notizie su certi provvedimenti presi dal fondatore prima della partenza dei missionari. Da queste disposizioni appare chiaramente che Alfonso considerava il lavoro apostolico dei suoi nella lontana⁶¹ Calabria come un avvenimento di particolare importanza.

Nel 1788 Caprioli depose tra l'altro: « Andando io con altri

⁵⁵ Si pubblica *infra*, Doc. 4.

⁵⁶ In fondo della lettera del principe Filomarino Alfonso ha scritto la sua firma: « Umil.mo div.mo ed obbl.mo serv.re vero - Alfonso de Liguori della C. del SS. Red.re ». Pensiamo che questa sia la firma posta sotto la risposta al principe.

⁵⁷ Il fatto che di tutte e due le spedizioni tre componenti sono conosciuti, ci induce a pensare che ad ambedue abbiano partecipato soltanto tre padri. Ci sembra che il lavoro svolto, per quanto a noi noto, si poteva sbrigare benissimo da tre valenti missionari. Per le confessioni si valsero dell'aiuto del clero locale; vedi *infra*, Doc. 3.

Crediamo anche che qualche fratello laico — almeno uno, ma forse due o tre — abbia accompagnato i padri in ambedue le spedizioni. E questo non solo per sbrigare le faccende domestiche e materiali, ma pure per prestare aiuto nel lavoro apostolico stesso, come era solito farsi nelle missioni più impegnative tenute dai Redentoristi nel Settecento.

⁵⁸ Dalla 'Storia della vocazione' (*Curriculum vitae*) del novizio Angelo Maione appare che il p. d'Antonio era superiore della missione e che aveva per compagno il p. Pentimalli. Il documento, scritto dallo stesso Maione il 17 maggio 1758 a Deliceto, si conserva in AGR XXXIX 100.

⁵⁹ Non molto dopo il ritorno dalla Calabria il p. Blasucci era stato nominato prefetto e lettore di filosofia degli studenti redentoristi a Ciorani. Cf. S. GIAMMUSSO, *I Redentoristi in Sicilia*, Palermo 1960, 14; KUNTZ, *Commentaria* VI 54.

⁶⁰ Il p. Caprioli (1728-1813) aveva fatto la professione religiosa nel 1751. Vedi MINERVINO, *op. cit.* 32 e *Spic. hist.* 9 (1961) 322, n. 4.

⁶¹ Nella sopraccitata lettera (nota 28) del 2 settembre 1753 Alfonso dice che « si tratta di sette a otto giornate di viaggio ». TANNOLA, *op. cit.* I 277 parla di « luoghi così remoti ».

compagni nelle missioni delle due Calabrie⁶², dimostrò [Alfonso] tanto piacere che si andava a predicare in quelle parti, dove non ancora ci eravamo andati⁶³, che nella mattina della partenza non solo ci benedisse egli, ma ci fece benedire ancora colla s. pisside »⁶⁴. E nel 1797 fece menzione di un altro interessante dettaglio, che illustra la particolare sollecitudine di Alfonso: « Diede ordine ai superiori [= al superiore] delle missioni, specialmente in quell'anno che io fui in Calabria con compagni a missionare, che non ci avesse fatto fare la barba perché giovani, se non che in fine della missione, e tutto per timore di mettere in pericolo la s. castità »⁶⁵.

Sull'andamento delle missioni durante questa seconda spedizione in Calabria siamo ancora meno informati che su quelle predicate nel 1756-1757. L'unica fonte della quale disponiamo, è la biografia di Alfonso scritta dal p. Tannoia⁶⁶.

Questi c'informa che i missionari partirono da Pagani nel novembre del 1757⁶⁷. Dei luoghi evangelizzati dà la seguente enumerazione: « Erano stati consolati a prima giunta colle s. missioni Vignanello, Ossomarzo [= Orsomarso], Cepollina, Verbicaro e S. Domenica⁶⁸. In quaresima essendosi ripassati colle rinnovazioni di spirito i medesimi luoghi, si erano fatte le missioni in Saracena, in Civita, S. Basile, Lungri e Fermo [= Firmo], tutti Albanesi di rito greco. Nell'Aprile⁶⁹, volendosi compiacere il principe della Rocca, erano stati in Cutro, Policastro, Cotronei e Rocca Bernarda, feudi del principe

⁶² Le provincie di Calabria Citra, oggi di Cosenza, e di Calabria Ultra, che comprendeva le attuali provincie di Catanzaro e di Reggio Calabria.

⁶³ P. Caprioli si scorda della prima spedizione in Calabria, fatta nel 1756.

⁶⁴ Processo ordinario celebrato a Nocera de' Pagani, Copia pubblica, vol. IV, fo 1929rv. Deposizione del p. Caprioli, teste 35, fatta il 29 luglio 1788. Anche Tannoia, *op. cit.* I 277 pone la solenne benedizione all'inizio della seconda spedizione in Calabria, cioè nel mese di novembre del 1757. Telleria, *S. Alfonso* I 603 la pone invece all'inizio della prima, cioè nel novembre del 1756.

⁶⁵ Processo apostolico celebrato a Nocera de' Pagani, Copia pubblica, vol. II, fo 814v. Deposizione del p. Caprioli, teste 9, fatta il 26 giugno 1797. Telleria, *S. Alfonso* I 603 sembra supporre che Alfonso abbia adottato tale provvedimento proprio per proteggere i giovani che andarono in Calabria, « sin duda porque con fundamento o por prejuicio recelaba de las pasiones fogosas del país que debían evangelizar ».

⁶⁶ Le relative notizie riportate da Kuntz, *Commentaria* VI 10-11, 34-35, 40-41, 52-54, e da Telleria, *S. Alfonso* I 605-606 sono tutte prese da Tannoia.

⁶⁷ Tannoia, *op. cit.* I 277.

⁶⁸ Il sac. Angelo Maione racconta nella 'Storia della vocazione' (vedi *supra*, n. 58) che nel mese di dicembre del 1757 i missionari giunsero a Santa Domenica. Dopo aver udito alcune prediche, decise di entrare nella Congregazione. Sulla raccomandazione del p. d'Antonio fu ammesso da Alfonso. Notizie biografiche su Maione in Minervino, *op. cit.* 106, e in *Spic. hist.* 2 (1954) 258, n. 98.

⁶⁹ Cioè dopo Pasqua, festa che nel 1758 cadeva il 26 marzo.

nella Calabria Ultra⁷⁰. Ed essendosi fatte anche in questi luoghi le rinnovazioni di spirito, si era passato nella terra di S. Giovanni in Fiore, commenda del figlio del principe⁷¹, in diocesi di Cosenza »⁷².

Il successo delle missioni — sempre secondo il Tannoia — fu grandissimo, e la partecipazione fu dappertutto universale, non di rado anche con notevoli sacrifici personali. « In tanti luoghi, le donne specialmente, si nascondevano di notte dietro i confessionali e negli angoli delle chiese, per esser le prime di mattina a potersi confessare. Tante giunsero a stare due giorni digiune o portavansi con se un tozzo di pane. [...] Esuberante fu il frutto in tutte queste missioni. Offese rimesse, e strepitose; restituzioni non leggiere; scandali gravi detestati; Baroni ed Università pacificate. Oltre di questo, riconciliati si videro colla Chiesa e con Gesù Cristo tanti pubblici miscredenti anche tra preti, che, rimessi, si resero a tutti di edificazione »⁷³.

Purtroppo Tannoia dà soltanto pochissimi dettagli per documentare le suddette affermazioni generali. Ce ne ha forniti due: uno per la missione di Saracena, l'altro per quella predicata a Policastro.

A Saracena il popolo portò via la scala del pulpito per impedire che il quaresimalista predicasse la sera, durante la missione⁷⁴. In Policastro accadde un caso, definito « troppo lugubre » dalla nostra fonte. Diventata pubblica la condotta scandalosa di alcune persone, mentre la missione era in corso, i padri minacciarono di partire, con il risultato che tutta la popolazione s'impegnò a dar riparo allo scandalo. « I due uomini, confusi e pentiti, ma carichi di funi e con corone di spine in testa, vennero portati, accompagnati da' preti e dal popolo, disciplinandosi e cercando scusa, per tutto il paese. Questo spettacolo infervorò la missione ». Cosa che s'intende facilmente! Anche le donne implicate nella vicenda, dopo essere state carcerate in un primo momento, diedero pubblicamente segni di vero pentimento ed autentica conversione⁷⁵.

Non fa meraviglia che, in tale clima di soddisfazione e perfino di entusiasmo per l'opera svolta dai missionari, autorità e popolo volessero trattenerli per poter beneficiare della loro opera anche in seguito. Di conseguenza furono offerte diverse fondazioni, e sembra che s'incominciasse a prendere contatti a Napoli in vista del consenso go-

⁷⁰ Questi luoghi erano situati nell'arcidiocesi di Santa Severina.

⁷¹ Vedi *infra*, le note 26 e 27 ai documenti.

⁷² TANNIOIA, *op. cit.* I 285.

⁷³ *Ibid.* 286.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.* 285-286.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.* 286.

vernativo. Anche qui l'unica fonte per ora a disposizione è il Tannoia, della cui narrazione quindi non abbiamo potuto verificare l'attendibilità con altri documenti contemporanei. Comunque, se anche la prima frase del suo paragrafo sulle case offerte in Calabria è chiaramente retorica, tutto ciò che segue può essere accettato come conforme alla verità storica.

« Se la Corte non fosse stata restia, le Calabrie ripiene si vedrebbero delle nostre case. In Mormanno ⁷⁶, che non fecero per farci stabilire nel soppresso convento de' Coloriti ⁷⁷. Quei di Cutro e Policastro destinarono persona in Napoli per ottenersi il reale beneplacito. Il principe della Rocca ne fu così invogliato, che contentavasi dimezzare la rendita della commenda del figlio, per vederli stabiliti in S. Giovanni in Fiore » ⁷⁸.

Anche la seconda spedizione missionaria si protrasse per sette mesi. I padri ritornarono nel mese di giugno del 1758, con grande consolazione di Alfonso « in vederli tutti sani e carichi di varie prede fatte all'inferno » ⁷⁹.

Non sembra che nei quattro anni seguenti i Redentoristi siano tornati in Calabria per predicarvi missioni ⁸⁰. Ma nel periodo 1763-1765 vi svolsero un lavoro apostolico piuttosto intenso. Di questo ci occuperemo in un prossimo articolo.

⁷⁶ Come abbiamo visto sopra, già nel 1748 mons. Fortunato aveva offerto ad Alfonso una fondazione a Mormanno.

⁷⁷ Si tratta degli eremiti agostiniani (di Santa Maria) di Colloreto. Erano così denominati dal poggio vicino a Morano Calabro, ove all'incirca del 1540 fu fondato il loro primo convento. Furono soppressi da Benedetto XIV verso il 1750. Vedi F. Russo, s.v. in *Dizionario degli istituti di perfezione* III (1976) 1221-1222.

⁷⁸ TANNIOIA, *op. cit.* I 286.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.* 285.

⁸⁰ Nel 1761 alcuni padri diretti ad Agrigento per una nuova fondazione, predicarono più volte durante la loro forzata sosta a Sant'Eufemia d'Aspromonte. Cf. GIAMMUSSO, *op. cit.*, 25-28.

DOCUMENTI

1. - Lettera di mons. Gennaro Fortunato, vescovo di Cassano allo Ionio, a s. Alfonso; Castrovillari, 18 maggio 1748. - Originale in AGR I D 35, 14.

Ill.mo Sig.re, Sig.re P.ne oss.mo

Il desiderio che ho sempre nodrito nel cuore, che si fondasse in questa mia diocesi una casa della sua Congregazione, mi spinge di bel nuovo a replicarne le suppliche a V. S. Ill.ma, essendo questa diocesi e le Calabrie estremamente bisognose d'ajuti sprituali.

La fondazione si farebbe in Mormanno, feudo della mia Chiesa e luogo di buon aere per esser situato nelle montagne. Ivi vi sarebbe e chiesa e casa per i Padri¹, la quale benché presentemente non sia molto grande, potrebbe però ampliarsi, essendovi il luogo capacissimo. Per il mantenimento poi de' Padri vi sarebbero presentemente annui docati centocinquanta di rendite effettive, che una persona benestante donarebbe da adesso alla Congregazione da fondarsi. Di più io vi darei sul bel principio docati cinquecento per impiegarsi in compre, e durante la mia vita, essendo Vescovo di Cassano, darei altri docati cento l'anno per la fabrica et per il mantenimento de' Padri.

Vi sono ancora due capellanie di cinquantatre ducati l'una, che dopo la morte di mio fratello e di mia sorella, che stanno già cadenti, da adesso l'assegnarei alli Padri della Congregazione. Si aggiunge a tutto questo che io li cederei cert'altre poche rendite della capella di S. Maria del Soccorso², e vi è molta speranza che più benestanti della diocesi, vedendo il frutto delle Missioni da farsi da detti Padri, vi farebbero delle pingui donazioni, al che io non mancherò di stimularli, siccome ho già fatto e fo.

L'obbligo poi di detti Padri sarebbe d'andare ne' tempi opportuni missionando per la diocesi, con trattenersi ne' luoghi grandi almeno un mese, poiché le Missioni di pochi giorni l'ho per lo più sperimentate poco utili, e dar gl'esercizj agl'ecclesiastici.

Intanto priego V. S. Ill.ma a raccomandare il negozio a Dio ed a darmi presto riscontro, se si compiace favorirmi, essendovi pericolo che il

¹ Non è possibile determinare quale chiesa fosse destinata da mons. Fortunato per la fondazione. Le chiese di Mormanno vengono enumerate in Russo, *op. cit.* II 168 e 197.

² Questa chiesa era stata fondata da un eremita spagnolo; Russo, *op. cit.* II 197. Diversi dati sulla devozione alla Madonna del Soccorso nell'Italia meridionale si trovano nello studio di F. FERRERO, *Nuestra Señora del Perpetuo Socorro*, Madrid [1966], 138 (Calabria), 161-165 (regione di Napoli), 171-175 (Sicilia).

donante dell'annui docati centocinquanta non se ne muja, ed io ritrovandomi vicino al sepolcro.

E mentre le raccomandando la mia miserabile persona e questa sua diocesi, fo a V. S. Ill.ma ed a tutti codesti buoni Padri divotissimo inchino, e mi confermo

Di V. S. Ill.ma

Divot.mo ed oblig.mo serv^e vero
Gennaro V. di Cassano

Castrovillari, 18 Maggio 1748

S. P. d. Alfonso di Liguoro

2. - Lettera di mons. Gennaro Fortunato, vescovo di Cassano allo Ionio, a s. Alfonso; Castrovillari, 8 giugno 1748. - Originale in AGR I D 35, 15.

Ill.mo Sig.re mio, P.ne oss.mo

La vostra lettera mi ha afflitto molto, poicché se non mi fa affatto disperare la nuova fundazione, mi la fa almeno vedere difficilissima e molto lontana, quando che io assolutamente, come altresì quel buon uomo che è disposto a far la donazione, e che vorrebbe, prima di chiuder gl'occhi, vedere almeno principiata l'opera. Perlocché alla dilazione procettata da V. S. Ill.ma di dieci anni non bisogna pensare, poicché il proporla sarebbe l'istesso che frastornare il donante dalla buona risoluzione e determinarlo ad altra opera pia.

Rispondo ora agl'altri capi del suo gentilissimo foglio. E primieramente al capo della tenuità delle rendite, su di che la priego di riflettere che la presente situazione del collegio sarebbe un principio di fundazione, le di cui rendite col tempo si andrebbero sempre accrescendo, siccome è accaduto in tutte l'altre case religiose, che da piccioli principij si sono poi eccessivamente augumentate per il buono odore de' religiosi e per la pietà de' fedeli.

E per comunicarvi con confidenza il mio sentimento: questa vostra idea non mi pare molto conforme allo spirito di Giesù Cristo e degl'Apostoli, i quali, benché avessero dovuti andare in mezzo a gente inimica e prevenuta contro di essi, vi andavano però « sine sacco et sine pera », confidati totalmente nella provvidenza di Dio, per la di cui gloria faticavano. Che se poi vediamo a' tempi nostri altro metodo nelle persone religiose, questo ci deve più tosto farci piangere che portarci ad imitarle, poicché l'esperienza ci fa vedere, quanto questa maledetta soverchia provvidenza umana debilita il frutto della divina parola e languisce lo spirito de' religiosi.

In quanto poi al luogo della fundazione vi fo sapere che Cassano è luogo di malissima aria³, per il qual motivo né io, né i Vescovi miei pre-

³ ALFANO, *op. cit.* 80 dice invece che Cassano è « d'aria buona ». Come per Mormanno (*supra*, nota 26) è quindi di opinione contraria a quella del vescovo.

decessori vi anno mai dimorati, se non per pochi giorni⁴. All'incontro Mormanno è feudo del Vescovo e di ottima aria per esser situata sopra de' monti. Egli è vero che l'inverno è rigido ed umido, ma dovendo i Padri nello detto tempo d'inverno portarsi per l'Emissioni [= le Missioni] negli luoghi bassi e di marina della diocesi, la rigidezza dell'aria di Mormanno non gli darebbe fastidio. In oltre con un poco di tempo si potrebbe fare un ospizio per detti Padri, o qui in Castrovillari ove io risiedo, o in altro luogo più caldo della diocesi.

Per la licenza del Re, sperarei ottenerla con facilità, rappresentandoli l'estremo bisogno di questa provincia di ministri evangelici e di buoni missionarij, del che anche il Re ne sta persuaso.

Circa poi lo scriverne a codesto Eminentissimo Arcivescovo, non vi ho ripugnanza alcuna di farlo, ma non mi pare presentemente tempo opportuno: bisogna prima strignere [= stringere] qualche cosa tra di Voi [= Noi], e poi darne parte al Sig. Cardinale⁵.

Intanto vi priego a raccomandare il negozio al Signore, e volendo favorirmi di scrivere, potrà indirizzare a dirittura la lettera per Castrovillari. E pieno di rispetto le baggio le sagre mani, e mi confermo

Di V. S. Ill.ma

Divot.mo ed oblig.mo serv^e vero
Gennaro V. di Cassano

Castrovillari, 8 Giugno 1748

[PS] Alla quale soggiungo di scrivermi, quando partirà, dove dovrò indirizzare le mie lettere.

Per strada di D. Ercole⁶

⁴ Vi erano anche altri motivi ad indurre i vescovi a risiedere abitualmente fuori di Cassano. Cf. Russo, *op. cit.* II 119 ss.

⁵ Si tratta certamente del cardinale Giuseppe Spinelli, arcivescovo di Napoli 1734-1754. Alfonso riteneva necessario, o almeno molto utile, il suo appoggio nelle cose riguardanti la Congregazione.

⁶ Alfonso era in questo tempo a Napoli per le trattative circa l'approvazione della Congregazione. Dimorava presso suo fratello don Ercole.

3. - Lettera dei padri Pietro Paolo Blasucci e Lorenzo d'Antonio a s. Alfonso; Mormanno, 8 gennaio 1757. - Originale in AGR XXXVIII B 5 (Personalialia del p. d'Antonio).

Viva Gesù, Maria e Gius^e

Ho⁷ ricevuta una carissima di V[ostra] P[aternità]⁸. Sento primieramente che i novizj sono molti, sino a 22⁹; gloria Patri. Perciò V. P. poco inclina a ricevere questi giovani Calabresi¹⁰, se non siano più che mediocri¹¹. Padre mio, vi dico la verità: questa gioventù calabrese ci rapisce; piacesse a Dio e fosse o men spiritosa o di spirito più forte per Dio. I giovani sono vivaci, di bello ingegno, graziosi, amabili, risoluti e spiritosi sin, per dirla, dentro le fascie. Basta vedere solamente i fanciulli di 3 o 4 anni col loro cappottino e sandaletti (giacché qui in Mormanno sono tutti zoccolanti) parlare con franchezza, rispondere all'impronto a' cittadini e forestieri con animo intrepido, come se fossero figli tutti di cavalieri. Padre mio, è una meraviglia.

I giovani da noi esaminati di 16 e 17 anni sono assai abili, nella spiega capacissimi, mostrano veramente abilità grande e spirito. Che voglio dirle? Mi affligge il cuore di escluderli, li tengo in canzona¹² e vado differendo sino al nostro ritorno e sino che ricevo da V. P. gli ordini espressi. Questo posso avvisarle circa questo; del resto veda V. P. come le pare.

Questa missione riesce assai fervorosa. E' una compassione vedere tanta gente affollata al confessionale e pochi soggetti a sbrigarla, sebbene ci andiamo procurando de' buoni confessori. Ma la fatica non piace a tutti, che non hanno idea di comunità, atteso che tanti confessori ci hanno promesso di venirci ad aiutare, ma intimoriti dalla fatica si sono portati da Calabresi, mancandoci di parola.

Gli esercizi a' preti del P. Pentimalli questa volta riescono assai fervorosi. I poverelli sono rimasti come tanti caponi storditi; forse mai hanno intesa cosa simile. I preti qui sono buoni, e si spera stabilire in questa città quella congregazione de' preti operarj, che non è riuscita in Ajeta per mancanza dell'arciprete di quel luogo, quanto santo tanto tosto di capo¹³.

⁷ La lettera non porta intestazione.

⁸ Questa lettera di Alfonso è sconosciuta.

⁹ Il numero dei novizi sembra comprendere sia i novizi chierici che laici. Nel 1757 fecero la professione undici novizi chierici; AGR, Catalogo I, ff° 17v-19v. Il numero dei fratelli laici che fecero la professione in quell'anno non si può determinare, per mancanza di un catalogo relativo.

¹⁰ I padri quindi avevano già scritto prima sulla possibilità di trovare delle vocazioni in Calabria. Questa lettera è andata perduta.

¹¹ Già un anno prima Alfonso aveva espresso l'intenzione di non voler ammettere novizi « mediocri ». Vedi la sua lettera del 30 gennaio 1756 al p. Gaspare Caione; *Lettere* I 328-329.

¹² Cioè: in sospenso.

¹³ Fin qui scrive il p. Blasucci; continua il p. d'Antonio, della cui mano sono anche il poscritto e l'indirizzo. La calligrafia del p. d'Antonio è di lettura alquanto

Padre mio caro, confermo quanto scrive il P. Blasucci, ed è tanto di più. Qui le cose vanno tutte buone: I soggetti fatigano allegramente, stanno buoni di salute e tremano di fare difetti. Gloria Patri. Per le¹⁴ missioni in quattagesima ventura, già sono appuntate; e sempre abbiamo che fare se fussimo trenta.

Per l'andata del P. Pentimalli al suo paese¹⁵, V. R. scrive¹⁶ che sia a Maggio, ma io avevo pensato al primo di Giugno, quanto maggiormente che li devo dare il compagno, e restiamo molto pochi per le missioni da farsi. Se le pare così, mi lo avvisa, e chi vuole che li dia per compagno¹⁷.

Mi scrive ancora che al primo di Giugno ci mettessimo in cammino per lo ritorno, ed io avevo pensato e promesso a Giugno fare le rinnovazioni di spirito, purché avessi veduto i compagni di buona salute e allegramente, e a quattagesima sollevarci per otto giorni. Si faccia però quanto li piace, che tutto eseguirò con molto mio piacere¹⁸.

Qui abbiamo abuscato due cantare di grassi. Ho pensato di mandarne quaranta rotoli per casa¹⁹, e perveneranno in mano di D. Saverio²⁰ per ripartirli. Qui c'è mandata qualche cosa. Mi scriva, come mi ho da portare in cercar denari all'Amico²¹, mentre il denaro ch'ho mi basterà sino a Maggio.

C'è qui un chierico [?] di 30 anni e più, solo, s<enza> parenti, che vuole farsi fratello, di buona s<alute>, capace assai e con quattro o cinquecento doc<ati>. Per dire le sue parole: Io sto nel grasso,

difficile, perché molto irregolare e trascurata. Non siamo sicuri di averla sempre interpretata esattamente. Non di rado la nostra trascrizione differisce da quella data da KUNTZ, *Commentaria* V 500.

¹⁴ La parola « le » sembra sia stata cancellata nel testo.

¹⁵ Il p. Pentimalli era nativo di Sant'Eufemia d'Aspromonte, località sita nell'allora Provincia di Calabria Ultra, ora di Reggio Calabria.

¹⁶ Non conosciamo questa lettera di Alfonso.

¹⁷ Non sembra che il p. Pentimalli abbia visitato il paese natale in questa occasione. Giuseppe LANDI, *Istoria della Congregazione del SS.mo Redentore* (ms. in AGR), vol. II, Gubbio 1782, 225-226 e 239, dice che soltanto nell'autunno del 1761, quando era in viaggio per la Sicilia, Pentimalli ritornò a Sant'Eufemia. Morì ivi il 15 novembre di quell'anno.

¹⁸ Come abbiamo visto nell'introduzione, le rinnovazioni furono fatte nei mesi di aprile-maggio, e l'8 giugno i missionari rientrarono a Pagani.

¹⁹ Cantaro e rotolo sono antiche unità di misura di peso, universalmente usate nell'Italia meridionale prima dell'adozione del sistema metrico decimale. Il valore variava secondo le regioni. Vedi F. FERRARO, *Dizionario di metrologia generale*, Bologna [1965], 30 e 218. Non è però esatto dire che il rotolo si usava soltanto in Sicilia.

²⁰ Vi erano allora due padri di nome Francesco Saverio nella Congregazione; Fr. Sav. (Di) Leo (1728-1811) e Fr. Sav. Rossi (1708-1758). Benché il primo venga indicato talvolta nei documenti come 'Saverio', questo appellativo è costantemente usato per il p. Rossi, uno dei primi compagni di Alfonso (ammesso nella Congregazione il 15 febbraio 1734, quando non vi si facevano ancora i voti) e consultore generale 1749-1758. In AGR, Catalogo I, f° 1v sta semplicemente iscritto come « D. Saverio Rossi », senza il nome Francesco.

²¹ Il medico Carmine Ventapane; vedi *supra*, nota 29.

faccio 'na vita di puercu, ho tutto in casa mia. Mi voglio far pecozzo, ca mi voglio salvare²².

Padre mio, che capacità in queste parti. Non se le faccia scappare. Vi ne sono cinque o sei, ch'n'bellezza²³. Dio par che li manda ad Iliceto, al P. Tandoia²⁴.

Mi raccomandì a Gesù Cristo. Tutti li cercano la s. benedizione e li baciano li piedi.

di V. R.

Servo umilissimo e figlio
Lorenzo d'Antonio del SS.mo Redentore

da Mormanno, 8 Gen. 1757

[P.S. nel margine a p. 1] Se vuole scrivere, passeremo da questa missione a quella della Scalea. = Castrovillari per la Scalea.

Indirizzo (a p. 4):

Al Molto Rev. Padre nostro in Gesù Cristo
Il Padre D. Alfonso de Liguori
 Rettore Maggiore della Cong.ne del Ss.mo Redentore
Nocera de' Pagani.

4. - Lettera di don Giovanni Batt. Filomarino, principe della Rocca, a s. Alfonso; Napoli, 21 luglio 1757. - Originale in AGR I D 36, 32.

Ill.mo Sig.re mio, P.ne Oss.mo

I favori in ogni congiuntura con tanta bontà e gentilezza da V. S. Ill.ma comparti[ti]mi²⁵ e lo spirituale bisogno de' miei feudi di Calabria, e specialmente quello di S. Giovanni in Fiore²⁶, Abbazia di Monsig. D. Giacomo²⁷, mio figlio, siccome mi dan tutta la speranza positiva di ottenere

²² Alcune parole dialettali di questo brano: puercu = porco; pecozzo (pecuozzo o picuozzo) = frate laico; ca = perché.

²³ Che è una bellezza.

²⁴ Cioè al noviziato della Congregazione, diretto allora dal p. Tannoia.

²⁵ Questa frase fa supporre l'esistenza di contatti precedenti tra il principe e Alfonso, sui quali però non siamo informati.

²⁶ Si tratta del celebre 'Monasterium florense', iniziato nel 1189 da Gioacchino da Fiore (c. 1133-1202). Era l'archicenobio della Congregazione fiorense, cioè di una riforma dei Cisterciensi, riunita con questi monaci nel 1570. Nel 1808, in seguito alle leggi napoleoniche, l'abbazia fu soppressa. Vedi L. COTTINEAU, *Répertoire topo-bibliographique des abbayes et prieurés*, vol. I, Mâcon 1939, 1155, s.v. Flore; F. CARAFFA, *Florensi e Gioacchino da Fiore*, in *Dizionario degli istituti di perfezione* IV (1977) 79-82 e 1188-1189.

²⁷ Il titolo di monsignore fa supporre che il figlio del principe fosse prelado, probabilmente di curia, e che avesse l'abbazia in commenda (abbate commendatario).

dalla innata compitezza e zelante carità di V. S. Ill.ma di voler nella suddetta Abbazia di S. Giovanni mandare una squadra de' suoi ferventi missionarj in spirituale vantaggio di quellè anime²⁸, sommamente necessitose dello alimento della parola di Dio, così mi dan l'impulso di pregarnela istantemente, così come col più vivo sentimento con questa mia ne la prego anticipatamente, acciò possa poi in tempo opportuno, e quando più piacerà e riuscirà comodo a V. S. Ill.ma, partecipare io di tal nuovo favore e quelle anime provare e profittare del frutto delle apostoliche fatiche de' zelanti suoi allievi; sull'indubitata certezza che oltre la gloria di Dio e profitto spirituale di que' sudditi, obbligherà grandemente gli atti della mia rispettosa gratitudine e della mia più divota osservanza, in esercizio della quale, mentre la prego de' suoi frequenti comandamenti, mi riprotesto per sempre e mi dico

Di V. S. Ill.ma

Div.mo ed obbl.mo Serv.re
Principe [?] della Rocca

Napoli, 21 Luglio 1757

Ill.mo Sig.re D. Alfonso Liguori
Ret.re Mag.re del SS.mo Red.re
(Nocera)

ALFANO, *op. cit.* 88 nota che S. Giovanni in Fiore era una « Commenda dell'Ordine Costantiniano ».

²⁸ Secondo ALFANO, *ibid.* il luogo contava (nel 1795) 5161 abitanti.

FABRICIANO FERRERO

LA INVESTIGACION HISTORICA SOBRE SAN CLEMENTE MARIA HOFBAUER

¿Cuál es la orientación que parece definir el desarrollo histórico de los estudios sobre S. Clemente María Hofbauer? ¿Qué perspectivas ofrecen en la actualidad algunos sectores concretos de los mismos?

Son las preguntas que nos hacemos al comenzar estas notas. En la respuesta intentaremos tomar conciencia del proceso seguido hasta conseguir el estado en que actualmente se hallan y de las posibilidades que desde ahí presentan en orden a una investigación ulterior.

A primera vista puede parecer un estudio de interés puramente bibliográfico. No lo creemos así. Para comprender la figura de S. Clemente y su significado en el momento actual de la Congregación y de la Iglesia tenemos que saber cómo ha llegado hasta nosotros. Las imágenes de los santos cambian con las iglesias, con los grupos y con los fieles que las veneran. Al buscar, pues, inspiración en ellas necesitamos conocer previamente cómo se han ido formando, por qué se ha hecho resaltar más unos rasgos que otros, qué facetas son fruto de una época y cuáles de otra, qué aspectos, en fin, conservan todavía un valor para nuestros contemporáneos y cuáles han dejado ya de tenerlo por haber sido descubiertos en un ambiente histórico concreto. Esto es, al menos, lo que nos anima a escribir las páginas que siguen.

I. - EL INTERÉS POR LOS ESTUDIOS HOFBAUERIANOS

Los estudios dedicados a S. Clemente María Hofbauer llaman poderosamente la atención por su importancia cuando se tiene en cuenta lo poco conocida que es su figura en la Iglesia universal. Y la sorpresa es todavía mayor si uno advierte que no hay ni libros, ni manuscritos personales, ni obras externas del Santo para justificarlos. Todo se centra en su persona y en una herencia espiritual transmitida

a sus discípulos, a la Congregación del Santísimo Redentor y a las iglesias locales en que trabajó. Resulta, pues, lógico preguntar a qué se debe el interés por estos estudios, cuándo ha tenido unas manifestaciones bibliográficas más importantes o qué imagen del Santo ha ido formando en cada momento.

1. - *Motivaciones fundamentales*

El interés por la figura de S. Clemente tiene causas muy diversas. En general podemos decir que ha partido de la Congregación del Santísimo Redentor y de las iglesias locales en que desarrolló de modo especial su actividad. Por lo mismo, de alguna manera está relacionado con la geografía hofbaueriana (Roma, Varsovia, Viena y áreas lingüísticas correspondientes) y con las fechas o efemérides llamadas a recordar su figura entre las mismas¹. Entre estas últimas nos parecen particularmente importantes:

- su fama de santidad y la veneración constante de que era objeto sobre todo en Viena y entre los redentoristas transalpinos (1820-1856);
- el traslado de sus restos mortales del cementerio de Maria-Enzersdorf a la iglesia de Maria-Stiegen en Viena (1862);
- el Proceso Ordinario (1864-1865);
- la introducción (1867) y culminación de la causa de beatificación (1888) y canonización (1909);
- la proclamación como patrono de Viena (1914);
- el primer centenario de su muerte (1920);
- el segundo centenario de su nacimiento (1951);
- el cincuentenario de su canonización y la inauguración del nuevo altar-sepulcro (1959);
- el ciento cincuenta aniversario de su muerte (1970);
- los grandes jubileos de la Congregación, de las Provincias de la misma y de las comunidades redentoristas más directamente relacionadas con él².

¹ Para la enumeración que sigue tenemos en cuenta dos criterios fundamentales: la motivación expresamente alegada en las publicaciones y la fecha de las mismas. Esta puede verse en la *bibliografía hofbaueriana* que citaremos más adelante.

² El más importante es el de 1932, Segundo Centenario de la Fundación de la Congregación del Santísimo Redentor. Cfr. R. TELLERIA, *Un Instituto Misionero: La Congregación del Santísimo Redentor en el Segundo Centenario de su fundación, 1732-1932*, Madrid 1932; G. BRANDHUBER, *Die Redemptoristen, 1732-1932*, Bamberg 1932; *Nel Secondo Centenario della Congregazione del SS. Redentore*, Cortona 1932. Para

Todos estos acontecimientos llevaban a que su figura ocupara espontáneamente un puesto de primer plano en las publicaciones jubilaires como resultado de un interés directo por la misma. Al lado había otras que provenían de su relación con la Iglesia, con la política, con la cultura y con las personalidades del tiempo. Es lo que motiva su presencia en las revistas, enciclopedias, diccionarios e historias generales, sobre todo cuando se trata de Varsovia, de Viena y, en general, de la problemática religiosa del mundo transalpino durante este período³.

El interés de la Congregación del Santísimo Redentor por la figura de S. Clemente coincide con el comienzo de una gran vitalidad interna del Instituto, con el afianzamiento de la rama transalpina, con el establecimiento de su Casa Generalicia en Roma y con la llegada de amigos, discípulos o admiradores de S. Alfonso, de los Redentoristas y del mismo S. Clemente a cargos eclesiásticos importantes.

La vitalidad de la Congregación a mediados del siglo XIX, a pesar de las crisis internas, es una realidad indiscutible⁴. El esfuerzo por llevar a feliz término las causas de beatificación y canonización de sus hijos más insignes, con todo lo que esto significa, nos parece una prueba de ello entre otras muchas que se podrían aducir⁵. Y resulta todavía más significativa si consideramos lo que en este momento supuso para el Instituto la promoción de la Causa del Doctorado de S. Alfonso⁶.

el elenco de otras publicaciones cf. M. DE MEULEMEESTER. *Bibliographie générale des écrivains rédemptoristes*, vol. III, Louvain 1939, p. 445: *Centenaires, Jubilés*, donde se remite también a obras que se refieren al primer centenario de la muerte de S. Alfonso (1887). La presencia de temas hofbauerianos en las restantes celebraciones jubilaires se debe al significado de S. Clemente para el hecho histórico que se celebra. En realidad, el mismo motivo que explica su presencia en todas las obras sobre historia general del Instituto.

³ R. TILL, *Hofbauer und sein Kreis*, Wien 1951, p. 9-21 y 59-78.

⁴ Para la historia general del período cfr. M. DE MEULEMEESTER, *Histoire sommaire de la Congrégation du T. S. Rédempteur*, Louvain 1958, p. 159 sig. y E. HOSP, *Weltweite Erlösung. Erlösermissionäre-Redemptoristen (1732-1962)*, Innsbruck 1961, p. 94 sig. Sobre los diversos indicadores de la vitalidad aludida cfr. F. FERRERO, *Perspectivas históricas de la problemática actual sobre la Congregación del Santísimo Redentor*, en *Spic. Hist.* 21 (1973) 378-394.

⁵ J. Löw, *De Causis « historicis » beatificationis nostrorum Servorum Dei brevis commentatio*, en *Spic. Hist.* 7 (1959) 357-429 y, más en concreto, pág. 391-403; A. SAMPERS, *Positiones in Causis beatificationis et canonizationis Servorum Dei CSSR.*, en *Spic. Hist.* 10 (1962) 278-299.

⁶ Nos referimos a los trabajos para agilizar la causa, estudiar y difundir su

Lo mismo diríamos de la abundante producción literaria. Sus características y finalidad varían mucho: uso privado de los congregados, recuerdo de la propia historia, conocimiento de las personalidades más representativas, difusión de las obras literarias de sus miembros más ilustres, celebraciones jubilaires, etc. Pero hasta la Segunda Guerra Mundial son numerosas las que podríamos llamar « obras monumentales »⁷.

También las vocaciones son cada vez más numerosas y entre ellas abundan, relativamente, las personalidades extraordinarias⁸. Se diría que la Congregación va adquiriendo una conciencia cada vez más clara de sí misma y de su propia identidad mientras su prestigio es cada día mayor. Por eso tiende instintivamente a afirmarse y a dar pruebas de entusiasmo, dinamismo, creatividad y eficacia en ocasiones muy diversas⁹.

Como fecha inicial de este fenómeno podemos considerar el año 1855. En él tiene lugar la fundación de la casa generalicia en Roma, la celebración del capítulo general, el nombramiento del primer general transalpino, una etapa nueva en la vida de la Congregación. En efecto, hasta mediados del siglo XIX el centro de la vida redentorista había sido Pagani. Desde el 8 de octubre de 1853 la

doctrina, defenderla de las objeciones oficiales y de los ataques de quienes no simpatizaban con ella, etc. Cfr. G. ORLANDI, *La Causa per il Dottorato di S. Alfonso: preparazione, svolgimento, ripercussioni (1866-1871)*, en *Spic. Hist.* 19 (1971) 53-65. Para el conjunto del tema, *ibidem*, p. 25-240, y A. SAMPERS, *Bestreben und erste Ansätze den hl. Alfons zum Kirchenlehrer zu erklären kurz nach seiner Heiligsprechung (1839-1844)*, *ibidem*, p. 5-24.

⁷ Tales consideramos las publicaciones de catálogos, constituciones, actas capitulares, colecciones de privilegios, propios para las fiestas de la Congregación, documentos regulares, circulares del superior general, necrologías, obras de S. Alfonso, manuales de Teología Moral, *Positiones* para las diversas causas de beatificación y canonización, etc. Para el contexto del fenómeno cfr. M. DE MEULEMEESTER, *Histoire*, p. 166-167, y F. FERRERO, *Perspectivas históricas*, p. 379-381.

⁸ El *Catalogus Congregationis SS. Redemptoris Transalpinae ineunte anno 1852*, Monachii 1862, p. 40, nos da los siguientes datos: *Total de casas* = 45, de las cuales: 6 en la Provincia Galo-Helvéctica; 18 en la Germánica; 11 en la Belga; 10 en la Americana. *Total de congregados transalpinos* = 716, a saber: 343 Padres; 174 Hermanos; 75 Clérigos Estudiantes; 12 Novicios Sacerdotes; 45 Novicios Coristas; 67 Novicios Coadjutores. Según M. DE MEULEMEESTER, *Histoire*, p. 160-161, en las provincias meridionales había, por la misma fecha, 181 Padres. Para el desarrollo numérico del Instituto cfr. F. FERRERO, *Perspectivas históricas*, p. 384.

⁹ « Il fervore impiegato nel confutarla [l'opinione sulla fama di Ballerini] non trovava la sua origine solo 'nell'interesse delle anime e della gloria del Nostro Padre S. Alfonso'. Era anche motivata dal desiderio, in certa misura plausibile, di dimostrare che 'la Congregazione, con la grazia di Dio, è capace di produrre qualcosa di serio' (P. Mauron a Desurmont, Roma 3 II 1873) ». G. ORLANDI, *La Causa per il Dottorato di S. Alfonso*, p. 63.

rama transalpina pasaba a constituir el « verum et genuinum S. Alphonsi institutum et noster P. Rector verus et legitimus successor »¹⁰. Era la consecuencia de la división interna que iba a conceder a los redentoristas transalpinos autonomía e iniciativa en todos los asuntos de la Congregación, mientras los napolitanos y sicilianos se quedaban un tanto al margen del dinamismo general del Instituto, en parte forzados por las circunstancias políticas de la península italiana¹¹.

Todo esto hizo que, desde la fecha indicada, la Congregación del Santísimo Redentor comenzara una formulación nueva de su espíritu, de su actividad, de lo que debían ser sus miembros, de sus figuras más representativas y de todas « sus cosas »¹².

Los estudios sobre S. Clemente y un interés especial por su figura en la Congregación arrancan de este contexto. Nos lo dice expresamente M. Haringer al presentar, por una parte, la veneración de que gozaba el Siervo de Dios en Viena y el deseo que tenían los Redentoristas de verlo en los altares, y, por otra, las dificultades que surgían por doquier para introducir la causa e, incluso, comenzar el proceso ordinario:

Noch weit mehr aber hemmte den Beginn desselben die Lage der transalpinischen Provinzen der Congregation des allerheiligsten Erlösers. Diese, welche doch zunächst dazu berufen waren, für die Verherrlichung ihres Gründers durch den Spruch der Kirche Sorge zu tragen, hatten in Rom bis zum Jahre 1855 keine hinreichende Repräsentanz, ohne welche sich eine solche Angelegenheit nicht unternehmen liess.

So konnte man also mit der Einleitung des Processes lange keinen Ernst machen.

Als aber im Jahre 1855 P. Nicolaus Mauron zum General-Oberen der Congregation erwählt wurde und dem weisen Befehle Sr. Heiligkeit gemäss seinen Sitz in Rom nahm, erwachte bald lebhaft der Gedanke an die Seligsprechung des Dieners Gottes P. Hofbauer und schienen die Schwierigkeiten zur Einleitung des Processes nicht mehr unüberwindlich. Im Jahre 1859 fand darüber eine erste Unterredung statt zwischen P.

¹⁰ Así el Capítulo General de 1855. Cfr. *Acta Integra Cap. Gen. CSSR. ab anno 1749 usque ad annum 1894*, Romae 1899, p. 617, no 1271, IV. Véase también M. DE MEULEMBESTER, *Histoire*, p. 160.

¹¹ G. ORLANDI, *La Causa per il Dottorato di S. Alfonso*, p. 30-31.

¹² Sin el deseo de presentar ahora una página de la historia general del Instituto, baste recordar todo lo que significó el Capítulo General de 1855, el Doctorado de S. Alfonso (1866-1871), la instauración del culto a la Virgen del Perpetuo Socorro (1866), los intentos por lograr un sistema alfonsiano en dogma, moral, ascética y mariología, etc.

General Mauron und dem Erzbischofe von Wien, Cardinal Rauscher, der eben in Rom anwesend war¹³.

El motivo de este interés hay que buscarlo, como diremos en el apartado siguiente, en el significado de S. Clemente para la Congregación del Santísimo Redentor en general y, sobre todo, para la rama transalpina de la que había sido fundador¹⁴. Pero tampoco se debe olvidar la presencia del Cardenal Rauscher en la sede arzobispal de Viena (donde tenía que celebrarse el Proceso Ordinario) y el prestigio del P. Mauron y de los Redentoristas en Roma¹⁵.

Pues bien, hasta este momento la literatura hofbaueriana era muy reducida. M. Haringer, en el prefacio de su primera edición, nos dice que los « rasgos biográficos que ahora presenta habían sido trazados ya en 1856 a base de cartas, testimonios y documentos varios conservados en el Archivo Generalicio de la Congregación en Roma »¹⁶. Con ellos se proponía completar, al menos en parte, dos biografías del Siervo de Dios: la de F. Pösl¹⁷ y la de S. Brunner¹⁸. Con este mismo fin añadiría en apéndice algunos párrafos de la obra de A. Tannoia¹⁹ y de una relación del P. G. G. Sabelli²⁰ sobre la

¹³ M. HARINGER, *Leben des ehrwürdigen Dieners Gottes Clemens Maria Hofbauer, General-Vicars und vorzüglichen Verbreiters der Congregation des allerheiligsten Erlösers*, Wien 1877, p. 463-464. En adelante la citaremos HARINGER (1877). Sobre el mismo autor cfr. J. Löw, *Opusculum ignoratum P. Michaelis Haringer*, en *Spic. Hist.* 5 (1957) 135-136, e IDEM, *P. Rudolfus von Smetana biographus S. Clementis*, en *Spic. Hist.* 7 (1959) 188-200. Para sus obras, M. DE MEULEMEESTER, *Bibliographie*, II 180-182 y III 314-315.

¹⁴ Cfr. *Litterae Circulares Reverendissimi Patris Nicolai Mauron [...] ad alumnos ejusdem Congregationis*, Romae 1896, p. 156-162.

¹⁵ Datos de interés en G. ORLANDI, *La Causa per il Dottorato di S. Alfonso*, p. 27, notas 8 y 10. Sobre las relaciones del Cardenal Rauscher con la Congregación, *ibidem*, p. 37, nota 60.

¹⁶ M. HARINGER, *Leben des Dieners Gottes P. Clemens Maria Hoffbauer, General-Vicars der Congregation des allerheiligsten Erlösers ausser Italien*, Wien 1864, p. III. En adelante citaremos HARINGER (1864).

¹⁷ F. PÖSL, *Clemens Maria Hoffbauer, der erste deutsche Redemptorist in seinem Leben und Wirken*, Regensburg 1844.

¹⁸ S. BRUNNER, *Clemens Maria Hoffbauer und seine Zeit*, Wien 1858.

¹⁹ HARINGER (1864), 125-137, citando a [A. TANNOIA], *Della vita ed Istituto del Venerabile Servo di Dio Alfonso Maria Liguori, Vescovo di S. Agata de' Goti e fondatore della Congregazione de' Preti Missionari del Santissimo Redentore*, Napoli 1798-1801, 3 vol., Lib. 4^o, cap. 29.

²⁰ HARINGER (1864), 137-162. El P. Giovanni Giuseppe Sabelli había nacido el 14 IX 1781 en Teschen (Cieszyn, Polonia) de padre italiano, natural de Sciacca (Agrigento), y de madre polaca. Tomó el hábito en Varsovia el 15 VIII 1802, profesó en manos de S. Clemente (Monte Thabor) el 23 VIII 1803 y se ordenó de sacerdote el 23 X 1803. Fue a Nápoles el 20 XI 1822, estableciéndose en Pagani al año siguiente. Murió en Roma el 24 II 1863. Cfr. F. MINERVINO, *Catalogo dei Redentoristi d'Italia*

actividad de la Congregación en Varsovia. Para terminar hacía referencia a diversos testimonios contemporáneos impresos en 1820, 1834, 1848 y 1851²¹. Era lo más importante que se conocía hasta entonces.

A partir de 1856²² los estudios sobre S. Clemente se van multiplicando con un ritmo creciente sobre todo en la Congregación del Santísimo Redentor. Teniendo en cuenta sus características generales nos parece fácil distinguir dos tipos fundamentales de publicaciones: las que se limitan a recordar su figura teniendo en cuenta las adquisiciones científicas de la época (pudiendo adoptar una forma piadosa, popular, de alta divulgación o técnica), y las que tratan de ampliar los conocimientos científicos sobre el Santo y sobre su actividad a partir de nuevas investigaciones.

Por otra parte, si nos fijamos en estas últimas, creemos poderlas dividir en dos grandes períodos o momentos: uno gira en torno a los procesos de beatificación y canonización y constituye el ciclo de las grandes biografías; el otro se orienta hacia la investigación sistemática y se sirve, sobre todo, de las publicaciones periódicas. Tratemos, pues, de ver sus características para responder de un modo más directo a la pregunta con que comenzábamos.

2. - *Grandes biografías (1864-1920)*

Los primeros trabajos de investigación histórica sobre S. Clemente estaban directamente relacionados con el Proceso Ordinario (1864-1865) y con el Proceso Apostólico (1867-1888)²³. Nada, pues, de extraño que la investigación se orientara a la agilización de la causa y que hubiera comenzado mucho antes que ésta.

(1732-1841) e dei Redentoristi delle Provincie Meridionali d'Italia (1841-1869), Romae 1978, p. 155-156.

²¹ HARINGER (1864), 163-167. Sobre el desarrollo de la literatura hofbaueriana en este primer período cfr. F. FERRERO, *S. Clemente María Hofbauer CSSR y el Eremitismo romano del s. XVIII y XIX*, en *Spic. Hist.* 17 (1969) 226-227.

²² HARINGER (1864), III y VI, alude a sus trabajos en Roma en torno a 1856; HARINGER (1877), 464, a los de Viena a partir de 1863. M. HARINGER, *Leben des ehrwürdigen Dieners Gottes Clemens Maria Hofbauer, General-Vicars und vorzüglichen Verbreiters der Congregation des allerheiligsten Erlösers*. Zweite vermehrte Auflage, Regensburg 1880, *Vorrede zur zweite Auflage*, sin pag., habla de los nuevos documentos que le han procurado sus amigos. Citaremos esta última edición, cuando haya lugar, como HARINGER (1880).

²³ HARINGER (1877), 462-494 y A. SAMPERS, *Positiones in causis beatificationis et canonizationis Servorum Dei CSSR.*, en *Spic. Hist.* 10 (1962) 287-290.

Los resultados a que dieron lugar los tenemos en las Actas del Proceso Ordinario²⁴, en las Posiciones del Proceso para la Beatificación y Canonización²⁵ y en las biografías de M. Haringer²⁶. Estas adquieren un significado particular porque « el P. Brixio Queloz, Procurador General del Instituto²⁷, nombró delegado suyo [en Viena] al P. Juan Nepomuceno Jentsch, Provincial de los Redentoristas en Austria²⁸. Al mismo tiempo, el autor de esta obra [M. Haringer] recibió la orden de trasladarse a Viena para ayudar al Postulador en el cumplimiento de su cargo. Esto le puso en situación de poder seguir en sus más pequeños detalles el proceso desde su comienzo hasta el presente [1877]. Estos detalles a veces no se hallan en las actas notariales »²⁹. La información de los testigos oculares y el acceso a los documentos más auténticos sobre la vida de S. Clemente dan a la obra del P. M. Haringer un valor extraordinario y hacen de él prácticamente el primer biógrafo importante del Santo³⁰.

²⁴ Cfr. *Copia authentica transumpti translati Processus Ordinarii Vindobon. super fama Sancti Vitae, virtutibus et miraculis S. D. Cle. M. ae Hofbauer, Congregationis SS. Redemptoris Vicarii Generalis trans Montes*, conservada en el archivo de la Postulación General CSSR (Roma). Publicación parcial en *Monumenta Hofbaueriana. Acta quae ad vitam S. Clementis Hofbauer referuntur*, Cracovia-Torun-Roma 1915-1951, 15 vol., conforme al índice del vol. XV 163. Para más detalles sobre este manuscrito cfr. *Spic. Hist.* 17 (1969) 246-247.

²⁵ Cfr. A. SAMPERS, *Positiones*, p. 287-290.

²⁶ Cfr. HARINGER (1864) y HARINGER (1877). Sobre sus viajes con motivo del Proceso se conservan los siguientes datos en el Arch. Gen. CSSR, *Cronaca della Casa generalizia I, 1855-1899: 1863 XI 25* (p. 63) parte per Genova il M. R. P. Haringer, il quale andrà a Vienna a cagione dei preamboli necessarii all'introduzione della causa del P. Hofbauer. — *1865 IV 2* (p. 70) felice ritorno del P. Haringer. — *1865 V 10* (p. 71) oggi arriva il P. Pfab portatore ufficiale del processo. — *1869 IV 11* (p. 104) parte Haringer per Vienna per il processo del Ven. Hofbauer. — *1869 VI 19* (p. 105) reduce P. Haringer da Vienna. (De las notas del P. J. Löw, *Zur Geschichte des Hofb. Processes*).

²⁷ El P. Brixio Constantino Queloz nació en Saint-Brais (Suiza) el 28 VIII 1802, se ordenó de sacerdote en 1832, profesó en 1847 y fue socio del procurador general de 1850 a 1853. De 1853 a 1882 desempeñó el cargo de procurador y postulador. Cfr. M. DE MEULEMEESTER, *Bibliographie*, II 337-338.

²⁸ El P. Juan Nepomuceno Jentsch nació el 16 IX 1817, profesó el 14 VII 1844 y se ordenó el 28 VII 1844. En el catálogo de 1845 aparece como estudiante en Mautern; en el de 1848 como profesor de derecho; en el de 1852 como misionero en Cristianía (Noruega); en el de 1856 como prefecto de estudiantes y profesor de Filosofía y Derecho; en el de 1859 como provincial de la Provincia *Germaniae Inferioris*; en el de 1863 como Provincial de la Provincia Austríaca; en el de 1867 como superior de Heiligenberg (diócesis de Praga); en los de 1884 y 1887 como superior de Baltimor. Murió el 12 III 1890 en St. John (New Brunswick, Canadá) de la Provincia de Baltimor. Cfr. *Collectio catalogorum CSSR. 1785-1852, Ruraemundae* [1881], I 100 y 132; II 37. *Catalogus CSSR. Transalpinae ineunte anno 1852, Monachii 1852*, 21; *Catalogus 1856*, p. 18; *Catalogus 1859*, p. 47; *Catalogus 1863*, p. 19; *Catalogus 1867*, p. 25; *Catalogus 1884*, p. 79; *Catalogus 1887*, p. 83; *Catalogus 1890*, p. 185. Véase también E. HOSP, *Erbe des hl. Klemens*, Wien 1953, p. 402, 436, 439, 568.

²⁹ HARINGER (1877), 464; HARINGER (1880), 458.

³⁰ El P. Miguel Haringer nació en Schlotau (Baviera) el 19 XI 1817, se ordenó

La imagen de S. Clemente en este momento refleja las preocupaciones del mundo católico romano y la visión que éste tiene de la Iglesia y de la época histórica que está viviendo. Casi nos atreveríamos a decir que es fruto de la misma mentalidad que llevó a documentos y actitudes tan significativas como el Syllabus (1864)³¹, la corriente infalibilista del Concilio Vaticano I³², el antiamericanismo³³ y el antimodernismo³⁴. Si a esto añadimos el influjo de la espiritualidad que a partir de 1855 se va imponiendo en la Congregación, tenemos elementos suficientes para explicarla.

Como puede comprenderse, no hablamos ahora de las descripciones que de su figura física nos han dejado los contemporáneos³⁵, ni de su temperamento o modo de ser³⁶, ni siquiera de la evolución a que ha estado expuesta su iconografía³⁷. Nos referimos sólo a la

de sacerdote en 1843 y entró en la Congregación del Santísimo Redentor en 1844. Fue discípulo de Görres en Munich, consultor general desde 1855, teólogo del Concilio Vaticano I y consultor de la Congregación del Índice. Murió en Roma el 19 IV 1887. Su obra sobre S. Clemente tuvo tres ediciones en alemán (aunque él mismo no parece considerar como primera edición la de 1864): 1864, 1877 y 1880. En esta última, *Vorrede*, se alegra de que haya sido traducida al checo, polaco, francés e italiano. El texto fundamental es el de 1877, que procuraremos seguir en adelante. La de 1864 había sido preparada por el P. R. Von Smetana en torno a 1856. Cfr. J. Löw, *P. Rudolfus von Smetana biographus S. Clementis*, en *Spic. Hist.* 7 (1959) 188-200. La edición, sin embargo, figura a nombre del P. Haringer, al menos como editor (*Herausgegeben von*). Véase también M. DE MEULEMEESTER, *Bibliographie*, II 180-182.

³¹ « Preoccupati [i Redentoristi] di conseguire lo scopo cui miravano [il Dottorato di S. Alfonso], esagerarono forse nel sottolineare i vincoli che univano S. Alfonso alla Chiesa del loro tempo, nell'evidenziare la coincidenza del pensiero del loro Padre e Maestro con l'orientamento dottrinale allora prevalente. La meticolosità impiegata, per esempio, nel valorizzare ogni elemento atto a farne un antesignano del *Sillabo* poteva dare frutti immediati, e li dette in effetti, ma a lungo andare si sarebbe rivelata un calcolo errato. Fu proprio il giorno in cui nella Chiesa cominciarono ad affermarsi nuove istanze dottrinali, che il prestigio di S. Alfonso andò riducendosi ». . . G. ORLANDI, *La causa per il Dottorato di S. Alfonso*, p. 65-66. Una prueba de cuanto se dice la tenemos en el *Acta Doctoratus, Romae 1870*.

³² A. SAMPERS, *Congregatio SS.mi Redemptoris et Concilium Vaticanum I (1869-1870)*, en *Spic. Hist.* 10 (1962) 424-449.

³³ En este contexto nos parece significativo el caso Hecker. Cfr. J. McSORLEY, *Father Hecker and his Friends. Studies and Reminiscences*, St. Louis-London, 1953, p. 53-68 y 80-87.

³⁴ L. VERECKE, *Les Rédemptoristes et le mouvement intégriste au début du XX^e siècle*, en *Spic. Hist.* 20 (1972) 393-410. « Nous n'avons donné de l'intégrisme dans la Congrégation du Très Saint Rédempteur, qu'un dossier matériel et partiel. Il y aurait beaucoup d'autres faits à relever, il y aurait aussi à esquisser une histoire des idées et des mentalités », *ibidem*, p. 410.

³⁵ HARINGER (1877), 385-389 y HARINGER (1880), 372-376.

³⁶ O. GREGORIO, *S. Clemente Hofbauer visto da un grafologo* [Gerolamo Moretti], en *Spic. Hist.* 7 (1959) 181-187

³⁷ No creemos que haya sido sistemáticamente estudiada. HARINGER (1864) ilustra la portada *Mit einem photographischen Bilde* que lleva esta leyenda: *Der Diener*

dimensión simbólica que en este momento comienzan a descubrir en su personalidad histórica.

Desde luego que no es fácil lograr una síntesis objetiva sobre el tema. A pesar de todo vamos a presentar los resultados de un primer intento por descubrir los rasgos fundamentales de una imagen que, poco a poco, se irá completando y adornando. En un primer momento creíamos poder distinguir dos modelos: uno para la Congregación del Santísimo Redentor, otro para los fieles en general. Al intentar resumir los resultados de nuestra reflexión nos parece que se trata siempre de una misma imagen con matices diversos.

La inscripción que pusieron al pie de la cruz que había sobre su tumba, decía con toda sencillez: *Joannes Clemens Maria Hofbauer, Cong. SSmi. Redemptoris Vicarius generalis, natus Tassovici in Moravia anno 1751: obiit Vindobonae die 15. Martii anni 1820. Fidelis servus et prudens*³⁸.

Cuando en 1862 fueron trasladados sus restos mortales a la iglesia de Maria-Stiegen, la lápida que cubría el sarcófago llevaba un alto relieve con la figura del Santo como sacerdote redentorista. En ella destacaban el bonete, el hábito talar, el crucifijo de misionero y el rosario cogido con su mano izquierda³⁹.

Dos años más tarde, M. Haringer, en su primera edición⁴⁰, hace resaltar cuatro rasgos fundamentales para quienes deseen comprender la vida que va a contarnos:

- la vocación extraordinaria de Clemente;
- los caminos admirables por los que Dios lo va llevando hacia la meta que se había propuesto;

Gottes Clemens M. Hoffbauer, General-Vicar der Redemptoristen. Gestorben 15. März 1820. Es una fotografía del sarcófago en que descansaban los restos mortales del Santo en Maria-Stiegen desde 1862. Un testigo del Proceso Ordinario nos lo describe así: «Der Deckel des über dem Grabe errichteten Monumentes macht die Gestalt eines Priesters der Congregation aus. Das Monument trägt die Umschrift: *P. Clemens Maria Hofbauer, Vicarius Generalis Congregationis SSmi. Redemptoris, obiit 15 Martii 1820.* Cfr. *Monumenta Hofbaueriana*, XI 223. En la edición de 1877 no aparece imagen alguna. En la de 1880 nos da la que podríamos llamar imagen del Venerable. En efecto, el Ven. *P. Clemens Maria Hofbauer, Insignis Propagator Cong. SS. Rede.* aparece en actitud de oración: de rodillas sobre un reclinatorio, manos juntas en actitud de rezar, rosario entre las mismas, breviario abierto debajo, imagen de la Virgen delante, crucifijo al pecho. Es la imagen que, expedida desde Roma, aparece en la portada de todas las obras anteriores a su canonización, al menos cuando se trata de las traducciones del P. Haringer. Innerkofler y Hofer nos presentan ya un retrato del Santo (con algunas variantes). El primero nos dice que ha sido hecho en vida del mismo S. Clemente por el P. Rinn. Hay otras imágenes, además de éstas que hemos mencionado, que presentan algunas variantes al figurarlo como redentorista, sacerdote o en alguno de sus milagros.

³⁸ HARINGER (1877), 382.

³⁹ Cfr. nota 37 y P. MEERSCHAUT, *Novum altare S. Clementis, Vindobonae*, en *Analecta*, 22 (1960) 132-136.

⁴⁰ HARINGER (1864), III-IV.

— la fortaleza inmovible del Siervo de Dios a lo largo de toda su vida en medio de luchas, contradicciones, persecuciones y situaciones desesperadas;

— el éxito en la difusión de la Congregación del Santísimo Redentor, conforme a la profecía de S. Alfonso y del mismo S. Clemente. Pues, como ya había escrito el P. M. A. Hugues en 1849⁴¹, « Jesucristo se sirvió del R. P. Hoffbauer para continuar la obra de S. Alfonso al otro lado de los Alpes [...]. La vida del Padre Hoffbauer es la historia del cumplimiento de esta predicción [sobre la extensión de la Congregación por él fundada después de su muerte] o, al menos, una página de la misma, ya que la profecía de S. Alfonso se va realizando cada vez más en medio de mil obstáculos. Y es de notar, sobre todo, cómo en esta expansión de nuestra Congregación se muestra la mano de Dios de dos maneras: por una parte, en la grandeza y diversidad de las dificultades que ha tenido que vencer; y, por otra, en la ausencia total de medios humanos para superarlas. El P. Hoffbauer, en efecto, no tenía ni las riquezas, ni el poder, ni la nobleza, ni la sabiduría del siglo, y todo eso faltaba también a sus discípulos lo mismo que había faltado a su maestro ».

El 16 de enero de 1864 el P. Nicolás Mauron comunicaba, en carta circular a toda la Congregación, el comienzo del Proceso Ordinario para la beatificación y canonización del Siervo de Dios P. Clemente María Hofbauer⁴². Si prescindimos de los datos informativos que ofrece sobre la devoción al Siervo de Dios y sobre las diligencias emprendidas para llevar a término el proceso recién comenzado, podemos decir que la carta presenta una semblanza de S. Clemente a sus cohermanos. Resumamos algunos rasgos más importantes siguiendo su mismo orden:

— En determinados momentos de la historia Dios suscita en su Iglesia nuevos institutos religiosos que continúen la obra de la Redención misericordiosamente realizada por Cristo Jesús. Entonces elige al fundador, lo adorna de su espíritu y de los dones de su gracia para que sea instrumento dócil para la realización de su obra, y lo propone como padre de cuantos va a llamar para que sigan sus huellas⁴³.

— Cuando un instituto está destinado a tener una expansión universal, es frecuente que ponga al lado del fundador « socium [...] sive discipulum, paterni ejus spiritus prae ceteris participem, cui continuandum et provehendum committit »⁴⁴.

— Tal ayuda no le faltó a S. Alfonso: « Ejus Congregatio [...] peritura videbatur, conjuratis in ejus interitum Mundo atque Inferno [...]. Cum spes omnis videretur ablata, misit Deus seni Alphonso et laboribus exercitato lectissimum Filium, qui ejus opus continuaret et pro-

⁴¹ M. A. HUGUES, *Vie et vertus du Serviteur de Dieu le Père Clément-Marie Hoffbauer, premier Vicaire Général de la Congregation du Très Saint Rédempteur en deça des Monts. D'après les documents authentiques recueillis par...*, Liège 1849, p. 1-2.

⁴² *Litterae Circulares Reverendissimi Patris Nicolai Mauron [...] ad alumnos ejusdem Congregationis*, Romae 1896, p. 156-162.

⁴³ *Ibidem*, p. 156-157

⁴⁴ *Ibidem*, p. 157.

moveret, ejusque gloriam apud homines mirabiliter ampliaret, suscitata ei Familia, quae per universam Ecclesiam dilataretur »⁴⁵.

— Por designio divino estaba destinado a llevar el Instituto del Santísimo Redentor a las regiones del Norte⁴⁶.

— Sería el heredero del celo apostólico de S. Alfonso, pues « cum sanctus Senex ex hac vita migrasset, zelus ipsius minime evanuit; sed [...] totus pervasit lectissimum ejus Filium, Clementem Mariam »⁴⁷.

— Difundió la Congregación del Santísimo Redentor en Polonia « quo tempore Portae Inferorum atrocissimum in Christi Vicarium ejusque Ecclesiam bellum gerebant. Invexit illam [Congregationem] inter gentes, quae prae ceteris spirituali ope maxime indigebant »⁴⁸.

— Su vida estuvo entretejida, como la de S. Alfonso, de contradicciones, sufrimientos y persecuciones⁴⁹.

— Expulsado de Varsovia, « Vindobonam se recipit, domicilium ibi suo Instituto paraturus. Verum [...] plus decem annos luctari debuit adversus impedimenta quaelibet, adeo ut vix, moriens, vicinam prospiceret votorum suorum completionem »⁵⁰.

— Su apostolado en Viena lo convirtió en « Religionis in Austria potissimum suum columnen et praesidium (Pío VII) »⁵¹.

— Por todo ello la Congregación le debe muchos beneficios: « Et re quidem vera, quod beatam sortem nacti sumus ingrediendi sanctissimum hoc nostrum Institutum, id, post Deum et S. Alphonsum, acceptum referimus Clementi Mariae Hofbauer, cujus indefessis laboribus et heroicæ constantiae debetur mira, quam nunc spectamus, Congregationis evolutio atque extensio. Nisi misericors Deus Clementem Mariam suscitasset ad propagandum opus S. Alphonsi, ex hodie consolatione orbaremur, qua nunc videmus centrum Instituti in urbe principi Orbis christiani constitutum, ibique collocatum (in quo mirabilis Dei providentia agnoscenda est) ubi, paucis distans passibus, cella exurgit in qua Servus Dei Novitatum peregit, et ecclesia in qua sacra vota nuncupavit. Jure igitur, post S. Alphonsum, dicendus est Clemens Maria primus noster Parens; jure illi debetur illud, quod dixi, pietatis et grati animi tributum »⁵².

— A pesar de todo, la glorificación del Siervo de Dios es una gloria más de S. Alfonso: « gaudebit certe S. P. N. Alphonsus de glorificatione Alumni, qui, tanta licet pressus paupertate, ad Canonizationem ejus promovendam conspicuas summas erogare non dubitavit »⁵³.

— Necesidad de que a las preces por el feliz éxito de la causa se una la « imitatio, quoad fieri poterit perfectissima, exemplorum ac vir-

⁴⁵ *Ibidem*, p. 157.

⁴⁶ *Ibidem*, p. 158.

⁴⁷ *Ibidem*, p. 158.

⁴⁸ *Ibidem*, p. 158.

⁴⁹ *Ibidem*, p. 159.

⁵⁰ *Ibidem*, p. 159.

⁵¹ *Ibidem*, p. 159.

⁵² *Ibidem*, p. 161.

⁵³ *Ibidem*, p. 161.

tutum, quae in hoc vero Alumno SSmi. Redemptoris et dignissimo Alphonsi Filio eluxerunt ». Entre sus virtudes cabe resaltar: la fe, el celo incansable, la constancia en la prosecución de las buenas obras, la mortificación, el amor a la vocación y el amor a la Congregación ⁵⁴.

En 1865 el P. A. Desurmont había preparado una pequeña biografía sobre el Siervo de Dios. No pudo ser publicada hasta 1909, cuando ya estaba en curso la edición de sus obras completas e iba a celebrarse la canonización de S. Clemente. La razón que se le dio fue la de ser demasiado breve para constituir una biografía y demasiado larga para un folleto tradicional. Por eso se le pedía que la ampliara. No creyó conveniente hacerlo, y la obra quedó sin publicar hasta la fecha indicada. El valor histórico que presenta es muy escaso. Su interés, a nuestro modo de ver, está en el modelo de redentorista que, a base de la figura de S. Clemente, quiere presentar un autor tan importante como el P. Desurmont, y en que ese modelo pudiera ser válido cuarenta y cuatro años más tarde a juicio del editor ⁵⁵.

El P. Desurmont conoce y transcribe gran parte de la circular que acabamos de citar. Por eso se diría que su obra quiere ser una prueba biográfica de las mismas ideas. De aquí su insistencia en la parte espiritual y redentorista de la vida de S. Clemente. Los rasgos más importantes del modelo propuesto nos atreveríamos a resumirlos así:

— *personalidad de S. Clemente*: « carácter dinámico, energía personificada, fe de patriarca, generosidad perfecta, secretamente atormentado por el espíritu de Dios » al comienzo de su vida eremítica ⁵⁶.

— *aspectos del ideal redentorista que más le impresionan*: « la gran virtud del fundador, el espíritu de sencillez propio del Instituto y la consagración obligada de éste a los pobres » ⁵⁷.

— *su actividad en S. Bennon*: « hizo de esta iglesia el teatro de una vasta y perpetua misión ». Entre las actividades que realizaba cabría enumerar: misas diarias, predicación cotidiana en varias lenguas, confesiones, sermones solemnes, sermones de controversia, exposición con el Santísimo, rosario, viacrucis, reuniones especiales, actividad caritativa, etc. ⁵⁸.

— *su actividad en Viena*: « predicación, confesiones, caridad, obras buenas, asistencia a los enfermos, trabajos con los herejes, conversión de los pecadores, difusión de la Congregación » ⁵⁹.

⁵⁴ *Ibidem*, p. 161.

⁵⁵ A. DESURMONT, *Saint Clément-Marie Hofbauer, Rédemptoriste, 1751-1820*, Paris 1909. Para la fecha de su composición cfr. p. V-VI. El P. Aquiles Desurmont había nacido en Tourcoing (Francia) el 23 XII 1828; profesó en 1851 y se ordenó en 1853; murió en Thury-en-Valois el 23 VII 1898 después de haber sido Provincial de la Provincia Galo-Helvéctica de 1865 a 1887 y en 1898. Cfr. J.-B. LORTHOIT, *Mémorial alphonisien*, Tourcoing 1929, p. 366-367.

⁵⁶ A. DESURMONT, *Saint Clément-Marie Hofbauer*, p. 4.

⁵⁷ *Ibidem*, p. 12.

⁵⁸ *Ibidem*, p. 18 y 19-22.

⁵⁹ *Ibidem*, p. 60-61.

— *en su vida como redentorista descuella*: la pobreza, la actividad extraordinaria en la difusión del Instituto, el celo apostólico, la armonía entre trabajo y contemplación, el celo por la observancia como buen superior⁶⁰.

— *las virtudes en que más sobresalió*: hombre de fe, esperanza de hijo de Dios, caridad ardiente, paciencia y perfecta conformidad con la voluntad de Dios, recogimiento tanto cuando era eremita como durante su vida apostólica, amor al prójimo, celo por la salvación de las almas, prudencia, sencillez, conciencia del propio deber y espíritu de justicia, gratitud, fortaleza de espíritu, paciencia, templanza, humildad, pobreza (compañera inseparable de Clemente), desprendimiento, castidad, obediencia⁶¹.

— *los discípulos formados por él eran*: los polacos, « llenos de vida, de talento, de elocuencia y de virtud »; los alemanes, « firmemente decididos, consagrados, capaces »; los franceses, sabios y santos, « dispuestos a contribuir con su saber y con sus dones sobrenaturales »⁶².

Algunos años más tarde, en 1877, el P. M. Haringer publicaba, con gran aceptación, la segunda edición de su obra⁶³. En la introducción, que iba a ser ampliada en la versión francesa de 1888⁶⁴, volvía a presentar una especie de síntesis ideológica para comprender la vida de S. Clemente:

— el P. Hofbauer, habiendo muerto en 1820, es un hombre de nuestro tiempo;

— llamado por Dios a continuar la obra de S. Alfonso, la Congregación del Santísimo Redentor, la extendió y afianzó en los países del Norte.

— S. Alfonso combatió con sus escritos [doctor] los principios de la Revolución y murió poco antes de que ésta estallara; al P. Hofbauer le tocó vivir en medio de la tormenta revolucionaria; vio la caída de la monarquía francesa, la formación y caída del imperio napoleónico, la caída de Polonia, el fin del Imperio Romano Germánico y la persecución de la Iglesia en Alemania y en otras naciones.

— Como S. Alfonso, también él brilló en la casa de Dios como una estrella, como el sol de mediodía, precisamente en medio de las tinieblas de una época que, sin derecho, se proclamaba a sí misma « de las luces » y « de la ilustración », cuando en realidad lo era « del error ».

— Como su fundador, proclamó la fe, combatió el error, defendió los derechos y la libertad de la Iglesia y tuvo que sufrir injurias, vejaciones, calumnias, expoliaciones, destierro, cárcel.

⁶⁰ *Ibidem*, p. 16-17, 21, 22, 34, etc.

⁶¹ *Ibidem*, p. 36-46.

⁶² *Ibidem*, p. 18.

⁶³ HARINGER (1877), *Vorrede*, sin paginación, firmado en Roma a 1 de noviembre de 1877.

⁶⁴ *Vie dudu bienheureux Clément-Marie Hofbauer [...] par le R. P. Michel Haringer [...] traduite par un Père Rédemptoriste*, Tournai 1888, p. 5-8.

— A los esfuerzos mancomunados de protestantes, josefinistas, iluministas y masones contrapuso Hofbauer la paciencia, la fe, la paz, el amor a la Iglesia y la fidelidad a la Sede de Roma⁶⁵.

Esta misma imagen la encontramos resumida de un modo « lapidario » en las primeras páginas de la *Collectio Catalogorum C.S.S.R. 1785-1852*, publicada por J. Van Rijkevorsel en 1881⁶⁶. Al lado de las imágenes de *Sanctus Alphonsus Maria de Liguorio, Episcopus, Ecclesiae Doctor et Congregationis SS. Redemptoris Fundator*, del *Rev.mus Pater Franciscus Di Paola, CSSR. Praeses (1780-1793)*, del *Rev.mus Pater Petrus Paulus Blasucci, CSSR. Rector Major (1793-1817)* y del *Ven.is Servus Dei Clemens Maria Hofbauer, CSSR. Vic. Gen.is (1793-1820)* presenta las siguientes leyendas en forma de inscripción lapidaria:

— « Anno Domini mdccclxxxv complentur: ab orta Congregatione die 9 Novembris 1732, anni liii. Ab approbatis Constitutionibus et Regulis a Benedicto XIV. S. M. die 25 febr. 1749, anni xxxvi. Ante pretiosam S.P.N. Alphonsi mortem die 1 Aug. 1787, anni ii » (a la izquierda está la imagen de S. Alfonso en color)⁶⁷;

— « Reverendissimus Pater Franciscus Maria di Paola, Congregationis SS.mi Redemptoris A.o D.i 1780 a SS. D. Pio P. P. VI praeses constitutus usque ad proximum capitulum generale, mittit Ven.m Patrem Clementem Mariam Hofbauer cum socio ad Congregationem trans Alpes dilatandam anno 1785 » (a la izquierda se halla la imagen del P. De Paola en blanco y negro⁶⁸;

— « Superior Generalis et Rector Major Congregationis SS. Redemptoris, Reverendissimus Pater Petrus Paulus Blasucci, a Capitulo Generali 14 Aprilis 1793 electus, Venerabilem Patrem Clementem Mariam Hofbauer Vicarium Generalem trans Alpes designat » (a la izquierda la imagen del P. Blasucci)⁶⁹;

— « Vicarius Generalis extra Italiam, Reverendissimus Pater Joannes Clemens Maria Hofbauer, natus 26 Decembris 1751, professus 19 Martii 1785, Presbyter consecratus 29 Matii 1785, a Rectore Majori nominatus 1793 » (a la izquierda una imagen del Venerable que parece el negativo en blanco y negro de una fotografía hecha sobre el altorrelieve de su tumba en Maria-Stiegen)⁷⁰.

— « Venerabilis Pater Joannes Clemens Maria Hofbauer, CSSR. Vicarius Generalis, Varsavia expulsus anno 1808 Vindobonam venit. Impierrimus in Congregatione stabilienda post multos labores confectus, R.do D.o Francisco Schmidt, qui Venerabili Patri a confessionibus erat,

⁶⁵ Este último párrafo está tomado fundamentalmente de la edición francesa, p. 6.

⁶⁶ [J. VAN RIJKEVORSEL], *Collectio catalogorum CSSR, 1785-1852*, Ruraemundae 1881.

⁶⁷ *Ibidem*, p. 7.

⁶⁸ *Ibidem*, p. 9.

⁶⁹ *Ibidem*, p. 11.

⁷⁰ *Ibidem*, p. 13.

cum amicis et discipulis adstantibus, in Domino quievit 15 Martii 1820 aetatis suae 69 »⁷¹.

Esta imagen se mantendrá sustancialmente en los documentos oficiales y en la piedad popular casi hasta después de la Segunda Guerra Mundial. Las variantes se deberán, sobre todo, a las circunstancias nuevas en que se hallen los autores del documento, que acentuarán así uno u otro de los rasgos que acabamos de ofrecer. El intento por interpretarla desde una perspectiva más histórica irá apareciendo progresivamente en los biógrafos del siglo XX y en la investigación contemporánea.

Con ocasión de la Beatificación aparece la obra de M. Bauchinger⁷². Tendría siete ediciones en lengua alemana hasta 1928 y una tirada inicial de 35.000 ejemplares⁷³, lo que pone de manifiesto la difusión que adquirió. Para la canonización vieron la luz pública dos biografías importantes: la de A. Innerkofler⁷⁴ y la de G. Lasilier⁷⁵. El ciclo podríamos cerrarlo con la de J. Hofer⁷⁶ que, en realidad, venía a celebrar más bien el centenario de su muerte⁷⁷.

Las obras de A. Innerkofler y J. Hofer acentúan el trabajo de investigación personal y ponen de relieve la preparación histórica de sus autores. Por eso, precisamente, insisten cada vez más en una interpretación de su figura que esté de acuerdo con el contexto histórico en que vivió el Santo. En esto se distinguen de otras muchas contemporáneas que a veces se reducen a resúmenes o traducciones acómодadas⁷⁸. El carácter científico de las primeras hará que tengan un cierto influjo en la historiografía contemporánea, de suerte que

⁷¹ *Ibidem*, p. 42.

⁷² M. BAUCHINGER, *Der selige Clemens Maria Hofbauer. Ein Lebensbild [...]*. Mit Illustrationen von Theophil Melider, Wien 1889.

⁷³ M. DE MEULEMEESTER, *Bibliographie*, II 18.

⁷⁴ A. INNERKOFER, *Ein österreichischer Reformator. Lebensbild des heiligen P. Klemens Maria Hofbauer, des vorzüglichen Verbreiters des Redemptoristen-Kongregation*, Regensburg 1910. Nueva edición, tres años más tarde, con el siguiente frontispicio: *Der hl. Klemens Maria Hofbauer, ein österreichischer Reformator und der vorzüglichste Verbreiter der Redemptoristenkongregation. Zweite, nach etwa 800 neuentdeckten Dokumenten verbesserte und vermehrte Auflage*, Regensburg und Rom 1913. Cfr. M. DE MEULEMEESTER, *Bibliographie*, II 207-208.

⁷⁵ G. LASILIER, *Un apôtre précurseur: Saint Clément Hofbauer (1751-1820)*, Rome, Varsovie, Vienne, Paris 1909. Cfr. M. DE MEULEMEESTER, *Bibliographie*, II 242.

⁷⁶ J. HOFER, *Der heilig Klemens Maria Hofbauer. Ein Lebensbild*, Freiburg im B., 1921, con una 2ª y 3ª edición en 1923. Cfr. *Bibliographie*, II 197-199.

⁷⁷ Más tarde sale la edición francesa de J. HOFER-R. KREMER, *Saint Clément-Marie Hofbauer (1751-1820)*, Louvain-Paris 1933.

⁷⁸ Cfr. M. DE MEULEMEESTER, *Bibliographie*, II 196-197.

S. Clemente vaya ocupando el puesto que le corresponde en la historia general, cosa que no logran sus precursores⁷⁹. Será lo que dé a la figura del Santo una proyección distinta de la meramente devocional, sobre todo fuera del Instituto, comenzando a ser fuertemente discutida por los autores de las diversas tendencias ideológicas⁸⁰.

3. - *Investigación sistemática y publicaciones periódicas (1920-1978)*

Hasta este momento los estudios hofbauerianos se habían preocupado fundamentalmente de la vida de S. Clemente en su conjunto y habían tratado de ofrecernos una semblanza general de la misma⁸¹. Era, pues, necesario que en adelante se acentuaran los estudios monográficos sobre temas concretos. Lógicamente este tipo de estudios pedía una forma literaria de tipo periódico que, por otra parte, se estaba acentuando progresivamente en la Congregación del Santísimo Redentor⁸².

El valor de las publicaciones de este nuevo período es muy vario. Las populares tienen una finalidad predominantemente devocional y piadosa. Las científicas, en cambio, se preocupan más de ir completando la documentación sobre cuanto puede esclarecernos su vida.

Pues bien, si prescindimos de las publicaciones populares y de las que sólo ocasionalmente traen algún estudio sobre S. Clemente, los estudios científicos de un cierto interés histórico hemos de buscarlos en las siguientes publicaciones:

- *Litterae Annales Provinciarum CSSR*⁸³;
- *Klemens-Hofbauer-Kalender (Innsbruck) 1909*⁸⁴;
- *Der Volksmissionar (Bonn) 1922*⁸⁵;

⁷⁹ R. TILL, *Hofbauer und sein Kreis*, Wien 1951, p. 9-11.

⁸⁰ J. Löw, *Bibliographia hofbaueriana*, en *Spic. Hist.* 1 (1953) 273.

⁸¹ Aunque se acentuaba el carácter del «Lebensbild» no faltaron estudios monográficos sobre temas particulares de los mismos autores como puede verse en sus respectivas bibliografías. Cfr. DE MEULEMEESTER, *Bibliographie*, II 196-197 y III 320-321.

⁸² Cfr. M. DE MEULEMEESTER, *Bibliographie*, III 84-194.

⁸³ Para el índice de las publicaciones hechas hasta 1909, cfr. *ibidem*, p. 445-446. Para otras posteriores, E. HOSP, *Weltweite Erlösung. Erlösermissionäre-Redemptoristen (1732-1962)*, Innsbruck 1961, p. 215-222.

⁸⁴ M. DE MEULEMEESTER, *Bibliographie*, III 87.

⁸⁵ *Ibidem*, p. 97-98.

- *Analecta Congregationis Sanctissimi Redemptoris* (Roma) 1921-1967⁸⁶;
- *Klemens-Blätter* (Viena) 1929⁸⁷;
- *Monumenta Hofbaueriana* (Cracovia, Torun, Roma) 1915, 1929-1939, 1951⁸⁸;
- *Homo Dei* (Tuchów) 1932⁸⁹;
- *Spicilegium Historicum Congregationis Sanctissimi Redemptoris* (Roma) 1953⁹⁰;
- *Orbis: Omnium Redemptoristarum breve informationis servitium* (Roma) 1968⁹¹.

Un guión general de las fuentes y de los catálogos bibliográficos hofbauerianos lo hemos dado ya en otro lugar⁹². Bástenos, pues, recordar ahora, una vez más, cómo los estudios aparecidos en las publicaciones mencionadas y en otras que solamente se ocupan de S. Clemente de un modo ocasional se hallan sistemáticamente recogidos en:

- M. DE MEULEMEESTER, *Bibliographie générale des écrivains rédemptoristes*, vol. II, Louvain 1935, p. 196-197 y vol. III, ibídem 1939, p. 320-321.
- J. Löw, *Bibliographia hofbaueriana*, en *Spic. Hist.* 1 (1953) 271-282.
- A. SAMPERS, *Bibliographia hofbaueriana (1953-1970)*, en *Spic. Hist.* 18 (1970) 447-455.

La literatura hofbaueriana de este período comienza con el ímpetu de las celebraciones jubilares del primer centenario de la muerte de S. Clemente (1920) y del segundo centenario de la fundación de la Congregación del Santísimo Redentor (1932).

⁸⁶ Cuenta con índices alfabéticos en los siguientes volúmenes: Vol. 1-6 (1922-1927) en *Analecta* 6 (1927) 361-371; 7-12 (1928-1933) en 12 (1933) 387-400; 13-18 (1934-1939) en 18 (1939) 305-315; 19-24 (1940-1952) en 24 (1952) 175-184; 25-30 (1953-1958) en 30 (1958) *Supplementum speciale* de 35 páginas; 31-36 (1959-1964) en 36 (1964) *Supplementum speciale* de 52 páginas.

⁸⁷ M. DE MEULEMEESTER, *Bibliographie*, III 96-97.

⁸⁸ *Monumenta Hofbaueriana. Acta quae ad vitam S. Clementis Hofbauer referuntur*. Fasc. I, Cracoviae 1915; Fasc. II-XII, Torun 1929-1939; Fasc. XIII, Cracoviae 1939; Fasc. XIV-XV, Romae 1951. Índices generales y especiales en el último volumen. Cfr. J. Löw, *Bibliographia hofbaueriana*, en *Spic. Hist.* 1 (1953) 271-273.

⁸⁹ M. DE MEULEMEESTER, *Bibliographie*, III 169-170.

⁹⁰ *Index articulorum et notitiarum in « Spicilegio » vulgatorum ann. 1953-1972*, en *Spic. Hist.* 20 (1972) 425-449.

⁹¹ « Publicación periódica como medio práctico, económico, frecuente, eficaz para la comunicación interna acerca de los asuntos de la Congregación ». *Orbis* 1 (1968) 3.

⁹² F. FERRERO, *Para una interpretación histórica*, en *Spic. Hist.* 18 (1970) 243-246.

Las obras más significativas del comienzo las constituyen los primeros volúmenes de *Monumenta Hofbaueriana* y diversas reediciones y acomodaciones de las grandes biografías con que se cerraba el período anterior. A su lado se hallaban las publicaciones jubilares y otras varias de carácter popular o devocional.

La Segunda Guerra Mundial provocó una crisis en todos estos trabajos. Más aún, las corrientes ideológicas centroeuropeas de la época inmediatamente anterior comenzaron a difundir una imagen negativa de S. Clemente, quien « *tanquam 'reactionarius' et Romani Pontificis ac Ecclesiae Romanae sinister propugnator vehementibus calumniis affectus est* »⁹³.

Terminada la guerra, los especialistas en temas hofbauerianos se encontraron con una serie de documentos importantes que no habían podido ser integrados en la última edición de J. Hofer — R. Kremer⁹⁴. Se imponía, pues, una presentación nueva de la vida de S. Clemente.

La ocasión propicia para hacerlo iba a ser el segundo centenario de su nacimiento. Además, en 1951 se celebraba a nivel local el Jubileo Universal del año anterior. El mundo y la Iglesia vivían así un ambiente de restauración y recuperación tras la tragedia de la guerra y en medio de la preocupación creada por el avance espectacular del comunismo. Austria, por otra parte, volvía a encontrarse en una situación de frontera.

En este contexto, la figura de S. Clemente, vista en medio de la Ilustración, del Josefinitismo, del Romanticismo, de la Revolución francesa y de la renovación pastoral de Europa, con su apostolado original en Varsovia (misión permanente) y Viena (Hofbauer-Kreis), aparecía como la del apóstol moderno que muy bien podía servir de modelo a quienes trabajaban en la reconstrucción material y espiritual de Europa⁹⁵.

⁹³ J. Löw, *Bibliographia hofbaueriana*, p. 273.

⁹⁴ J. HOFER-R. KREMER, *Saint Clément-Marie Hofbauer (1751-1820)*, Louvain-Paris 1933.

⁹⁵ Como ejemplo de lo que deseamos expresar nos permitimos transcribir las palabras con que comienza su obra E. HOSP, *Der heilige Klemens Maria Hofbauer (1751-1820)*, Wien 1951, p. VII-VIII, escritas el 8 de diciembre de 1950: « Wir stehen in einer Zeit des Niederbruchs und des Neubaues. Noch wichtiger als der materielle, finanzielle und politische Neubaue ist die Erneuerung des religiösen und kirchlichen Geistes, der Einsatz zeitnaher, opfermutiger Seelsorger und glaubensstarker Laienapostel. Der hl. Klemens Maria Hofbauer war von der göttlichen Vorsehung in eine ähnliche Zeit hineingestellt, musste mit ähnlichen Problemen ringen. Er ging vielfach neue Wege, die aber aus echter Liebe zu den Seelen herauswuchsen [...]. Sein Lebens-

Además, dentro de la Congregación del Santísimo Redentor, como en los demás institutos religiosos, comenzaba a sentirse esa necesidad de renovación y puesta al día que iba a culminar en el Concilio Vaticano II y en la época posconciliar de nuestros días. S. Clemente comenzó a ser visto entonces como símbolo y modelo por quienes buscaban formas nuevas de vivir los ideales permanentes del Instituto. Su imagen aparecía atractiva y juvenil, abierta al cambio y a la creatividad y contrapuesta al tradicionalismo decadente.

Lo cierto es que a partir de 1951, los estudios hofbauerianos reciben un impulso nuevo: reaparecen y se terminan los *Monumenta Hofbaueriana*, se publican obras tan importantes como las de E. Hosp⁹⁶ y R. Till⁹⁷, y *Spicilegium Historicum* inicia con la *Bibliographia hofbaueriana* de J. Löw una serie de estudios que irá continuando hasta nuestros días.

Las ocasiones para reavivar este interés son las mismas que indicamos al principio: cincuentenario de la canonización (1959), ciento cincuenta aniversario de su muerte (1970).

La manifestación literaria del interés nuevo por la figura de S. Clemente la tenemos en los artículos de los grandes diccionarios y enciclopedias, en estudios sistemáticos de algunas publicaciones periódicas de carácter científico, en las biografías y artículos populares, en las publicaciones piadosas, etc.

Los temas de que se ocupa esta literatura podríamos clasificarlos así, siguiendo a A. Sampers⁹⁸:

- estudios generales;
- edición de documentos relacionados con el Santo;
- estudios monográficos sobre los distintos períodos de su vida: período eslavo (1751-1784), período romano (1784-1786), período varsoviense (1786-1808), período vienés (1808-1820);

werk überdauerte die politische Konstruktion Metternichs. Es strahlt heute noch Lebenskraft aus auf den kirchlichen Neubau unserer Zeit. Das soll uns gerade das zweite Zentener Geburt wieder zum Bewusstsein bringen». Cfr. también R. TILL, *Hofbauer und sein Kreis*, p. 142-146: Hofbauer und unsere Zeit.

⁹⁶ E. HOSP, *Der hl. Klemens Maria Hofbauer. (1751-1820)*, Wien 1951, con versión italiana de F. Tatarelli: *Il Santo della preghiera e dell'azione, Clemente Maria Hofbauer*, Roma 1954; *Erbe des hl. Klemens*, Wien 1953, y otros muchos artículos publicados especialmente en *Spicilegium Historicum* y en *Klemens-Blätter*. En su primera obra insiste en el drama interior del Santo y procura darnos una cronología precisa de su vida. Cfr. J. Löw, *Bibliographia hofbaueriana*, p. 273-274.

⁹⁷ R. TILL, *Hofbauer und sein Kreis*, Wien 1951.

⁹⁸ A. SAMPERS, *Bibliographia hofbaueriana 1953-1970*, en *Spic. Hist.* 18 (1970) 447-455.

- estudios sobre su actividad pastoral;
- estudios sobre sus discípulos;
- biografías de carácter popular;
- escritos populares;
- escritos devocionales y diversos.

Pero en este momento también es importante el cambio que experimenta la figura de S. Clemente. Las publicaciones científicas se preocupan de buscar y publicar una documentación más amplia que nos permita encuadrar mejor la imagen del Santo en el medio histórico que le tocó vivir. Tampoco faltan estudios que se preocupan de su modo de ser a partir del análisis grafológico de sus cartas⁹⁹. Otros acentúan de modo particular su proyección sobre el contexto socio-cultural y sociorreligioso de la época, especialmente a partir del Círculo de Viena y de su relación con los demás representantes de la renovación cristiana en el mundo germánico¹⁰⁰. Finalmente, en torno a 1970, al mismo tiempo que se pone al día la información bibliográfica y se editan nuevos documentos, se trata de esclarecer su vida eremítica en Tívoli y el significado de su personalidad en el conjunto de la historia contemporánea¹⁰¹.

De esta manera la figura del Santo comienza a perder alguno de los rasgos que había proyectado sobre ella la mentalidad del siglo XIX y va adquiriendo el realismo de una personalidad histórica que se halla condicionada por una herencia cultural y humana y por un contexto social, político y religioso. En otras palabras, su imagen va siendo despojada de lo devocional y simbólico de una época para recuperar la frescura de las personalidades históricas, con sus cualidades y con sus limitaciones.

Quizá no deje de ser interesante señalar cómo, mientras los estudios históricos tratan de recuperar la imagen histórica de S. Clemente, la Congregación del Santísimo Redentor comienza a descubrir en ella un modelo, con todo lo que el modelo tiene de a-histórico o meta-histórico. Si no interpretamos mal el fenómeno, los rasgos que con este motivo se ponen de relieve giran en torno a su dinamismo apostólico, a los esfuerzos por implantar la Congregación en un mundo nuevo con formas de vida y de apostolado distintas de las recibidas de la tradición napolitana, y a su forma personal de

⁹⁹ Cfr. nota 36.

¹⁰⁰ De especial importancia los estudios de J. Löw, E. Hosp y R. Till.

¹⁰¹ Cfr., además de los autores anteriores, A. Sampers, F. Ferrero, O. Weiss y diversos artículos más en *Spicilegium Historicum*.

vivir como redentorista tras la ruptura con el pasado que supuso para él la expulsión de Varsovia y la soledad de Viena¹⁰². Así, mientras la imagen del siglo XIX quería ser una copia de la de S. Alfonso, la actual se complace más bien en las diferencias que presenta dentro de un mismo espíritu y de una misma misión en la Iglesia. S. Clemente hereda y enriquece el espíritu de S. Alfonso dentro de una fidelidad radical al carisma de los orígenes.

En fin, un tema que ciertamente se relaciona con el estudio de la mentalidad y de la personalidad de S. Clemente. De momento bástenos con haberlo insinuado. Por su importancia para el estudio sistemático de la espiritualidad redentorista quizá volvamos a tratarlo algún día de un modo más detenido.

II. - SITUACION ACTUAL Y POSIBILIDADES

Esta nos parece la trayectoria general que han seguido los estudios hofbauerianos hasta nuestros días. Cara al futuro cabe preguntarse por la situación en que se encuentran y por las posibilidades que ofrecen algunos temas en particular que, sin duda, van a seguir siendo objeto de investigación en los próximos años.

1. - *La investigación sobre las fuentes*

Hasta ahora se ha ocupado especialmente de:

- los testimonios contemporáneos en torno a S. Clemente o a la situación de Varsovia, Viena y demás regiones en que vivió el Santo¹⁰³;
- la correspondencia epistolar¹⁰⁴;
- las declaraciones de los testigos en el Proceso de Beatificación y Canonización¹⁰⁵;
- documentos varios de archivos diversos¹⁰⁶.

¹⁰² F. FERRERO, *Para una interpretación histórica de S. Clemente María Hofbauer*, en *Spic. Hist.* 18 (1970) 237-241.

¹⁰³ Cfr. *Monumenta Hofbaueriana*, XV 150-151 y 164.

¹⁰⁴ Para una localización de las cartas de S. Clemente cfr. *Monumenta Hofbaueriana*, XV 151-155, y *Spic. Hist.* 7 (1959) 17-28. Para las de los superiores generales del momento, para las de los vicarios transalpinos y otras relacionadas con S. Clemente cfr. *Monumenta Hofb.*, XV 155-162, y *Spic. Hist.* 20 (1972) 434-438, A. Sampers, n° 221, 222, 236, 246, 265, 271, 275, 279, etc.

¹⁰⁵ Para el texto parcial en alemán cfr. *Monumenta Hofbaueriana*, XV 163.

¹⁰⁶ *Ibidem*, p. 205-206.

La continuación de estudios sistemáticos en este campo podría extenderse:

— a los archivos locales (eclesiásticos y civiles) de las regiones directamente relacionadas con S. Clemente o con la Congregación del Santísimo Redentor en su tiempo;

— a los archivos de las nunciaturas y embajadas de las mismas regiones;

— al Archivo Secreto Vaticano, especialmente en la sección de Secretaría de Estado¹⁰⁷;

— al Archivo Generalicio de la Congregación del Santísimo Redentor en Roma;

— a la documentación sobre personas y familias que tuvieron amistad o trato particular con el Santo en los diversos períodos de su vida.

Todo esto sin contar que hay documentos que merecerían ser publicados de nuevo tras una investigación más sistemática y completa sobre los mismos. Pensamos, por ejemplo, en la declaraciones de los testigos en el Proceso Ordinario.

2. - *Familia y lugar de origen*

Son muchos los aspectos que tendrá que esclarecernos la investigación sistemática de las fuentes si queremos comprender la vida de S. Clemente en su lugar de origen. A título de ejemplo nos atrevemos a sugerir algunos en particular;

— significado de la Guerra de los Siete Años (1756-1763) entre Austria y Prusia para la región concreta en que vivió;

— características de la formación cultural y religiosa del Santo en Tasovice y Zojmo durante su infancia y adolescencia;

— influjo sociorreligioso de los santuarios de Mühlfrauen y Maria-Zell sobre la región en general y sobre el espíritu eremítico hofbaueriano en particular;

— origen, motivaciones, preparación y exigencias de la vida eremítica, sacerdotal y religiosa en la zona, etc.

Cierto que sabemos ya muchas cosas sobre cada uno de estos temas. Pero tenemos la impresión de que son demasiado genéricas y de que todavía no han integrado ni el estilo ni las aportaciones

¹⁰⁷ Cfr. la «osservazione» de A. SAMPERS, *Pareri di S. Clemente M. Hofbauer e di Gregorio Ziegler circa la nomina di vescovi nei Paesi Germanici (1816)*, en *Spic. Hist.* 20 (1970) 391-392.

científicas de la investigación histórica de los últimos años en la Europa Oriental.

Este trabajo resultará más fácil si se tienen en cuenta las adquisiciones actuales en los mismos estudios hofbauerianos. Así, E. Hosp¹⁰⁸ parece haber esclarecido definitivamente algunos aspectos relacionados con la familia y lugar de origen de S. Clemente. A primera vista podrían parecer detalles sin importancia. En cambio pueden tener especial interés para quien desee estudiar y conocer mejor el contexto socioeconómico, sociopolítico, sociorreligioso y sociocultural en que se movió su familia y él mismo durante un período muy importante de su vida¹⁰⁹.

Y es que si resulta claro que el padre de S. Clemente, Pedro Pablo Dvorak, era natural de Budwitz o Budejovice en Moravia (Pobedice), junto al río Taja, a unos 50 Km. al NO de Zojmo, y no de Budweis (Česke Budejovice), a unos 100 Km. de Praga; que de Pobedice emigró a Tasovice (Tasswitz), donde había una colonia alemana; y que aquí contrajo matrimonio con Maria Steer (31 I 1736), cambiando su apellido eslavo de Dvorak por el alemán de Hoffbauer o Hofbauer e imponiéndolo después a sus hijos... Si esto es así, resulta claro que las investigaciones sobre este período de su vida han de girar en torno a Pobedice y Tasovice¹¹⁰.

3. - Redentorista, sacerdote, misionero

¿ Por qué se hizo S. Clemente Redentorista ? ¿Cuál fue su misión inicial en el mundo transalpino ? Dada la importancia del tema todos los biógrafos del Santo le han dedicado una atención particular. Es posible que algunos se hayan preocupado excesivamente de confir-

¹⁰⁸ E. Hosp, *Abstammung des hl. Klemens*, en *Spic. Hist.* 2 (1954) 87-112. Cfr. también J. WOJNOWSKI, *Nova S. Clementis biographia critice perlustrata*, en *Spic. Hist.* 18 (1970) 442. Este artículo pone de relieve algunas de las adquisiciones históricas que no han sido incluidas todavía en biografías como la que el autor critica: E. DUDEL, *Klemens Hofbauer. Ein Zeitbild*, Bonn 1970.

¹⁰⁹ Al tema le concede particular importancia O. WEISS, *Klemens Maria Hofbauer, Repräsentant des konservativen Katholizismus und Begründer der katholischen Restauration in Österreich. Eine Studie zu seinem 150. Todestag*, en *Zeitschrift für bayerische Landesgeschichte*, 34 (1971) 212-216.

¹¹⁰ Para este apartado hemos tenido presentes de modo especial los datos recogidos por J. WOJNOWSKI en el artículo antes citado y en su *Dissertatio ad inaugurationem anni scholastici 1970/1971, anni Jubilaei S. Clementis M. Hofbauer, habita* (Tuchów 2 X 1970), con el título de: *S. Clemens eiusque socii varsavienses: quaestiones quae ulteriores investigationes postulant*. Seguimos la versión latina de T. Kaczewski conservada en el archivo de Spicilegium Historicum.

mar documentalmente fechas y lugares olvidando un tanto el significado y la transcendencia de los hechos. A pesar de todo, nos hallamos ante un aspecto que, como tantos otros de su vida, todavía permanece en el misterio de la historia. ¿Qué posibilidades ofrece un estudio ulterior del mismo?

Un punto clave, sobre el que los biógrafos todavía no han conseguido pruebas definitivas, es el de la fecha y lugar de su ordenación sacerdotal. Con él están íntimamente relacionados todos los demás.

Las primeras noticias que tenemos del interés por la fecha de la ordenación sacerdotal de S. Clemente se remontan a 1834. Ese año el Superior General, P. J. Camilo Ripoli (1832-1849), preguntaba desde Paganí al Procurador General de la Congregación en Roma, P. José María Mautone (1832-1845), si entre la profesión religiosa y la ordenación sacerdotal de un clérigo de la Congregación tenían que pasar tres años, como era norma general. La respuesta dice, entre otras cosas:

« In vista della sua ho parlato con' Passionisti, Teatini e Carmelitani, e tutti mi hanno detto che noi ed i Regolari siamo esenti dalla legge del triennio, e che essi così praticano. Anche il P. Exgenerale de Paola praticava così. Infatti i due tedeschi Uffubar [Hofbauer] ed Ible [Hübl] si ordinarono subito dopo fatta la professione. In seguito è stato fatto sempre così. Posto ciò stimo che »...¹¹¹.

El P. José María Mautone había nacido en Nápoles el 26 de octubre de 1765; recibió el hábito el 8 de marzo de 1785 y profesó en Scifelli el 7 de febrero de 1786¹¹². Pudo, pues, conocer personalmente a S. Clemente en el noviciado. Precisamente por eso su testimonio ha merecido una atención particular.

Las investigaciones ulteriores, relacionadas con el proceso de beatificación y canonización y con el interés de los biógrafos por documentar una fecha tan importante, suponen esta conexión entre profesión religiosa y ordenación sacerdotal. Y puesto que, según el *Libro della Vestizione, ed Oblazione de' Novizii ne' Collegi di S. Giuliano e di Scifelli da' 14 Aprile 1783 a' 28 Ag.o 1792* [20 I 1822]¹¹³,

¹¹¹ Arch. Gen. CSSR., VIII B 15 (6), Lettera del 4 II 1834.

¹¹² F. MINERVINO, *Catalogo dei Redentoristi d'Italia*, p. 116.

¹¹³ Arch. Gen. CSSR., Cat. VI. « 7 D. Clemente Hofbauer, della Moravia, nato li 26 Decembre 1751 (al margen lateral izquierdo). D. Clemente Hofbauer di (tacha della) Tassviz nella Moravia entrò nel Noviziato li 24 Ottobre 1784, e fu vestito dal P. D. Giuseppe Landi, Maestro de' Novizi, nel Collegio di S. Giuliano di Roma ». (Después de un breve espacio sigue): « 8. D. Taddeo Hübl, di Cermna in Boemia, nato

S. Clemente tomó el hábito en S. Julián de Roma el 24 de octubre de 1784 y profesó el 19 de marzo de 1785 en la misma residencia romana (inaugurada el 22 de marzo de 1783), ambas fechas deberían estar relacionadas entre sí de alguna manera.

J. Löw, en las investigaciones que sugiere hacer sobre el particular, según diremos más adelante, propone esta hipótesis de trabajo:

« Il Santo avrebbe fatto la sua professione religiosa a Roma il 19 marzo 1785, si sarebbe immediatamente trasportato a Frosinone, e sarebbe stato ordinato in seguito: Sabato Santo, 26 marzo, Tonsura e Ordini Minori; Pasqua, 27 marzo, Suddiaconato; Lunedì, 28 marzo, Diaconato; e Martedì, 29 marzo, Presbiterato.

Come luogo di ordinazione si indica generalmente Veroli, sede di Frosinone, ed anche Alatri, sede vicina, riferendosi ad una vacanza della sede di Veroli, che sarebbe vero soltanto per l'anno seguente.

Ma dato che anche la data della Professione, 19 marzo 1785, dà luogo a qualche dubbio, occorre estendere forse la ricerca agli anni vicini, 1784-1786 »¹¹⁴.

En las cartas citadas no aparece la causa de la duda sobre la fecha de profesión. Tal vez pueda deberse a lo infructuosa que hasta el momento había sido la investigación que partía de ella. Pero también podría apoyarse en el mismo documento original. En efecto, las actas de profesión en que figura esta fecha se deben a diversas manos y parecen también de épocas diversas. De ser contemporáneas de los hechos que testifican, podrían remontarse a una fecha poco posterior a la profesión del sujeto. Sin embargo hay una serie de ellas, pertenecientes al período comprendido entre el 29 VI 1783 y el 6 I 1789 que parecen escritas por una misma mano y en una misma fecha, como

li 28 Ottobre 1761 (al margen lateral izquierdo). D. Taddeo Hibl di Cermna in Boemia entrò in Noviziato li 24 Ottobre 1784, e fu vestito dal P. D. Giuseppe Landi, Maestro de' Novizi, nel Collegio di S. Giuliano di Roma ». Cfr. *Registro dei Novizij della Congregazione del SS.mo Redentore*, que forma parte del ms. titulado: *Libro della Vestizione ed Oblazione de' Novizii ne' Collegj di S. Giul[i]ano e di Scifelli da' 14 Aprile 1783, a' 28 Ago 1792*, fol. 7v. En la parte de las *Professioni* se lee: *D. Clemente Hofbauer* (al margen lateral izquierdo). « D. Clemente Hofbaver fece la sua professione in mano del R.mo P. Sup. G.le D. Francesco de Paola nel Collegio di Roma li 19. Marzo 1785, colla condizione di dover seguitare il restante del Noviziato. (Y casi sin dejar espacio apreciable con el acta siguiente sigue con punto y a parte): *D. Taddeo Hibl* (al margen). D. Taddeo Hibl fece la sua professione in mano come sopra nell'istesso giorno ed anno, e condizione ». *Ibidem*, fol 2v.

¹¹⁴ Tomamos el texto del borrador de la carta al obispo de Veroli del 3 X 1946. Se conserva la respuesta del día 27 X 1946 y otra del P. Löw del 8 XI 1946. Casi el mismo texto al obispo de Alatri (8 XI 1946). Respuesta del 10 XII 1946 y nueva insistencia del P. Löw con fecha 11 V 1948. El 17 VIII 1948 responden negativamente de la Curia di Alatri.

si se tratara de transcribir una redacción anterior. Nos lo confirma el acta del 8. IX 1789 (fol. 3v) que introduce claramente un cambio en la caligrafía del manuscrito. Pues bien, entre las primeras se hallan las que se refieren al P. « Clemente Hofbauer » y al P. « Tadeo Hibl » ¹¹⁵.

Según esto, cabría la hipótesis de que las actas aludidas hubieran sido transcritas en el manuscrito actual cuatro o cinco años después de los hechos y a base de un manuscrito anterior, del que muy bien podría haber formado parte el folio que actualmente lleva el número 12 (cuando el original es el 117) y que pertenecía al *Catalogo de F[rater]lli Servienti* ¹¹⁶.

Teniendo, pues, en cuenta las dificultades que ocasiona en la cronología hofbaueriana esa fecha, considerada normalmente como absolutamente segura, ¿ no cabría pensar en una equivocación del copista ? ¿ No sería posible una duda sobre la veracidad del catálogo, al menos para no condicionar de un modo tan definitivo la investigación posterior ?

En las pesquisas hechas hasta el presente sobre este tema se ha llegado a la localización precisa de datos y documentos auténticos referentes a la ordenación sacerdotal de otros redentoristas contemporáneos. En 1864 escribía el P. M. Ulrich al P. E. Douglas que las investigaciones sobre el Siervo de Dios en Veroli, Sora, Foligno y Tivoli habían sido infructuosas. Y sin embargo, en un folio de esa misma época, dirigido *Al Molto R. P. Procuratore Generale, il P. D. Brixio Queloz del SS. Red.* con una *Nota di alcuni Padri della Congregazione del SS.mo Redentore, ordinati [1777-1791] dalla ba. me. di Monsig. Pie. Stefano Speranza, Vescovo di Alatri*, hace mención de 16 redentoristas que reciben en ese tiempo diversas órdenes ¹¹⁷.

Algo parecido ocurrió con las investigaciones sugeridas por el P. J. Löw entre 1946 y 1948 en los archivos diocesanos de Veroli y Alatri ¹¹⁸. En 1968 G. Orlandi y F. Ferrero estudiaron sistemáticamente el tema en los archivos del Vicariato de Roma, de las diócesis de Tivoli, Alatri, Veroli, Sora y Ferentino, así como en los archivos particulares de la Familia Molella, de la iglesia de Sta. María en Frosinone, de los Canónigos de Veroli y de las comunidades reden-

¹¹⁵ Cfr. *Libro della Vestizione ed Oblazione*, fol. 2v-4 y 7-9v.

¹¹⁶ *Ibidem*, fol. 12.

¹¹⁷ *Arch. Gen. CSSR.*, Cat. I.

¹¹⁸ Los pidió a los obispos de las respectivas diócesis.

toristas de Frosinone y Scifelli. Los resultados conseguidos fueron muy semejantes ¹¹⁹.

Todo ello nos puede llevar a diversas conclusiones. En primer lugar, si no queremos dar por seguro que ha desaparecido toda documentación sobre el particular ¹²⁰, tenemos que admitir que los caminos seguidos hasta ahora para estudiar este momento de la vida de S. Clemente no han sido los más adecuados. Prácticamente hemos ido buscando un dato aislado sin elementos suficientes para poder localizarlo. ¿ No sería más razonable tener en cuenta el conjunto de su vida, es decir, su vida de redentorista en Italia ? ¿ No habría que remontarse a posibles contactos de S. Clemente con otras comunidades redentoristas y con otras personalidades relacionadas con la Congregación aún antes de 1784, sobre todo si queremos explicar razonablemente su vocación y su actividad posterior ? Su misión en Varsovia y su correspondencia con distintas personalidades son demasiado importantes y claras para que puedan explicarse a partir de la versión tradicional sobre su ingreso en la Congregación del Santísimo Redentor, sobre su profesión religiosa, sobre su permanencia en Italia y sobre su misión en la Polonia Rusa. Tiene que haber algo que no conocemos o que no sabemos interpretar.

En orden a un estudio ulterior de este período de su vida hay que tener en cuenta que contamos ya con una serie de datos que pueden ayudarnos en la investigación. Veamos algunos ejemplos.

— Sabemos de una serie de personalidades con las que posteriormente mantuvo el Santo una correspondencia especial: ¿ por qué no aclarar cuándo pudo comenzar a tratar con ellas ?

— Conocemos las fechas de fundación correspondientes a las comunidades redentoristas fuera de Nápoles: ¿ cuál era su actividad y cuál pudo ser la relación de S. Clemente con ellas en sus viajes a Roma y por Italia en general ?

— Los registros del noviciado y las actas de profesión nos dan nombres y regiones de quienes entraron en la Congregación por

¹¹⁹ En los libros que pudimos consultar se notaban huellas de que ya había sido hecha una investigación sobre el mismo argumento. Al margen de los nombres de redentoristas había una señal a lápiz.

¹²⁰ E. Hosp, *Stadt der Priesterweihe des hl. Klemens M. Hofbauer*, en *Klemens-Blätter*, 42 (1976) 74-75, alude a volúmenes desaparecidos. Creemos que se refiere a esta N.B. de la *Nota di alcuni* a que aludíamos antes. Dice, en efecto: « Mancano i Registri degli anni 1787 e 1788 quali si dubitano smarriti nelle vicenne, in specie nel tempo dell'Impero Francese. Ciò non ostante si faranno altre diligenze, e se si riaveranno, si osserverà se ne' medesimi vi è trascritto ciò che si ricerca ».

la misma época: ¿ conocemos suficientemente los detalles que ahí figuran sobre personas, lugares, estudios, normas, etc ? ¿ Qué condiciones imponía el hecho de ser « transalpinos » ?

4. - S. Clemente y los Redentoristas de Italia

Por cuanto hemos dicho en el apartado anterior parece claro que si deseamos comprender adecuadamente los primeros años de S. Clemente en la Congregación resulta urgente estudiar sistemáticamente su relación con las comunidades redentoristas de Italia antes de 1785. Es verdad que contamos con una interpretación tradicional pero resulta insuficiente para explicar el influjo de este hecho en el resto de su vida. A nuestro modo de ver sería necesario estudiar más:

— el primer conocimiento que tuvo S. Clemente de S. Alfonso y de los Redentoristas ¹²¹;

— la situación real de la Congregación fuera del Reino de Nápoles y, más concretamente, en las regiones de Scifelli (1773), Frosinone (1776), Spello (1781), Gubbio (1782), S. Julián de Roma (1783), Cisterna (1785), L'Aquila (1820), Spoleto (1826), Modena (1835) y Finale (1836) ¹²²;

— la formación que recibió tanto antes de ser redentorista como en el noviciado y después de su ordenación sacerdotal;

— la causa y el fin de la misión que se le había encomendado al enviarlo con Tadeo Hübl a la Polonia Rusa;

— el porqué de su establecimiento definitivo en Varsovia;

— los pasos que tuvo que dar antes de la fundación definitiva de S. Bennon;

— la imagen que tenía del Instituto;

— la imagen que fue infundiendo a sus discípulos;

— cómo vivía el ideal redentorista y cómo lo proyectaba a su alrededor...

Para lograr esto es evidente que necesitamos estudiar previamente la situación real de la Congregación que conoció el Santo y que lo fue configurando como redentorista. Cuál era su proyección social

¹²¹ O. WEISS, *Klemens Maria Hofbauer*, I. c. p. 218-219, pone de relieve la relación de S. Clemente con el exjesuita P. Joseph Albert Diessbach para explicar el influjo del ultramontanismo sobre él y su primer conocimiento de S. Alfonso, quizá ya en 1782. Sobre el mismo tema, R. TILL, *Hofbauer und sein Kreis*, p. 30-31, y E. HOSP, *Der hl. Klemens M. Hofbauer*, p. 26-29.

¹²² F. MINERVINO, *Catalogo dei Redentoristi d'Italia*, p. 325-328.

y religiosa para que pudiera impresionarle; cuáles sus actividades; cómo pudo llegar a conocerla, etc.

Para muchos de estos temas contamos con materiales importantes en las colecciones de fuentes que se han ido publicado. Quizá falte un estudio sistemático de las mismas desde esta perspectiva. De todos modos, para comprender la situación real de la Congregación en las regiones indicadas nos parece necesario tener presente: quiénes eran los congregados que trabajaban allí; su relación y la de las comunidades respectivas con las autoridades civiles y eclesiásticas de la zona, así como la amistad que las unía a otras personalidades contemporáneas; el apostolado a que se dedicaban (en el sentido más amplio de la palabra); su relación con otros grupos de la renovación cristiana; su influjo en la difusión de la moral de S. Alfonso, etc.

Por otra parte, no debe olvidarse lo que ya hemos dicho en otra ocasión a propósito de los estudios hofbauerianos: la literatura actual sobre los siglos XVIII y XIX está sometiendo a profunda revisión crítica muchos de los esquemas y modelos que habíamos este-reotipado para definir la sociedad, la cultura y la iglesia del tiempo.

5. - *Redentorista en Varsovia*

Parece una etapa bastante estudiada en la vida de S. Clemente. Los especialistas creen que no es así¹²³. Hay una serie de aspectos que, o no han sido suficientemente estudiados, o que, habiéndolo sido, todavía no son presentados en la literatura hofbaueriana desde la nueva perspectiva que suponen los estudios hechos. Recordemos algunos de los más importantes.

— *Primera residencia de S. Clemente en Varsovia.* Hasta obtener definitivamente la iglesia de S. Bennon, los primeros redentoristas vivieron en la calle SW. Jana en un colegio de los Jesuítas. Recogían niños, los cuidaban, los instruían y, al mismo tiempo, iban restaurando la vecina iglesia de S. Bennon con el asilo adjunto que luego se convertiría en casa religiosa. Su economía se reducía a las limosnas espontáneas de los fieles¹²⁴.

¹²³ También en este apartado seguimos de modo especial a J. WOJNOWSKI, *Nova S. Clementis biographia critica perlustrata*, en *Spic. Hist.* 18 (1970) 443-446, y la *Dissertatio* a que aludíamos antes.

¹²⁴ *Dissertatio*, fol. 7. La iglesia de S. Bennon estaba en la calle Nova Miasto. Cfr. *Spic. Hist.* 18 (1970) 443.

— *El hospicio para niñas huérfanas y la escuela elemental, pública y gratuita, para niñas de la clase humilde de Varsovia.* « Expulsados los Jesuítas (1773), la Comisión Nacional de Educación solamente fundaba escuelas elementales para niños; las niñas de las familias nobles se educaban en la misma familia o en colegios de pago »¹²⁵. S. Clemente se preocupó de las niñas pobres de la ciudad. Esta iniciativa quizá sea la primera no solamente en Varsovia sino en toda Polonia ya que es anterior a 1795. Cabe, pues, preguntar: ¿Cuál era su originalidad y su significado social y pastoral en relación con las restantes ciudades europeas? ¿Qué significaba dentro de los ideales apostólicos de la Congregación? ¿No sería, añadimos nosotros, un recuerdo de su actividad eremítica en el mundo austríaco? ¹²⁶.

— *Los Oblatos de la Congregación del Santísimo Redentor.* Según J. Wojnowski, « S. Clemente, nada más llegar a Varsovia, fundó una Asociación de Oblatos, que después, entre 1795 y 1802, fue propagando durante sus viajes por Silesia, Moravia, Alemania, Austria y Suiza »... « Los miembros de la asociación eran sacerdotes, religiosas y laicos de ambos sexos, tanto de Polonia como de otras naciones. Su fin, la propia santificación y el apostolado laical, sobre todo por medio de la difusión de la buena prensa »... « Toda su actividad estaba protegida por el silencio y el secreto. Las mismas cartas las firmaban con la sigla AC. Para conseguir más eficazmente sus objetivos hacia 1802 S. Clemente fundó una imprenta en la casa de Varsovia »¹²⁷.

Pues bien, ya que actualmente se conocen muchos nombres de este grupo, ¿no sería el caso de completar, desde la documentación que ha llegado hasta nosotros sobre estos discípulos, la figura del maestro, como, por otra parte, se ha hecho ya para el período vienés con los miembros del Hofbauer-Kreis? Algo parecido valdría para los amigos, colaboradores y redentoristas contemporáneos de S. Clemente, durante esta etapa de su vida, en Varsovia, Viena y otras ciudades de Polonia, Austria, Suiza, Alemania e Italia ¹²⁸.

¹²⁵ *Dissertatio*, fol. 8-9.

¹²⁶ Nos referimos al hecho de que algunos eremitas estaban encargados de escuelas y catequesis próximas a su eremitorio. En 1780 Clemente figura como eremita y como estudiante de catequética. Cfr. E. Hosp, *Der hl. Klemens M. Hofbauer*, p. 20.

¹²⁷ *Dissertatio*, fol. 9-11.

¹²⁸ *Ibidem*, fol. 10-13 y 20-26.

— *La formación de los Redentoristas en Varsovia* constituye otro tema que podría esclarecerse sobre todo a partir de los libros y estudios del P. Mariano Brudzisz¹²⁹.

— *La opinión pública sobre los Bennonitas*. La expulsión de los Redentoristas de Varsovia en la época napoleónica fue un acontecimiento. Los escritores « laicos » de la ciudad formaron con esa ocasión una especie de « leyenda negra » sobre los Bennonitas (Redentoristas de S. Bennon) que, en parte, ha ido pasando después a la historiografía polaca. Quizá una de las primeras manifestaciones haya que buscarla en la *Gazeta Warszawska* y en el *Korespondent Warszawska* (1808), que los acusan de fanatismo¹³⁰. ¿Cuál es el origen de esta actitud? ¿Qué realidad supone? ¿Qué influjo ha tenido en las restantes fuentes históricas? El estudio de los diarios, periódicos, memorias, diccionarios, enciclopedias y demás publicaciones contemporáneas sobre la ciudad de Varsovia, completado con el de los archivos de nunciaturas y embajadas, puede ser la base para una explicación. Con ello quedaría más clara la mentalidad de S. Clemente y de los Redentoristas de Varsovia antes de 1808.

— *Relación de S. Clemente con los polacos de Viena*. La colonia polaca en la capital austríaca, sobre todo durante el Congreso de Viena, era importante. Sin duda alguna había familias que estaban en relación con S. Clemente ya desde el tiempo en que el Santo vivía en Varsovia. ¿Qué hay sobre el particular?¹³¹

— *Las comunidades redentoristas de Polonia, Austria, Suiza, etc.* Lo que dijimos sobre las comunidades italianas del tiempo podemos repetirlo de las comunidades fundadas de alguna manera por S. Clemente y por sus discípulos inmediatos. También aquí nos parece importante tener en cuenta la orientación de los estudios históricos de dichas regiones y las posibilidades archivísticas que ofrecen¹³².

¹²⁹ *Ibidem*, fol. 11.

¹³⁰ *Ibidem*, fol. 13-19.

¹³¹ *Ibidem*, fol. 20.

¹³² *Ibidem*, fol. 24-26.

6. - *La mentalidad de S. Clemente*

Un tema de la mayor importancia para comprender la personalidad del Santo, su actividad en Varsovia y Viena, y la herencia que continuaron sus discípulos en las diversas regiones. De suyo no es nuevo. Todas las fuentes, en efecto, nos hablan de su ortodoxia, de su amor a la Iglesia de Roma, de su defensa de la fe, de sus controversias con los no-católicos, de la oposición que encontraba por parte de grupos y personas que podríamos considerar más o menos en contraste con la doctrina católica tradicional¹³³. También acabamos de recordar la opinión pública sobre los Bennonitas en Varsovia y cómo en torno a 1865 S. Clemente aparece como llamado a hacer frente al espíritu anticristiano de la época.

En conjunto creemos que la imagen de S. Clemente ha sufrido una evolución muy definida: en un primer momento se ve en él al paladín de la ortodoxia y de los derechos de la Iglesia Romana, adornado de los valores y virtudes tradicionales. En frente están quienes consideran esta imagen como algo negativo y no descubren en ella más que conservadurismo, fanatismo y servilismo a la Curia Romana. Un tercer momento lo tenemos a partir de la Segunda Guerra Mundial: en la nueva restauración de Europa, S. Clemente aparece como « un apóstol moderno ».

Creemos que todas estas interpretaciones carecen de serenidad histórica. Unas veces exageran la actitud apologética, otras la animosidad ideológica, y no son pocos los casos en que se proyectan ideales y preocupaciones de personalidades y momentos históricos muy determinados. A nuestro modo de ver O. Weiss ha vuelto a plantear el problema de una manera correcta, aunque a veces parezca tener miedo a cambiar algunos rasgos de la imagen tradicional del Santo¹³⁴.

Los aspectos que este autor hace resaltar en el problema, y que la historiografía hofbaueriana debería ir clarificando aún más, los formula así:

— mentalidad y religiosidad de Hofbauer

¹³³ K. GANZER, *Der heilige Hofbauer, Vater der Gegenreformation im 19. Jahrhundert*, Hamburg 1939.

¹³⁴ Además del artículo ya citado, cfr. O. WEISS, *Die Redemptoristen in Bayern (1790-1909). Ein Beitrag zur Geschichte des Ultramontanismus*, München 1977, 3 vol. Band 1, p. 192 sig.

- desarrollo y formación
- influjo ultramontano
- el círculo Hofbauer-Schlegel
- importancia política y eclesiástica de Hofbauer
- desarrollo ulterior del círculo de Hofbauer
- actitud de Hofbauer para con Sailer¹³⁵

Un análisis serio de estos puntos a base de las fuentes publicadas hasta 1970 le permite llegar a una conclusión bastante clara: Hofbauer está relacionado, de alguna manera, con el centralismo, curialismo e integrista romanos¹³⁶. Desde aquí coopera también a la renovación del catolicismo en el siglo XVIII y XIX con una mentalidad distinta de la que tuvieron otros contemporáneos suyos como Sailer.

Desde esta perspectiva histórica quizá haya que decir que el mérito y el interés principal de S. Clemente no podemos buscarlo en su personalidad sino en el conjunto de su obra. A pesar de venir del mundo rural y humilde, a pesar de su espiritualidad de eremita, a pesar de su formación y de su incorporación a un instituto del que decía su fundador en 1774 que estaba hecho « per le montagne e per i villani »¹³⁷, once años más tarde su discípulo más ilustre logrará llevarlo a las zonas de mayor dinamismo político y cultural. De hecho serán Clemente y sus discípulos quienes introduzcan la Congregación del Santísimo Redentor en las regiones desde donde iría consiguiendo su expansión definitiva.

Pero esta obra de S. Clemente no podemos reducirla o limitarla a su actividad personal. Continúa y se completa en sus discípulos. Entre ellos los hay de mentalidades diversas. ¿Cuál es la que tiende a imponerse? ¿Cuál es la que va a predominar en la Congregación poco después de su muerte? ¿Cuál predominó de hecho en el Círculo de Viena?¹³⁸

De este modo se ve inmediatamente que para llegar a una respuesta válida hay que conjugar muchos factores. El tema de la personalidad o mentalidad de S. Clemente nos lleva espontáneamente

¹³⁵ Son los subtítulos del artículo antes citado, que expresan claramente por sí mismos el contenido. La documentación en que se apoya es la publicada hasta 1970 sobre todo en *Monumenta Hofbaueriana* y *Spicilegium Historicum*.

¹³⁶ O. WEISS, *Klemens Maria Hofbauer*, p. 237.

¹³⁷ S. ALFONSO, *Lett.*, II 293.

¹³⁸ O. WEIS, *Klemens Maria Hofbauer*, p. 229-232; F. FERRERO, *Para una interpretación histórica*, en *Spic. Hist.* 18 (1970) 237-241.

a su espiritualidad, a la Congregación del Santísimo Redentor (de la que recibió una herencia y en la que se ha ido continuando de un modo especial su obra) y al conjunto de sus discípulos en Viena y en Varsovia. Una visión crítica de todos estos aspectos nos haría comprender mejor lo humano del Santo y el significado que tuvo su vida en la Congregación y en la Iglesia. Las biografías tradicionales hacen resaltar mucho su dinamismo y su actividad exterior. Cuando hablan de su espiritualidad se quedan más bien en testimonios y características genéricas sin atreverse a hablar de una espiritualidad hofbaueriana. ¿No habría derecho a intentar algo en este sentido?

* * *

Al terminar estas notas nos viene a la mente una conclusión espontánea: la vida de S. Clemente tiene que ser escrita de nuevo. Las que hasta ahora se han hecho obedecían a preocupaciones, intereses y modos de pensar de una época o de un momento histórico. Además no pudieron conocer muchos documentos y estudios que hoy nos son familiares. Nuestros contemporáneos necesitan una biografía del Santo que refleje lo que puede significar para ellos a partir de una imagen suya desmitificada y llena del frescor humano que puede darnos la historia.

Por otra parte, la Congregación del Santísimo Redentor, como las demás congregaciones religiosas, necesita una presentación nueva de los modelos que han encarnado y enriquecido sus ideales permanentes. Y S. Clemente, sin duda alguna, tiene que ser uno de ellos.

Este trabajo, si no estamos equivocados, ha de suponer, a un mismo tiempo, una interpretación científica de su figura, teniendo en cuenta las conclusiones a que han llegado los estudios históricos, y una presentación clara de cómo S. Clemente continúa el carisma de los orígenes, de qué elementos aporta, de las formas nuevas que añade en el modo de vivirlo, de los aspectos fundamentales que pone de relieve, de cómo su espíritu constituye una herencia que sus discípulos están llamados a continuar.



SAMUEL J. BOLAND

THE CONVERSION OF
FATHER ROBERT ASTON COFFIN C.S.S.R.

Father Robert Aston Coffin was the first superior of the English province, and he continued in that office for seventeen years¹. A term of office of that length, extraordinarily long to a modern mind, was by no means unique among the Redemptorists of the latter half of last century, and it has significance in that the superior inevitably left much of his own personal influence on the developing province. Father T.E. Bridgett, in a panegyric delivered after Father Coffin's death in 1885, has drawn attention to another significant factor². When Father Coffin joined the Congregation in 1851 there were only two English-born professed Fathers. The fact that this distinguished Oxford convert, friend of Newman and Manning, was one of the foundation members of the English province undoubtedly

¹ Published material about Coffin has been listed by Maurice de Meulemeester C.S.S.R., *Bibliographie générale des écrivains rédemptoristes* II, Louvain, 1935, p. 70. In addition there is much useful information in the well-known biographies of Newman: Wilfrid Ward, *The Life of John Henry Cardinal Newman*, 2 vols. London, 1912; M. Trevor, *Newman*, 2 vols. London, 1962. There are also available two manuscript sketches of his life in the archives of the London province of the Redemptorists at Clapham, quoted in this article ALP. One is anonymous and typewritten and has the title *The Life of the Right Rev. R.A. Coffin C.S.S.R. First Part*: it is quoted *Life*. Copies are to be seen in the General Archives of the Redemptorists in Rome, quoted AGR. There does not seem to have been a *Second Part*. The other manuscript life is handwritten and in French: B. Lubienski C.S.S.R., *Memoires sur la vie de Mgr. Robert Coffin C.S.S.R., Evêque de Southwark*, undated. The author was Father Bernard Lubienski, born 9 XII 1846, professed 15 X 1866 and ordained 19 XII 1870. He remained in England until 1883, when he went to the Austrian province to work among his conationals, passing finally to the new Polish province. His manuscript was probably completed before his departure from England in 1883, as he does not mention Coffin's death, which occurred in 1885.

² The sermon was published by the Redemptorists at Clapham. T.E. Bridgett C.S.S.R., *A Sermon Preached at St. Mary's, Clapham, at the Requiem Mass Celebrated on April 16th. 1885, the Octave Day of the Funeral of Right Rev. Robert Aston Coffin C.S.S.R., Bishop of Southwark*. Concerning Thomas Edward Bridgett, renowned historian see Cyril Ryder C.S.S.R., *Thomas Edward Bridgett*, London, 1906. Father Bridgett was a fellow novice of Coffin and like him a recent convert from the Church of England.

goes far towards explaining the esteem in which he was held by his contemporaries.

The two unpublished biographies in the archives of the London province place their greatest emphasis on the career of Coffin prior to his coming to the Congregation, the anonymous manuscript, in fact, ending abruptly with his reception. That same emphasis is reflected in the letters and papers in the archives at Clapham, collected most probably by Lubinski with a view to his study. Most of them belong to the time before he became a Redemptorist.

The attention given to Father Coffin's early life seems to be well placed. He was so typical of the enthusiastic Anglican scholars who made the Oxford Movement such a powerful influence in both the Church of England and in the Catholic Church; and he was one of the most eager of those young men who were attracted by the learning and piety of Newman, unquestioningly following him along the road that took them from Canterbury to Rome. In the young Coffin it is possible to discern much of the mature Redemptorist who left such a deep impression on the emerging English province. Some knowledge of Father Coffin must also contribute much to an understanding of those provinces that owe their origins to England.

Father Coffin's association with Newman is naturally of particular interest. For a long period the two men were very close. Coffin collaborated with Newman, contributing his *Life of St. William* to the latter's series of *Lives of English Saints*³. He was a frequent visitor to the community at Littlemore, where he found a welcome solitude and an occasional spiritual retreat away from the bustle of his large and fashionable parish. When Newman went to Rome in search of a more regular organisation for his little band of friends, Coffin promptly joined him, becoming one of the half dozen foundation members of the Birmingham Oratory in 1847. In the following year Newman made him superior of St. Wilfrid's, newly acquired by the accession of Faber's disciples⁴. Within a few years Coffin, together with others of the new converts, became dissatisfied with the Oratory; and his search for an alternative led to his being received as a Redemptorist in 1851. Naturally, relations between himself and Newman, his old friend and former superior, became awkward for both, even though between such devout and Christian men there could be no question of hostility.

There is sufficient documentation available to illustrate this interesting period in the life, not only of Robert Coffin, but of the English Church. It is hoped that future studies will treat Coffin's brief experience with the Oratory and his leaving it to become a Redemptorist. For the present

³ Cf. Bridgett, *op. cit.* p. 5. *The Life of St. William* appeared in 1844. On Newman's projected series cf. Wilfrid Ward, *op. cit.* I, 77-78.

⁴ St. Wilfrid's was the house belonging to the Brothers of the Will of God, the group of converts established by Frederick William Faber in 1845 on his being received into the Catholic Church. It was situated at Cheadle in Warwickshire, and Newman found himself embarrassed by the accession of the «Wilfridians» and the acquisition of a new house which he found it difficult to staff with his handful of followers. Cf. R. Chapman, *Father Faber*, London 1961; Wilfrid Ward, *op. cit.* I, 202.

we concentrate on his conversion. His quest for religious truth reveals much of the character of the man, his deepest spiritual aims, his virtues and perhaps too his weaknesses.

In addition to the two manuscript biographies already mentioned there are other papers in the archives of the London province which have proved most informative and which will be appended to this article.

The first is a letter to his friend, Macmullen⁵. It is a careful statement of his beliefs in answer to queries raised by Macmullen and another close associate of his Oxford days, Johnson⁶. Coffin attached some importance to this letter, as he asked that it be sent back to himself after Johnson had seen it. He gives a frank and thorough exposition of the process by which he came to his decision, answering carefully the objections he knew must be being voiced among the circle of his acquaintances. The letter is dated 9th November 1845, barely a month before he was received into the Catholic Church; and it clearly expresses his final decision, as seems to be confirmed by the terse sentence that ends the letter: « My other letter I wrote last night ». That was probably to resign his charge of the church of St. Mary Magdalene.

The second document bears the title, written in a hand other than Coffin's « Statement Concerning his views on Religion ». The paper, written by himself, is undated, but a reference to Newman's conversion places it at least after 9th October 1845. His conclusion is that at least he may not « any longer remain a clergyman of the Church of England ». His point-by-point analysis of his attitude to religion leads to the same conclusion he expressed to Macmullen; and it is probable that the statement was compiled shortly before the letter. Being, naturally, more personal, it reveals more deeply the motives that brought Coffin to the point of his decision.

The final document that has assisted this investigation is a letter to Phillipps, that generous patron who assisted so many of the new converts⁷. There are copies of several letters of Coffin to Phillipps in the

⁵ Richard Gell Macmullen (1814-1895) was a Fellow of Corpus Christi College, Oxford. His warm support of the Tractarian movement made him suspect to his Anglican colleagues, once the trend towards Rome had become evident. He became a Catholic himself. Cf. Charles Stephen Dessain Cong. Orat. and Vincent Ferrer Blehl S.J., *The Letters and Diaries of John Henry Newman* (quoted *Letters and Diaries*), vol. XI, London, 1961, p. 345.

⁶ Manuel Johnson (1805-1859) had seen military service with the East India Company before coming to Magdalen Hall in 1834. An amiable and hospitable person, he allowed the Tractarians to meet in his house. From 1839 he was Radcliffe Observer in Oxford. Cf. *Letters and Diaries*, XI, 343.

⁷ Ambrose Phillipps (1809-1878) had become a Catholic at the age of fifteen and was a student of Cambridge from 1826 to 1828. From 1840 he tried to persuade Newman to become a Catholic, though he did not meet him until two years later. He used his considerable fortune to support the Catholic cause in England, being especially generous as patron to new converts. In 1857 he was one of the cofounders of the Association for the Promotion of Christian Unity from which Catholics were ordered by their hierarchy to withdraw in 1864. On his father's death in 1862 he assumed his mother's maiden name, becoming Ambrose de Lisle Phillipps, though he was sometimes known as Phillipps de Lisle or simply de Lisle, a confusion of names which appropriately represents his extreme eccentricity. Cf. *Letters and Diaries*, XI, 352.

archives. Their dates range from November 1845 to July 1847. Of the first three there is only a brief indication of the contents, namely negotiations for Coffin to assume the position of tutor to Phillipps' sons, Everard and Ambrose. The letter which is our third appendix, was written after the year spent in the Phillipps' home. It is important in that it reveals certain attitudes of the new convert which seem to have remained with him all his life.

It must be remembered, moreover, that the two manuscript biographies offer very useful help towards understanding Coffin's conversion and subsequent career. Both bear the mark of personal memories that the authors must have heard about their subject either from himself or from others of his acquaintances in the Redemptorist communities where he was so long a familiar figure. They add much detail, some of which is little more than pious reminiscing; but there is no lack of significant incidents. From these sources it is possible to reconstruct briefly the course of his life up to the time of his becoming a Catholic.

Robert Aston Coffin was born on 19th July 1819 of a comfortable merchant family with residences in London and Worthing. He was the eldest of a family of five children with whom he shared a carefully sheltered and warmly affectionate home life that was to make more acute the pain of separation when he became a Catholic. His first school was a select little establishment conducted by Rev. Mr. Edle and his sister for the children of gentlemen. He remained under the care of this gentle, if slightly snobbish, pair of recluses until at the age of twelve he was sent to Harrow, which occasioned the first of several tearful partings from his family.

In 1837 he came to Christ's College, Oxford, having determined to take Orders in the Church of England, apparently having resolved the doubts he had as a small boy as to whether he should become an opera singer or a bishop. In 1840 he gained his M.A. degree, and in the same year to his great delight was admitted as a Fellow of his college, to which he had become characteristically most attached. The frankly ambitious young cleric appears to have determined to assure himself of a comfortable career in Oxford whose academic atmosphere he passionately loved all his life. He was ordained deacon in 1842 and priest of the Church of England in 1843, in the same year being appointed Vicar of the fashionable church of St. Mary Magdalene's, Oxford, on the nomination of his own Christ's College.

At the age of only twenty-four he had gained a position that surely must have been envied by many of his contemporaries. He had already become a familiar figure in Oxford, respected for his skill in European and Eastern languages; he preached regularly to a

distinguished congregation of scholars; and he had every reason to expect further honours.

From the time of his arrival in Oxford he had fallen under the spell of John Henry Newman, and he soon became one of the most enthusiastic of that group of young men who were the great man's constant companions. By 1837 the Oxford Movement was commanding attention far beyond the narrow limits of the Anglican communion, and its *Tracts for the Times* had established themselves as ranking with the most important religious literature of the age. Coffin, looking back on those exciting years, recalled especially the close friendship with Newman that he had experienced and which he always cherished. « I was the son of his heart »⁸.

By 1843 when Coffin was ordained Newman had led his followers through the crisis provoked by Wiseman's article on the Donatist schism in *The Dublin Review*, which led to the final abandonment of the *via media*, the storm aroused by the appearance of *Tract 90* and his own retirement to Littlemore⁹. It was a difficult time when the young men saw all their hopes apparently shattered; and most of them could find no refuge save in the faith so accurately formulated in the creed of W.G. Ward, their most forthright spokesman: « *Credo in Newmannum* »¹⁰.

Coffin subscribed whole-heartedly to Ward's creed, as he frankly admitted to Macmullen. « I have rested chiefly on Newman's theory in the four sermons »¹¹. He was speaking about the sermons preached in November and December of 1841 and published in the collection, *Sermons on Subjects of the Day*. Of them Newman's own footnote in the published edition says they were « on the safety of continuance in our communion »¹². What justified one's remaining in the Anglican communion was the note of sanctity it retained and which Newman struggled to make clear both to himself and to those who trusted him. It was for that reason that he undertook to direct publication of the series, *The Lives of the English Saints* to which Coffin readily contributed his *Life of St. William*. Newman quickly abandoned the project, especially when he

⁸ *Life*, p. 7.

⁹ Cf. Wilfrid Ward, *op. cit.* I, 67-76.

¹⁰ *loc. cit.* I, 60.

¹¹ ALP Coffin to Macmullen, 9 XI 1845.

¹² Cf. the edition in the series *Christian Classics*, Westminster, Maryland, U.S., 1968, p. 308. See also Newman's *Apologia pro Vita Sua*, Fontana edition, 1965, p. 213.

found himself compelled to admit that his own first contribution, his *Life of St. Stephen Harding*, was no longer the writing of an Anglican¹³.

It was an anguished time for Newman, and no less so for Coffin. He clung to his « four sermons » as the principal support of his faith in his Church; but in the course of 1844 his grasp was shaken by a series of incidents that he seems to have remembered vividly all his life. Two of them especially left him most profoundly disturbed.

Within a surprisingly short time he had acquired a reputation as a preacher, respected as he was for his learning enhanced by a fine voice and presence so that he was very much in demand in parishes other than his own. He was particularly gratified when his old tutor, Rev. Mr. Edle, invited him to preach in his church. His first sermon, in which he expounded the doctrine of the Real Presence, enraged one of the parishioners; and the gentleman's indignation was tried beyond endurance when on the following Sunday he heard the same preacher and on the same objectionable subject. The offended man sought ease for his spirit in what has long been the sovereign remedy of the disgruntled Englishman, a letter to *The Times*. Bitterly he lamented that he should have lived to see the day when he should find papists in English pulpits. As for Coffin, he was astounded to discover that he had raised such a storm and he deeply regretted that a belief he had long taken for granted should have occasioned such distress to poor Mr. Edle, whom he had revered since childhood¹⁴.

The other incident occurred in his own parish. Summoned to attend a dying woman, he ministered to her according to the *Book of Common Prayer*. After hearing her confession he was pronouncing the words of Absolution in the deprecativ form used in the Anglican rite, when the sick woman interrupted him: « I believe you don't know whether you are a priest or not ». In some consternation Coffin asked her what she meant; and discovering that she believed that the Christian priesthood existed only in the Catholic Church, he very generously went to fetch a priest from the Catholic chapel. Rév. Mr. Newsham received the woman into the Church and heard her confession before she died.

Coffin had tried to act with discretion as well as with a charity

¹³ Cf. Wilfrid Ward, *op. cit.* I, 77-78.

¹⁴ *Life*, 8-9.

that was quite heroic, but the next day the story was all over Oxford. He had to satisfy a formal demand for an explanation by his church wardens. The dying woman's words remained with him, and he was distressed still further when he chanced to overhear the gossip that malicious tongues were spreading about the city: « The Vicar was with the woman at eleven o'clock and the priest at noon ». He could not rid his mind of the thought that threatened to lay his career in ruins: « Perhaps I am not a priest »¹⁵.

The year 1845 was to be the time of decision for the friends of Newman. It had become plain that sooner or later they must accept that Rome was the only choice remaining to them. Coffin, always a man of honour, thought it well to warn his family that he could soon find it necessary to renounce his Anglican priesthood. The experiences of 1844 continued to trouble him, as also did the fact that his own advice had already led some of his friends to « go over to Rome »¹⁶.

As early as January 1845 his mother, disturbed by reports she had heard, came to Oxford and spent a month with her son. It was a dreadfully trying time, especially since, womanlike, she had played on Coffin's weakness, bringing with her his favourite younger sister, Henrietta. At the end of the visit he yielded to the women's tears to the extent of agreeing to come and spend a little time with the family at Worthing¹⁷.

Very likely, the visit to his home was in June¹⁸. On this occasion he informed his parents that he had made up his mind to become a Catholic. The announcement occasioned the inevitable emotional outburst, in which the calmest person appears to have been the elder Mr. Coffin. He insisted that his son discuss his doubts with the eminent Dr. Pusey, in whom both men agreed they had the greatest confidence.

The interview was quickly arranged; but it proved a disappointment to everyone, including Pusey himself, who was so startled at Coffin's news that he could not bring himself to adduce any argument to dissuade him, murmuring over and over that it was all so very sad¹⁹.

¹⁵ *Life*, 10-11.

¹⁶ ALP Coffin to Macmullen, 9 XI 1845; *Life*, 11.

¹⁷ *Life*, 12.

¹⁸ ALP Coffin to Macmullen, 9 XI 1845.

¹⁹ *Life*, 12.

Even after telling his parents that his mind was made up, Coffin still hesitated, as he admitted to Macmullen. He took his doubts to other old friends of Newman who had not joined him in Littlemore, Charles Marriott²⁰ and R.W. Church²¹. Sincere, earnest and affectionate as they were to their friend, they could offer him no help. They « could not lessen my difficulties », he sadly reported²².

He was really now in an impossible position, as he was able to admit when he could see it in retrospect. For the present, however, he took refuge in his parish duties, putting off the final step « to wait until Newman's book came out »²³. Everything seemed to be combining to bring him to the one inescapable point, and yet he waited for a sign from Newman.

Even after Newman and his companions at Littlemore became Catholics early in October, Coffin still hesitated. The anonymous biographer relates two quite important incidents that are not mentioned elsewhere; and one must presume that he learned them, at least indirectly, from Coffin himself²⁴.

His father, disappointed that Pusey had been unable to satisfy him, tried one last friend in whom both men had implicit confidence, Henry Manning, Archdeacon of Chichester and already regarded as a churchman with a future. Coffin readily fell in with the plan and set out. On the way he met a young lady, a friend from Oxford, also on her way to speak with Manning. Coffin scribbled a brief note and sent it on with her while he waited for her to bring back the Archdeacon's written reply. He had put his case bluntly. « May one who believes all the doctrines of the Catholic Church remain a Protestant and not become a Catholic? ». The reply was equally terse. « He who believes all the dogmas of the Catholic Church ought to become a Catholic ». It is an important indication of the state of mind common among the Tractarians that it was five more years

²⁰ Charles Marriott (1811-1858) had been one of Newman's collaborators in producing the *Library of the Fathers* series. After Newman's conversion he purchased Littlemore to prevent its being used for Catholic purposes. Cf. *Letters and Diaries*, XI, 346.

²¹ Richard William Church (1815-1890) was another collaborator in the *Library of the Fathers*. A gifted writer, he was the author of the sensitive study, *The Oxford Movement, 1833-1845*, London, 1891. Cf. *Letters and Diaries*, XI, 336.

²² ALP Coffin to Macmullen, 9 XI 1845.

²³ *ibid.* The book in question was the *Essay on the Development of Christian Doctrine*, which, in spite of everyone's expectations, did not appear until after Newman had become a Catholic. Cf. Wilfrid Ward, *op. cit.* I, 86.

²⁴ *Life*, 13.

before Manning himself applied to his own case the advice so categorically given.

Coffin returned to his family home in Worthing in great turmoil of mind. For three weeks he struggled to find the courage to take the final step he saw now he could no longer avoid. Then, early one morning the post brought him a letter from Newman begging him to wear the enclosed medal of Our Lady Immaculate. Coffin immediately put it around his neck and then at once, his mind again calm, sat down to write to his friends and his ecclesiastical superiors announcing his intention to leave the Anglican Church and ministry and become a Catholic.

His next task was to inform his family that his decision was now final. He did so firmly, making it clear that further argument would be useless. It was his father now who was most affected by the news. He was unable, he declared, to live any longer in Worthing where he had suffered such bitter disappointment; and he set out at once with his family for their London home. It was a sad party, especially so for Robert who went along with the rest of the family, until at a stopping place on the way he met one of his Oxford friends, Edward Douglas, radiantly happy after two or three years as a Catholic. His evident satisfaction served to confirm Coffin's resolution²⁵.

Coffin returned to Oxford about the end of November to find that Newman and St. John²⁶ had just returned from their visit to Catholic institutions, which they had undertaken as Newman had suggested in order to meet the Catholics they had joined. Coffin hurried out to Littlemore; and as soon as they met Newman asked: « Why are you not a Catholic? » While Coffin stumbled through the troubled story of the past few months, Newman busied himself with a railway timetable. He interrupted the sorry tale: « There is a good train this afternoon. Would you like to come to Prior Park with me to be received into the Church? »²⁷. He was received into the Catholic Church on the 3rd December.

²⁵ *ibid.* Edward Douglas was born 1 XII 1819 of an ancient and extraordinarily wealthy Scots family. He was ordained 25 VI 1848 and was professed as a Redemptorist 8 XII 1849. He had a long and distinguished career in the Congregation. Cf. Fridericus Kuntz C.S.S.R., *De Vita Eduardi Douglas brevis commentarium*, Rome, 1909.

²⁶ Ambrose St. John (1815-1875), a student of Christ Church from 1834, had been one of the first to become a Catholic, being received into the Church as early as 1843. He remained probably Newman's closest friend. Cf. *Letters and Diaries*, XI, 355.

²⁷ *Life*, 14. Prior Park, a large house near Bath, had been a Catholic school and seminary since 1830.

Father Bridgett, himself a convert, made a shrewd observation in his panegyric on Coffin. He quoted Emerson's cruelly cynical comment on the established religion, as being based on the principle: « By taste you are saved », going on to point out that it was not at all easy for a man to pass from the quiet, cultured, academic circles of Oxford to the unknown and only lately tolerated company of the Catholics²⁸. Newman's novel, *Loss and Gain*, spoke eloquently of the painful balancing of accounts so many of his friends had found it necessary to make. In Coffin's case, with his frank delight in his Oxford life, the passing to the Catholic Church could have been more keenly felt than it proved to be, owing to the shelter he found in the Phillipps household.

He had begun writing to Phillipps as soon as he returned to Oxford after taking leave of his family in London²⁹, the first letter being dated 25th November from Littlemore. It was quickly decided that he take charge of the two Phillipps boys and come to live at « Grace Dieu », the rambling mansion in Leicestershire.

Father Lubienski offers some entertaining comments on the Phillipps household where Coffin lived throughout 1846. Ambrose Phillipps was eccentric to a degree quite extraordinary even by the standards of nineteenth century English gentlemen. He had lent his enthusiastic and unrestrained support to the current gothic revival with a passion which found expression in his somewhat peculiar tastes in music and liturgy, in which he could show himself ferociously intolerant. On days he considered sufficiently important he had the Divine Office recited by the entire household, including the servants, all solemnly vested in copes. On one occasion he placed his little daughter in a niche and surrounded her with flowers, while the rest of the family gathered about her for devotions in honour of the Blessed Virgin³⁰.

Phillipps was an unusually forceful character, able even to impose his sterner tastes on the already sufficiently austere and usually inflexible Pugin³¹. During his year at « Grace Dieu » Coffin was exposed to what was possibly far the most extreme form of what

²⁸ T.E. Bridgett, *op. cit.* 7.

²⁹ ALP Coffin to Phillipps, 15 I 1847.

³⁰ Lubienski, *op. cit.* 37.

³¹ On that extraordinary man, Augustus Welby Pugin, his character and his comprehensive views on his Gothic Revival cf. Wilfrid Ward, *The Life and Times of Cardinal Wiseman*, vol. I, London, 1897, pp. 353-362.

Wiseman kindly used to call « The Catholic Movement »³². Some of Newman's younger friends, especially those of the *Rambler* group, called it « The Old Catholic Movement »³³. Reading the letter Coffin wrote to Phillipps in January 1847, one is forced to suspect that this first contact with Catholic life left a very deep impression. One is also led to suspect that the attitudes he showed at the end of his time with that overwhelming family went far towards explaining his later disagreement with Faber and even with the English Oratories.

Of that year at « Grace Dieu » he assured Phillipps: « I shall always feel grateful that the first year of my Catholic life was passed there and shall reckon my connection with yourself and Mrs. Phillipps as among the many great blessings that have been vouchsafed to me »³⁴. Of Pugin Wilfrid Ward said that « his whole soul dwelt in the middle ages »³⁵. Did Coffin, the new Catholic, also find his true spiritual home in the extreme medievalism of Pugin and Phillipps? If his own words are not merely polite thanks for hospitality, one has to say that he did.

It seems possible to discover from the story of Coffin's journey to the Catholic Church indications of his character. And in his case, in view of his long influence on the young English Redemptorists the effort to know him and the kind of man he was will not be without value.

When, a few years later, Coffin was on the point of severing his connection with Newman's Oratory, he went for advice to Father Lans, superior of the Redemptorists at Hanley Castle³⁶. The latter insisted, in spite of vehement protests, that Coffin go and speak with Newman, because « you owe too much to Father Newman, your conversion, your priesthood etc. »³⁷.

It is undeniable that Coffin leaned heavily on Newman's judgement, as for that matter did all of his circle of intimate friends. In his letter to Macmullen he said that for « more than a year and a half » he had experienced « grave doubts about the Church of

³² *ibid.*

³³ Wilfrid Ward, *The Life of John Henry Cardinal Newman*, I, 205.

³⁴ ALP Coffin to Phillipps, 15 I 1847.

³⁵ Wilfrid Ward, *The Life and Times of Cardinal Wiseman*, I, 354.

³⁶ John Baptist Lans was born 16 VII 1808, ordained priest 16 IV 1833 and professed as a Redemptorist 2 VIII 1843. He died 31 III 1886 in Bishop Eton, Liverpool, after forty years in the service of the English foundations. Cf. Thomas Livius, *A Brief Memoir of the Rev. John Baptist Lans C.S.S.R.*, Liverpool, 1887.

³⁷ Lubienski, *op. cit.* 78.

England ». That would mean practically from the time of his ordination as a priest and his assuming charge of St. Mary Magdalene's.

He told Macmullen, as we have seen, that he had justified his position by relying on « Newman's theory in the four sermons ». His dependence was quite explicit on that notion of continuity in life and holiness by which Newman hoped for a time to show « the safety of continuance in our communion ». He found it necessary to invoke that principle to meet serious problems of conscience, as he reminded himself in the statement he prepared for his own reflections. « At both my ordinations, as also when I took my M.A. degree I signed the XXXIX Articles according to the interpretation of *Tract 90* »³⁸. With that understanding to quieten his doubts, he threw himself into his parish duties, rather in the same spirit, one imagines, as Newman, standing at his desk for hours on end and writing away at his *Essay on Development*³⁹.

As his doubts increasingly troubled him in the course of 1845, Coffin waited for Newman's book, clearly his last faint hope of retaining his place in the Church of England with his family. Then, early in November, before the *Essay* was published, he heard that « at length Newman, Dalgairns⁴⁰, Collyns⁴¹ etc. etc. » had gone. Even then he delayed, and would probably have hesitated longer still had not Newman summarily put him on the train for Prior Park.

Coffin had only recently come to the point where he had to abandon his reliance on the four sermons. When he said in his statement that he had « lately » read the articles of Wiseman and Newman, he probably meant that he had been studying them again. Newman's reply to Wiseman had been his first attempt to formulate the theory that replaced the *via media*. Now Coffin saw, as Newman himself had long recognised, that the attempt to justify the Anglican position on the survival of the note of holiness in its communion must inevitably shatter the unity of the Church. Now that Newman had decided that he had been in schism after all, Coffin could see no other course for himself. « I feel that as far as the intellectual view

³⁸ In Oxford it was still a condition for graduation that the candidate subscribe to the Articles.

³⁹ Cf. Wilfrid Ward, *The Life of John Henry Cardinal Newman*, I, 87.

⁴⁰ John Dobrée Dalgairns (1818-1876), a Scot, a keen Tractarian and a competent medievalist, was with Newman's Oratory until after some disagreement in the 1850's he went to London and eventually succeeded Faber as superior there. *Letters and Diaries*, XI, 338.

⁴¹ Charles Henry Collyns or Collins (1820-1885) had been Coffin's curate. He had become a Catholic in October 1845. He joined the Jesuits in 1847, but left them and

goes; I must defer to the judgement of another; and I would willingly do so to his ».

In his religion he needed someone to point the way. This was one of his greatest disappointments with the Church of England, as he pointed out in rhetorical language to Macmullen. « With regard to Church authority, is there any in the English system? ». He simply had to have authority; and he discovered that he had little or no trouble about taking the word of Rome on any doctrine: even his small hesitation about the practice of Communion under one kind only he was prepared to yield to Roman authority.

Of his friends among the Oxford convents Coffin seems to have resembled W.G. Ward rather than Newman. One can easily imagine him, too, looking forward to receiving every morning a papal Bull together with *The Times* at his breakfast table. Once he became a Catholic he was immediately attracted to the extremely authoritarian religion he found at « Grace Dieu ».

As a Catholic he also found evident relief in the Eucharistic doctrine he so readily accepted. He had been conscious of difficulty in this regard, as he explained to Macmullen. One can understand how distressing he must have found it to remember the embarrassment he had caused his old friend, Mr. Edle, by his preaching on the Real Presence. It must have been unhappy instances of this kind that made him realise that what he had long held was incompatible with the Prayer Book and the Articles.

To Macmullen he spoke of « many private and internal considerations ». They amounted to the need he felt for confession and spiritual direction, as he put it more plainly in his statement. One would have to suspect that the incident of the sick call affected him profoundly. Probably, the need of reassurance in spiritual matters was his deepest motivation in becoming a Catholic. His long reliance on Newman and his heavily scored emphasis on Church authority are no doubt linked with the same quest for individual guidance, which he could find only in a Catholic confession.

His dependence on a confessor remained with him and eventually helped to tip the scales when he decided to change from the Oratorians to the Redemptorists. When he discussed his position five years later with Newman in an exchange of letters that must have

the Church in 1858. He later became president of the Vegetarian Society and secretary of the British Temperance League. Cf. *Letters and Diaries*, XI, 337. Curiously enough, Lubienski, *op. cit.* 21, relates that Collins' predecessor, Rev. Mr. Hathaway, whose Evangelical opinions Coffin could not abide, also became a Catholic and also even a Jesuit, in which calling he showed more constancy than his Tractarian successor.

been painfully embarrassing on both sides, the latter suggested that « I don't suppose *what you seek, a tradition of spiritual direction*, is to be found in England anywhere else but with the Jesuits or Redemptorists »⁴².

It would not be reading too much into the story to see Coffin's conversion as a search for spiritual guidance. He was drawn at once to Newman's circle; and when his influence could no longer keep him in the Church of England, he found refuge in the authority of Rome. As a Catholic his quest continued until it brought him into the company of men who could teach him the ways of God. It was at the end of 1850 that he went to the Redemptorist novitiate, and only five years later he was entrusted with authority over his companions as Rector of Clapham; and he continued for thirty years to exercise authority as Rector, Provincial and Bishop.

The Redemptorists had not been long on English soil when Coffin came to them. They had made their first foundation in Falmouth in 1843, so that their arrival coincided with the great stirring in religious circles caused by what was happening in Oxford. When he made his novitiate during 1851 it was in the heady atmosphere that Newman so unforgettably described in his sermon on *The Second Spring*: the novices were necessarily received with the expectation of great things. And Coffin himself, the brilliant young preacher of St. Mary Magdalene's, the friend of the great Newman, was bound to be considered for positions of importance, even before his distinguished companion, Thomas Edward Bridgett.

In the event, predictably enough one has to say, it was Coffin who gave the English province and the foundations that derived from it in Ireland and Australia their first orientation. One who was as dependent as he was on the guidance of another was particularly amenable to the policy of centralised authority in religious institutes so markedly promoted by the Holy See during the pontificates of Pius IX and Leo XIII⁴³. Father Nicholas Mauron, Superior General of the Redemptorists, certainly found him sufficiently suited to his own style of government to keep him in office for seventeen years.

In all fairness one must give Coffin a generous share of credit for the fact that late last century the English province rightly enjoyed a reputation for scholarship. It is true that he was fortunate in having

⁴² *Letters and Diaries*, XIV, 1963, p. 88. The emphasis is Newman's own.

⁴³ Cf. Roger Aubert, *The Church in a Secularised Society*, vol. V in the series *The Christian Centuries*, Darton, Longman and Todd, London, 1978, p. 114-115.

so many gifted writers among his subjects⁴⁴, but he always remained himself a scholar and one who admired and encouraged learning. His own contribution was limited to his translations of writings of St. Alphonsus, a labour that came easily to him and which was long appreciated in the English-speaking world. His panegyrist and friend of many years' standing said of him that his love for St. Alphonsus had become a passion⁴⁵.

Above all, the quality that emerges in the account of his coming to the Catholic Church is Coffin's firmness in following his conscience. This is a point well made by Father Bridgett, as he speaks of the sacrifices the change of religion cost him: separation from his family, from the Oxford he loved, from the cultured Anglican circles in which he moved⁴⁶. Undoubtedly, it cost him most to occasion his family's bewildered grief. Bridgett, while he gives Coffin the credit he deserves, mentions that others made even greater sacrifices, and he was in a position to know. Certainly, one should learn from Coffin's case to appreciate the many untold stories of heroism occasioned by the Oxford Movement.

DOCUMENTS

1. - Letter of Coffin to Macmullen, 9 XI 1845

My Dear Macmullen,

I have just received your letter, which as it evidently implied that you as well as Johnson think I am acting hastily, I should like to answer as shortly as I can, though I do not expect anything I shall say will materially alter either your or his opinion. Still I shall be glad that you both should know something of what I have to say for myself. Will you therefore let Johnson have this?

With regard to my acting suddenly or hastily or under excitement, I say that I have been a long time in doubt and unsettled, but I have never given myself up seriously to think over my difficulties. It is now more than a year and a half since I have had great doubts about the

⁴⁴ Cf. Austin Berthe, *Life of St. Alphonsus Liguori*, English edition by Harold Castle, II, Dublin 1905, pp. 700-705.

⁴⁵ T.E. Bridgett, *op. cit.* 8.

⁴⁶ *ibid.* 5-6.

Church of England. During that time I have rested chiefly on Newman's theory in the four sermons, as also on being in the position in which God had placed me. From time to time these doubts have come upon me stronger and stronger, and it is now just a year since I heard that Newman had made up his mind to leave this communion; and from that time I have never felt settled and have gradually become more and more convinced that in the end I should join the Church of Rome. Still I was content to go on working from day to day and to smother as it were my doubts by hard parish work, which while it lasted left me little or no time to think upon the subject. Last Easter I felt so sure that it would end in my becoming a Roman Catholic that I made up my mind on a matter that would have affected my whole future life. In June last I was very much unsettled and had then serious thoughts of resigning my Living, but I determined not to think any more about it then but to wait until Newman's book came out, thinking this would be before he left us. I was much worried and taken up with the Confirmation and very much interested in it and until you returned to Oxford had really no time to give to the subject.

At length Newman, Dalgairns, Collyns etc. etc. went, and I *do* think it was naturally a time to make me consider what were the grounds on which I myself was standing. I saw other men whom I greatly respected, far superior in ability, learning and holiness to myself following out their convictions. How could I go on holding the same views as they and not be roused to think over seriously and in order to a decision my own position?

I may also add that in January last and in June last I prepared my mother for what I considered would almost to a certainty eventually take place. So far, then, with regard to the question of acting hastily or under excitement. I believe that the time has come when I must decide one way or another, and I greatly fear that if I go on putting away my troubles as I have done before I may not be allowed to see the truth again and may be unable to follow it.

With regard to what Johnson and others say as to my not being prepared to join the Church of Rome, I hardly know what this means; but I suppose I shall be attempting to answer the objection when I say that I embrace most heartily all that she teaches both in the Canons and Decrees of Trent, which are the points most at issue between her and the Church of England. And not only this, but I am daily more and more convinced that the English and Roman religions are really so different and that in such important points that they cannot both of them be true. I mean as a whole.

I mention one doctrine out of many, that of the Sacrifice of the Mass. This, it cannot be denied, is one of the most prominent points in Roman teaching and practice, indeed *the* prominent point round which the rest circles. This very doctrine one dare not teach in the Church of England. It is not to be found in her formularies: all that taught it was omitted at the Reformation in the Prayer Book; and I cannot but think, notwithstanding no. 90, it is condemned in the Articles.

Again, is this doctrine held by the English Church (certainly one dare not teach it) viz. that the Sacred Presence is in the Sacrament by

virtue of the words of Consecration independently of the receiver and therefore to be worshipped and adored?

Then again with regard to unity, nothing but the Pope being the Visible Head of the Church can to my mind at all answer to the teaching of Holy Scripture, whether one looks at the plain declaration of Our Lord to St. Peter or to the various figures and analogies and the descriptions of the Church in the Epistles.

It may be said: Are you prepared to use all the devotions to St. Mary? To this I answer: I am daily more convinced that the more one tries to dwell on the mystery of the Incarnation the more one comes to appreciate the meaning of these devotions; and I feel sure they have a legitimate part in the Catholic system. And of course, it is nothing to the point to say that they lead to abuse amongst the ignorant, for I suppose nothing has led to greater abuses than the modern circulation of the Bible amongst ourselves or the unreserved preaching of the atonement⁴⁷.

Then again, I feel more and more convinced that the English and Roman systems are antagonistic and that as an English Churchman one is bound to believe the latter to be in many points erroneous. I do not believe this, and when persons join the Church of Rome I not only have nothing to say against them, but I believe them to be doing what is right in itself.

With regard to Church authority, is there any in the English system? Is there any one doctrine that all the Bishops are agreed upon? Or to take our best divines, do they teach *one* definite system, in all cardinal and spiritual points the same? I do not think this can be maintained.

With regard to the doctrines of Purgatory, Invocation of Saints, adoration of Relics, as stated in the Council of Trent, I believe them to be true and part of Christian teaching.

Whether, then, I am prepared to join the Church of Rome or not, I think it would not be denied by anyone that I ought not to continue as a Clergyman in a Body which, say what you will, does and always has protested against the Church of Rome and denied her claims to be the Catholic Church. Can anyone deny that we are a Protestant country or that our Church is Protestant, though not perhaps outwardly to the same extent as the foreign bodies are?

Of course there are many private and personal considerations which are drawing me and which I should not like to mention to anyone but a Confessor, but one thing I may say. I do want Confession, both as to my past and present life. I greatly need, and I feel the need more and more every day, the grace of the Sacrament of Penance. Now, certainly, the Church of England does not hold it to be a Sacrament or necessary to salvation in the case of Post Baptismal sin. I believe both these points; and more than this, I could not confess as long as I was in doubt about the Church to which I belong.

I am aware that there are many points which I have left untouched. I have only attempted to give you some notion of my state of mind. I

⁴⁷ This severe censure of the emphasis on the Scriptures and the doctrine of the Redemption was a not untypical High Church criticism of the Evangelical wing of the Church of England.

have never fairly before considered the question, but *now* I have been doing so ever since Newman left and especially since I have been here alone, and but one course seems open to me. No one can judge entirely in such a case as this for another; and Marriott and Church, who were the only persons I spoke to particularly except Dr. Pusey, could not at all lessen my difficulties.

And now that I have written all this, I cannot but feel that it will be to little or no purpose. I am sure it is not a matter of argument or reading, but of conscience and of being led by God's grace. Why some are inclined one way and some another no one can tell. Still, that God is calling some to join the Church of Rome, while others He keeps settled here for the present, none can doubt. Nor can I doubt on the other hand that most of those to whom we now look, and who are staying, each on his own theory, will eventually be led to Rome, each one in the most fitting time when and as God wills.

Will you let me have this again? My other letter I wrote last night⁴⁸.

Ever Yours and very sincerely,
R.A. Coffin.

2. - Statement Concerning his Views on Religion

1. I cannot say the Church of England is that one Catholic Church which the Bible and Antiquity lead one to believe is the ordinary and divinely appointed means of salvation, whereas the claims of the Church of Rome to be that one Church approve themselves to me, and for some time past have appeared to me to become daily stronger and more unanswerable.

2. Three years ago I read the *History of the Reformation* in Collier⁴⁹, and as far as I was able to judge, the whole movement seemed most irreligious and wholly indefensible. Lately I have read Dr. Wiseman's article in the *Dublin Review*⁵⁰, in which he urges the Donatist schism against the English Church and Mr. Newman's answer to it⁵¹. If the view of the

⁴⁸ The letter was probably written from his parents' home in Worthing. The letter mentioned seems to be one of those which the anonymous biographer says Coffin wrote to his friends and ecclesiastical superiors after he had told his family that his decision was irrevocable.

⁴⁹ Jeremy Collier (also written Collyer) was the author of *Ecclesiastical History of Great Britain to the End of the Reign of Charles II*, which was republished in nine volumes from 1840 and was avidly read by Newman and the Tractarians. Collier was described as a « non-juror », which means he had refused the Test Oath of 1673, which further implies that he was a Catholic. Cf. *Letters and Diaries*, XI, 186-187.

⁵⁰ The article, *St. Augustine and the Donatists*, appeared in July 1839.

⁵¹ Newman's response to Wiseman came in January 1840 in the *British Critic* of which he was editor and which he had made the quasi-official organ of the Tractarians; and he further expanded his theory in the four sermons to which Coffin attached so much importance.

latter be true, I think the idea of the one visible Church must be given up; and I do not see what there is at present to prevent any Bishop or any member separating themselves from the jurisdiction of Canterbury and forming provincial independent Churches.

3. At both my ordinations as also when I took my M.A. Degree I signed the XXXIX Articles according to the interpretation of Tract 90, believing at the time that that interpretation was not the natural interpretation or that which the Church of England held, but that one might adopt it as long as Mr. N. did so. I would not sign the Articles again without saying that I signed them in the above manner, nor do I think I could sign them again at all.

4. The doctrines of the Roman Church as condemned in the Articles I believe are true and part of Christian doctrine, e.g. Transubstantiation, Purgatory, the Sacrifice for the quick and the dead; and whatever I have read of the Council of Trent, as also of the Catechism, seems to me to bear as manifest signs of being the teaching of the Holy Spirit as do the Nicene and Athanasian creeds.

5. What I have read of the Fathers leads me to think that they must be on the side of Rome, e.g. St. Monica wishing to have the Sacrifice offered for her. Is this doctrine held by the English Church?

6. The want of Confession and individual guidance. I could not with my present opinions confess in the English Church.

7. As long as Mr. N. remained in the English Church I could have been satisfied, especially as at one time he tried to keep persons back; but now that he has decided that we are in schism and has joined the Roman Church, the doubts which have been upon me so long are strengthened and confirmed. I feel that as far as the intellectual view goes I must defer to the judgment of another; and would willingly do so to his.

8. I do not know that I hold any one doctrine because the English Church holds it, and for some time past I have been selecting this or that point out of the Catholic body of teaching and have held it in a certain sense but not on the principle of Church Authority.

9. I have read carefully the profession of faith as decreed by Trent, and in my present mind could accept the whole of it. The only point which is of any difficulty is communion under one kind; but this I would receive on the Authority of the Church; and the great Roman Saints are a proof that the whole and entire grace of the Blessed Eucharist is in the Church of Rome.

With these opinions how can I any longer remain a Clergyman of the Church of England, not to say a member?

3. - Letter of Coffin to Phillipps, 15 I 1847

I came here on Monday, having spent Sunday at Birmingham with Macmullen⁵² and Mrs. Wilkinson⁵³. Catholicity certainly presents a noble appearance at St. Chad's⁵⁴, except alas! the figured music. You have so inoculated me with the love of the Church music that I find it difficult even to sit still while they are figuring with scales and chromatics at the Kyrie and Gloria, at the former of which Mr. Moore said he felt ready to dance⁵⁵. You will be glad to hear that he is all for the Plain Chant and singing in Choir and will do all in his power to introduce it at St. Chad's; but at present one of their chief supporters is so against it that he is unwilling to give offence by bringing in things abruptly. The converts with me were all displeased with the music. The ceremonial, crowded congregation and the devotion of the people were all most striking. I was much pleased with the Convent and House of Mercy, for which the Nuns are now building a beautiful church. The House of Mercy is one of the most beautiful institutions I have ever seen. I go to St. Edmund's⁵⁶ tomorrow with Macmullen and shall return to town on Monday. In this way I shall avoid another dose of figured music at Warwick Street or Chelsea. Grace Dieu has spoiled me and I miss it very much I can assure you. I shall always feel grateful that the first year of my Catholic life was passed there and shall reckon my connection with yourself and Mrs. Phillipps as among the many great blessings that have been vouchsafed to me.

⁵² Macmullen, who always remained a close friend, became a Catholic in that same year and accompanied Coffin to Rome.

⁵³ Mrs. Wilkinson was the proprietor of a boarding house next door to the Sisters of Mercy in Birmingham, and her home became a familiar refuge for the new converts, especially after the Oratory came to Birmingham. Cf. *Letters and Diaries*, XI, 361.

⁵⁴ St. Chad's, the newly completed cathedral, was one of Pugin's first works after he became a Catholic in 1834.

⁵⁵ Dr. Moore was a priest of Birmingham whose pastoral zeal was much admired by the convert Tractarians. He later became president of the seminary at Oscott. Wilfrid Ward, *The Life and Times of Cardinal Wiseman*, I, 410.

⁵⁶ St. Edmund's College, Ware, was founded in 1793. It had become the seminary of the London district. Coffin had evidently been affected by the elitist neo-gothic influence of Phillipps to the extent that he avoided the little London chapels of Warwick Street and Chelsea.

SAMUEL J. BOLAND

PETER DONDERS
AS HIS CONTEMPORARIES SAW HIM

Outside his own religious institute and restricted circles in his native Holland and the scene of his work Peter Donders is almost completely unknown. One would have to fear that his beatification will fail to arouse much interest among Catholics. The present reflections on the process of his beatification are offered in the hope that some of his brother Redemptorists will be moved to introduce him in popular and attractive form to a wider public. For one thing, some further public interest should assist the development of the cause. We offer an introduction to the material assembled for the presentation of the cause in Rome¹. As a source for a *Life* it has an advantage in that it is principally verbal testimony offered in the diocesan processes, so that it shows Peter Donders as people saw him and judged him in his own day.

It must be confessed that in the case of Father Donders there is very little material to challenge the scholarly researcher, certainly nothing remotely comparable with the mine of information concerning St. Clement Hofbauer that one finds in the *Monumenta Hofbaueriana*. There is much less to reward the student than say Father Michael Curley found in his fine study of St. John Neumann. In the case of Peter Donders the biographer finds himself compelled to rely much more exclusively on material contained in the *Positio*. The real difficulty has been indicated, unintentionally perhaps, by one of the witnesses in the process at 's-Hertogenbosch. « To describe him as I saw him, he was another Curé of Ars »². That is a fair comparison; and as in the case of St. John Vianney, the course of his life followed a routine that occasioned little comment official or otherwise. After all, simple people are not mentioned in despatches.

On the other hand, the case of Peter Donders has some definite advantages over that of the Curé of Ars. His routine existence was prin-

¹ *Beatificationis et Canonizationis Servi Dei Petri Donders Sacerdotis Professore Congregatione Sanctissimi Redemptoris Positio super Introductione Causae*, published by the Sacred Congregation of Rites, Rome, 1913. It is quoted as *Positio*.

² *Positio*, 43. The witness was Hubert Sassen, a lawyer; *Positio*, 3.

cially the care of lepers, which can scarcely fail to arouse interest, and of a wild jungle region that entailed long and dangerous expeditions among primitive peoples. These are the things the witnesses spoke about together with the qualities of kindness, patience and endurance he showed in his very difficult mission. That is what one finds in the *Positio* and it should provide material enough for a biography with considerable popular appeal. It has been used to excellent effect by Father Kronenburg³. The material he used is available to others.

The volume containing the *Positio* has five sections, each with its own independent pagination. The one that contains the evidence concerning the Servant of God is entitled *Summarium*, and it is the only one that interests us⁴. The *Summarium* is in two parts: the evidence given verbally in the diocesan processes and the documents submitted in the case. A brief description of the two parts may assist us to understand the evidence.

There were two diocesan processes, one at 's-Hertogenbosch in Holland and one at Paramaribo in Surinam. In the beginning of each the witnesses were required to answer a set form of questions identifying themselves and explaining the extent of their acquaintance with the candidate.

The witnesses at 's-Hertogenbosch were the more numerous, seventy-six in number of whom twenty-eight were witnesses to healings. Eleven Redemptorists gave evidence, and the others included a number of elderly clergy and laypeople who had been at school or in the seminary with Peter Donders, and some few officials, religious and others who had known him during periods of service in Surinam. By far the most informative is Father Peter Oomen⁵, who had been Father Donders' provincial and had a brief personal acquaintance with him during a canonical visitation. He prepared his evidence thoroughly beforehand, using the most significant of the documents tabled in the process. He is probably also the most reliable of all the witnesses. From the others one gains for the most part some little detail or an occasional useful or edifying anecdote.

The process in Paramaribo offers a much more interesting spectrum of witnesses. There were fifty-one, of whom thirteen were Redemptorists and the rest included officials of the colonial administration, hospital staff, supervisors of plantations, tradesmen and a number of lepers. Naturally enough, the statements here were generally speaking much more lively and vivid than those of the octogenarians who appeared before the Dutch tribunal. Father Cornelius van Coll is especially deserving of attention⁶. He is described in the *Positio* as vice-provincial of Surinam⁷. Like Father

³ J. B. Kronenburg, *De Eerbiedw. Dienaar Gods Petrus Donders C.S.S.R.*, Tilburg, 1925. English translation by John Carr C.S.S.R., London, 1930.

⁴ Pagination of quotations in this article is from the *Summarium*.

⁵ Peter Oomen was born 7 XI 1835, professed 19 X 1857 and ordained 22 IX 1860. At the time of his giving his evidence he was Procurator General, residing in Rome.

⁶ Cornelius van Coll was born 30 I 1842, professed 17 X 1870 and ordained 10 XII 1871.

⁷ *Positio*, 21.

Oomen he prepared his evidence beforehand from information gathered locally and in Holland. The proces gathered information from a large number of the people for whom and with whom Father Donders worked. They are easily recognisable and always worth attention. A good example is Gijbert Louis Rusp who was associated with Father Donders as an altar boy, sometimes accompanying him on his journeys, and later as schoolmaster in one of the outlying stations. He must have been regarded as some sort of authority, as he is quoted from time to time by other witnesses.

Part II of the *Summarium* consists of documents submitted in the diocesan processes. Among them the biographer should find some useful material.

In this respect the process at 's-Hertogenbosch had rather more to offer, seventeen documents, some of them quite interesting. Of particular importance are the two *curricula vitae* and the *ratio conscientiae* which Father Donders wrote at the request of his Vicar Apostolic, Most Rev. Henry Schaap⁸. Two documents from the hand of his fellow novice, Father John Romme, one notes on his life compiled in 1874 and the other a letter to the provincial on Father Donders' death, are valuable, coming as they do from a man who knew him both as a secular priest and as a Redemptorist⁹. The biographer will discover further useful material in the panegyric preached by the Vicar Apostolic¹⁰ and in the necrology composed by Father Adrian Bossers¹¹.

The process at Paramaribo did not occasion much further documentation. There is, however, a most interesting extract from the chronicles of the Batavia house written by Father Donders himself¹². It is an excellent description of the Indians of Surinam, showing that the author knew them thoroughly and had made a most careful preparation for his work among them. The passage is important evidence of Father Donders' quite exceptional gifts of observation and sound pastoral judgment.

The sketch of Peter Donders' life that follows is based on the verbal evidence and the documentation presented in the processes and following the order of the questions put to the witnesses. It is an outline that can be given substance and life from the same source.

⁸ Documents VII, VIII and IX; *Positio*, 530-540. A translation of these documents appears below.

⁹ Documents X and XI; *Positio*, 540-547. Father John Romme was born 22 III 1832 and was ordained 17 V 1856. Like Father Donders he was already working as a secular priest on the Surinam mission when the Redemptorists came. Following Father Donders' example, he joined him in the novitiate and was professed with him 24 VI 1867.

¹⁰ Document XV; *Positio*, 555-563.

¹¹ Document XVI; *Positio*, 563-580. There is information about Father Bossers in Maurice de Meulemeester C.S.S.R., *Bibliographie générale des écrivains rédemptoristes*, Louvain, II (1935) 42; III (1939) 262. He was in Surinam from 1867, the year of Father Donders' profession as a Redemptorist.

¹² Document XVIII; *Positio*, 580-585.

Early Years

The certificate of his baptism shows that Peter Donders was baptised on 27th October 1809 in the parish church of St. Denis, 't Goirke, Tilburg¹³. His parents were Arnold Denis Donders and Petronella van den Brekel. That extraordinarily well informed witness, Father Oomen, adds the further detail that he was baptised on the day of his birth¹⁴.

The parents, obviously pious if they brought the child along so promptly for baptism, are described by the same witness as being « poor but upright and religious »¹⁵, a description repeated in almost the same words by the few who speak about the family. The only other child was a younger brother named Martin, whose memories of Peter furnish the evidence of a number of witnesses at 's-Hertogenbosch. When Peter was seven years old his mother died and his father married Johanna Maria van de Pas¹⁶.

His schooling was cut short, probably around about the age of twelve, in order that he might earn something to help support the home. He took up the weaver's trade like his father and kept at it until he entered the Minor Seminary¹⁷. Jane Duzee who gave evidence at 's-Hertogenbosch, mainly of what she had heard from others, offers a charming picture of Peter Donders, the working man.

Not long ago I showed a picture of Peter Donders to Mr. Eugene Verster in Loon-op-Zand. As he looked at it he said: « Oh, I knew him very well. I often used to see him carrying a bundle of firewood and a little corn. Ah! Poor fellow! »¹⁸.

It was clearly a home in which poverty and hard work were inescapable. Peter Donders found relief in an occupation which he evidently found most agreeable, teaching the catechism to the children of his neighbourhood. This is a frequent topic of the evidence offered at both tribunals, all the witnesses saying more or less the same as Jane Meelis at 's-Hertogenbosch.

¹³ Document I, *Positio*, 525.

¹⁴ *Positio*, 50.

¹⁵ *ibid.*

¹⁶ *ibid.*

¹⁷ *Positio*, 535.

¹⁸ *Positio*, 49.

In his free time he used to teach catechism. When the children were with him, they kept very quiet, listening attentively to what he said; and he often brought some little presents in his pocket to reward them if they were silent and attentive. I used to go to the catechism class of a certain devout lady; and if we became noisy she would say: « One, two, three, silence! That's what Peerke Donders used to say and the children kept quiet for him ». She often used to say that Peerke Donders was a holy little man and the children had great respect for him¹⁹.

In his earlier *curriculum vitae* written in 1874 Father Donders says: « It pleased the good God to give me at an early age, about five or six years, an ardent desire for the priesthood in order to work for the salvation of souls so dear to Him »²⁰. Even allowing for the fact that this is an old man recalling his childish aspirations in the light of a full life's work, one has to credit him with an extraordinary singleness of mind. Not even in his longer *curriculum* did he say a word about his work for the children of Tilburg which had attracted so much favourable attention when he was a young man. He begins to appear as a man whose motivation is clear and simple, out of love of God to give himself for the good of those whom God loves.

There is no doubt that the priesthood was his great preoccupation during his adolescent years. He described his escaping military service in the context of his divine call.

When I was eighteen years of age I had to submit to the ballot for military service, and I drew a very low number. Even here the good God was helping me. How? Since at that time I was not in good health and looked weak, I was put off for a year on the word of my doctor; and by the special providence of God the same thing happened each year until after five years I was exempted from military service²¹.

He goes on to tell how he was encouraged by his parish priest, Rev. W. van de Ven and the curate, Father Vogels. Their good offices gained him admission to the Minor Seminary in Gestel-St. Michel, as a witness relates, recalling also the way the parish priest recommended his protege. « I am sending you this young man to do what you like with him. Here in Tilburg is no place for him »²².

¹⁹ *Positio*, 59.

²⁰ *Positio*, 530.

²¹ *Positio*, 534-535.

²² *Positio*, 60.

The Seminarian

Father Donders himself gives us a short account of his time in the Minor Seminary.

He [van de Ven] arranged for me to be received into the Minor Seminary in Gestel-St. Michel as a servant, because all the young men were in the army on account of the civil disturbance, so that there was a shortage of serving staff in the seminary. In this way, as far as I remember, I was fully occupied as a servant; and then another was taken on and it was possible for me to begin my course. After attending class and spending some time at study I helped the other servants. In this way I completed my schooling in Gestel-St. Michel²³.

Since he was at the time twenty-two years old, as he tells us himself²⁴, it must have been in 1831 that he began in this decidedly eccentric fashion his course towards the priesthood. It was a time of unrest in the Lowlands with Belgium gaining independence from Dutch domination; and in Holland the call to arms gave Peter Donders his opportunity. His peculiar position is made almost painfully clear by the evidence given at 's-Hertogenbosch by Father Louis Verhulst C.S.S.R. who was a fellow student of his in the Minor Seminary.

His place in the chapel was behind the students and professors with the servants and maids. One would be deeply moved to see him coming from there slowly and reverently up the length of the chapel to the communion rails²⁵.

Generally speaking boys of Minor Seminary age are not remarkably prone to be merely edified by companions who are at all out of the ordinary. That is how it was at Gestel-St. Michel, as the same witness testified. The servant status of this odd student, some half a dozen years or so older than his companions, made him an obvious butt. Father Verhulst said of him:

He was often teased by the students and even punched. I was an offender myself. In spite of everything he was meek and patient: I never found in him a trace of annoyance. One day during mealtime they began to drag him along so that he was practically running; but all he said was:

²³ *Positio*, 530.

²⁴ *Positio*, 535.

²⁵ *Positio*, 46. Father Louis Verhulst was born 14 V 1824, professed 17 VII 1848 and ordained 12 VIII 1849.

« Easy! Easy! » Especially when the professors were not present they used to tease him at mealtimes, shouting out: « Come here, Peerke you devil ». He always took it patiently and with a gentle smile ²⁶.

Several fellow students gave similar evidence. One spoke of the names the boys used to call their unfortunate companion: the least offensive of them was « Holy Peerke » and the least elegant « Stinker » ²⁷. Another told how the students used to call him names, punch him and kick him in order, as they said, to find out how holy he was ²⁸.

In spite of all the teasing, some of the young fellows were ready enough to help him through his studies. Father Odenhoven who spoke to the tribunal at Paramaribo about what he had heard from contemporaries of Father Donders has some helpful information.

He was generally among the lowest in the class; and the lack of time for his studies is sufficient explanation. Examinations on the Bible were an exception, as he usually came first or close to the top. The students teased him but were generally fond of him. They supplied him with writing materials, books and so on, and they helped him with his lessons, mathematics, history and the rest ²⁹.

The Norbertine, Francis Anthony van der Meulen, who was a fellow student of his in the Minor Seminary, told of how the memory of Peter Donders continued in Gestel-St. Michel. « Even after he left, the name 'Peerke' was given to students of exceptional piety » ³⁰. Other students spoke similarly of the use of the name, which became in time something of a seminary tradition.

The same Norbertine witness said that Peter Donders was no longer teased when he went on to the Major Seminary at Herlaer in 1837 ³¹. There were many voices to speak in praise of his piety and affability and of the respect and affection he gained among the students. In his *curriculum vitae* Father Donders recalled with gratitude that he had been admitted to his theology course through the generous financial assistance supplied by his old parish priest, van

²⁶ *Positio*, 45.

²⁷ *Positio*, 41.

²⁸ *Positio*, 32.

²⁹ *Positio*, 65. Father Engelbert Odenhoven was born 24 VII 1842, professed 19 X 1863 and ordained 21 XII 1867.

³⁰ *Positio*, 36.

³¹ *Positio*, 38.

de Ven; and one of his professors, van Someren, he called his « special benefactor »³². His good parish priest stood behind him all the way and guaranteed his title of ordination³³.

The rather terse account in the *curriculum vitae* suggests that the President of the Major Seminary, Philip van de Ven, took some interest in him while he was still in Gestel-St. Michel. « Meanwhile [while he was studying the humanities] the President of the Major Seminary had me read the Annals of the Propagation of the Faith; and this reading gave rise to the desire of becoming a missionary when I was a priest in order to work for the conversion of the pagans »³⁴.

One may conjecture that the two van de Vens were trying to provide for his ordination, which would explain what Father Donders goes on to relate in his *curriculum*.

The President of the Major Seminary wanted me to ask the provincial of the Jesuits in Ghent to receive me; but the Jesuit provincial decided that I was not called to that Order, since I was then twenty-six years old; and I left on the very next morning. When I got home the President wanted me to set out again for St. Trond to the Reverend Redemptorist Fathers. This was the same sort of thing: the President spoke to me and I did what he said. I asked the Director for a recommendation, which he gave me. « If they don't accept you », added the President, « there are in St. Trond houses of other Orders where you should apply ». And that is what I did. The Rector of the Redemptorists sent me with another candidate to the provincial at Liège, at that time Very Rev. Father de Held³⁵. There I saw too for the first time Father Bernard³⁶, now deceased, and spoke with him. I was not accepted and out of obedience went on to the Franciscan Fathers in St. Trond, who were also not convinced of my vocation³⁷.

³² *Positio*, 531. Rev. G. van Someren had been assistant priest in Peter Donders' parish.

³³ *ibid.*

³⁴ *Positio* 535.

³⁵ Father Frederick de Held was the zealous and vigorous propagator of the Congregation in Belgium, Holland, England, Ireland and the United States. For information concerning him see Maurice de Meulemeester C.S.S.R., *Bibliographie générale* II, 99; C. Dilgskron C.S.S.R., *Friedrich von Held*, Vienna, 1909; Maurice de Meulemeester C.S.S.R., *Frederic von Held*, Jette, 1911.

³⁶ Father Bernard Hafkenscheid was one of the most renowned of Redemptorist missionaries last century, as well known in the United States as in Europe. There is information concerning him in Maurice de Meulemeester C.S.S.R., *Bibliographie générale*. Of many *Lives* published perhaps the most accessible for English speakers is P. Claessens, *Vie du P. Bernard*, Tournai, 1873. An English translation was published in New York in 1875.

³⁷ *Positio*, 535-536.

With the support of his good benefactors Peter Donders began to study philosophy and theology; and « thanks be to God, these studies were more successful than those in the humanities, Latin and the rest »³⁸.

His teacher and guide, Rev. van Someren, seems to have been the one who did most to guide him towards his missionary career. The *curriculum* goes on:

Since the professors and others knew that I wanted to be a missionary, and at that time everyone was going to North America, G. van Someren told me of the great shortage of priests in our own Dutch colonies and how fair it was to choose a field of our own. He said that if I was not opposed to going to Surinam, then I could speak with the Prefect of the Mission there, G. Grooff, because he was to visit the seminary in a few days' time. That is how it turned out. When I spoke with him, we agreed that I was to come out as soon as possible after finishing my course of theology and being ordained priest. This decision was reached in 1839 in the Major Seminary in Haaren. Two years later by God's grace and mercy I was ordained a priest³⁹.

He received tonsure, Minor Orders and Subdiaconate at the hands of Cardinal Sterckx in Mechlin on 26th April 1840, Diaconate in April of the following year and the Priesthood in July⁴⁰. There followed a delay of a full year before he finally set sail for Surinam on 1st August 1842 »⁴¹.

Early Years in Surinam

Father Donders was a secular priest in Surinam for twenty-four years, a slightly longer period than his time as a Redemptorist. Until 1856 he was engaged in parish duties in Paramaribo, the principal town and the residence of the Prefect Apostolic. What must be regarded as a typical description of his life during those early years of his ministry was given by the witness, John Marius Mehcziz.

³⁸ *Positio*, 536.

³⁹ *Positio*, 536-537. Rev. James Grooff succeeded to the position of Prefect Apostolic of Surinam in 1827 in his own twenty-seventh year. There is a note on him in Kronenburg-Carr, 35. He is described as « remarkable for his extraordinary zeal for souls and his tender affection for the lepers ».

⁴⁰ *Positio*, 54.

⁴¹ *Positio*, 537.

When I was thirteen or fourteen Father Donders, who had already been in the church a long time, used to say Mass at seven o'clock. After a quarter of an hour's thanksgiving he used to take a little coffee. At eight he held school for the children. Part of the time was devoted to teaching Christian doctrine and the rest to reading and writing. [...] At ten the Servant of God went out without a hat to visit the Catholics, even in the streets a long way off, coming home at midday or at one or even two o'clock. Sometimes Most Rev. Scheepers would rebuke him for this. He used to have lunch with the rest of the clergy, and afterwards the Servant of God would go to the church to pray. He never took a siesta. When Most Rev. Scheepers was otherwise engaged, he took the catechism class for the children being prepared for their first Holy Communion. After that he went out again on his visitation. If he did not go out he would sometimes play the organ. At seven he had a class for the adults who were to be baptised, and after that he spent the time from eight to ten with Most Rev. Grooff ⁴².

Some of the witnesses in the Paramaribo process added an anecdote or two which can put a little colour into that routine, which after all is not much different from the sort of thing zealous parish clergy do from day to day. Dorothy Kustner, for example, told of Bishop Scheepers often threatening the children during his catechism class: « I'll send Father Donders to Batavia, because you are wearing Father Donders out. Even in the house we get no rest: the whole day long it's nothing but Father Donders! Father Donders » ⁴³! And Jansje Kustner told of the gentleman, probably a planter, who had had rather too much to drink and kept interrupting Father Donders' sermon because he wanted to preach to the people himself. When somebody called the police, Father Donders came down from the pulpit and took the man into the sacristy to talk with him. The story ends delightfully with the information that the gentleman never drank alcohol again ⁴⁴.

For a brief period Father Donders held the office of Pro-vicar. This was from May 1853 to September 1854 ⁴⁵. This was when Most Rev. Scheepers, who had been Pro-vicar for some years was named Vicar Apostolic and went to Holland for his episcopal consecration. In his own narrative Father Donders makes no mention of his office, his only comment being on how busy the half dozen or so clergy

⁴² *Positio*, 98.

⁴³ *Positio*, 97.

⁴⁴ *Positio*. 96.

⁴⁵ *Positio*, 75.

were during the Vicar's absence in Europe ⁴⁶.

Father van Coll offered the important information that « very soon after his arrival the visitation of the plantations was entrusted to the Servant of God in the year 1843. Since Batavia and Coronie were excluded, only two plantations were visited together with the village of New Amsterdam. In time that number grew to twelve » ⁴⁷. This work, principally among the slaves on the plantations, was most exacting, as Father Oomen was able to describe from his own experience.

The plantations are situated on the banks of the rivers, and to visit them one travels by tent-boat. One can take on board only the things needed for the church ceremonies, a little equipment for the overnight stops, a box of food and a large cooler of the type used by the natives. Four Negro oarsmen and a pilot take the Missionary on his journey. The first voyage of this kind, especially when it is made with a companion in the cool of a moonlit night has something romantic about it and can be quite pleasant. But when one has to do it over and over again and alone, burnt by the sun or drenched by violent storms that make one huddle in the tiny shelter at the back of the boat and even spend a wretched night there, all the poetry goes out of it, leaving just the plain, wearying, exhausting truth. And that was the experience of the Servant of God for years on end, as after his heavy day-to-day work in Paramaribo or in Batavia he would make his monthly or even fortnightly visits to the plantations ⁴⁸.

John Mehciz, the young lad already mentioned, offered to the tribunal his own recollections.

As a boy I often went along with the Servant of God to visit the plantations. In the morning at seven or eight o'clock the Servant of God taught the catechism to the slaves, who according to the size of the plantation could number from thirty to about a hundred. After that he heard confessions, and sometimes he would baptise ten or a dozen people. Then he would say Mass, during which he preached. After a short thanksgiving and a cup of coffee he heard confessions again ⁴⁹.

Father Oomen spoke of Father Donders' horror at the condition of the slaves and his earnest wish to see the practice abolished;

⁴⁶ *Positio*, 538.

⁴⁷ *Positio*, 87.

⁴⁸ *Positio*, 75-76.

⁴⁹ *Positio*, 99.

he described the obstacles put in the way by the planters and their overseers; and how in spite of it all he gave more and more attention to the slaves. « In 1843 he began his expeditions with two plantations, and in 1852 he was visiting twelve with a total of 1145 Catholic slaves »⁵⁰.

In 1856 Father Donders was sent to Batavia, the leper station, the place which those who know him usually associate with his memory. Much of the evidence of the witnesses dwelt at length on horrifying descriptions of the disease, which one would have to admit are the sort of thing that has over the years become familiar and really quite conventional. To say that does not in any degree lessen the extraordinary devotion he showed in his work among the lepers over a period of thirty years or so, both as a secular priest and as a Redemptorist. For the greater part of this long period there was little variation in his life of tending the material and spiritual needs of the sick. But he did everything in his own way, and this is the sort of thing that was recalled by many of the witnesses with evident affection in terms similar to the testimony offered by Laurence Doel.

Father Donders was always with us in Batavia. He helped the lepers in all sorts of ways. He fetched water, tended their sores, swept out their houses and served them in other similar ways. He did things like these especially when there was a shortage of staff to look after the sick; and it was mainly due to his efforts that the government eventually provided nurses⁵¹.

Francine Buthil gave similar evidence. « The people of Batavia loved Father Donders, not only because of the many kindnesses he showed us, such as bandaging our feet, carrying water and things like that, but because he helped us by his prayers and teaching »⁵². Accounts like this could be multiplied almost endlessly.

Father van Coll described the patients in Batavia as being almost all very poor and of many races, the Catholics among them numbering about four hundred⁵³. Another witness who knew Father Donders in Batavia gave a picturesque example of his pastoral care.

⁵⁰ *Positio*, 77-78.

⁵¹ *Positio*, 103.

⁵² *Positio*, 93.

⁵³ *Positio*, 88.

One day a ship came to Batavia with sixty lepers, Catholics, Moravian Brethren and pagans, all of them to be placed in the hospice. Father Donders, however, took care to have the Catholics, about ten I think, lodged with the Catholics of Batavia. The assistant minister was unwilling to look after the Moravian Brethren and left them to Father Donders' care. He spent a whole day teaching them, and since they were all very ill, he baptised them⁵⁴.

While he was in Batavia he often had occasion to give clothes to people he found going about practically naked. And there were frequent incidents of the type narrated by Philip Frederick.

One day the Servant of God came to the part where my parents lived. Father Donders knocked at the door of one of the houses where there was a woman who had come in sick from one of the plantations. When Father knocked she asked him not to come in as she had no clothes. He went behind the house and came back after a short time. Then I saw him handing something in through the partially opened door. The woman later told my mother that Father Donders had given her a shirt⁵⁵.

This was by no means the only time he gave the shirt off his back. And he went to all sorts of lengths to get money for the poor; he had given his superiors trouble since the days he had been in Paramaribo. One day Bishop Scheepers in exasperation said to him: « All I do is give, give! What are you going to do when I am dead? » And the culprit answered: « God will still be alive »⁵⁶.

He was apparently still quite a bother to those over him after he became a Redemptorist. One day he was overheard saying to a poor old soul: « Look, dear, I'm poor myself just now and can't give you anything. Just give me time to talk to my confrere who looks after the money and then come back and ask me »⁵⁷.

The Redemptorist

His becoming a Redemptorist is probably best left to himself to narrate, as he put it in his second *curriculum vitae*.

It pleased the good God that the Rev. Father Meurkens, appointed Pro-vicar in 1863 on the death of Bishop Scheepers, should go to Europe

⁵⁴ *Positio*, 248.

⁵⁵ *Positio*. 242.

⁵⁶ *Positio*, 232.

⁵⁷ *Positio*, 225.

on account of his health; and the Mission of Surinam was entrusted to the Reverend Redemptorist Fathers. In 1866 Bishop J.B. Swinkels⁵⁸, Vicar Apostolic, arrived in Paramaribo with two Fathers and a Brother. It was the wish of Propaganda and of His Holiness Pius IX that we secular priests should not leave the Mission, but should stay on. I took the first opportunity to go from Batavia to the city to ask the Bishop to receive me into the Congregation. For a long time, especially after having read the life of our Holy Father written by Father Bossers⁵⁹, I had wanted to become a Redemptorist if it should please the good God to give me a vocation. I prayed to the good God and to the Blessed Virgin Mary in order to discover the holy Will of God. And the good God heard my prayers. I was received by the Rector Major in spite of my fifty-seven years⁶⁰.

Bishop Swinkels, writing to the Dutch provincial, reported that Brother Donders together with Brother J. Romme were to begin their novitiate on the feast of All Saints, November 1st 1866⁶¹. It seems that the Vicar Apostolic himself was the novice master for the eight months or so that the novitiate lasted. His report of his novice sent off to his provincial on the 19th February 1867 describes Father Donders. « He has a very lively character, quite imperturbable and most agreeable in company with his confreres. The only thing I would like to see is that he were much younger »⁶².

His fellow novice, Father John Romme, after Father Donders' death wrote of him to Father Oomen: « I freely declare that he was always and in everything a source of edification to me. I also gratefully recall that after the good God I owe my vocation to the Congregation mainly to him. Four or five months after Bishop Swinkels' arrival I heard that he had been received and I began to think seriously about it myself »⁶³.

Bishop Swinkels left a more vivid description of his novice which is preserved in a note made in 1875 by his successor, Bishop Schaap⁶⁴.

⁵⁸ John Baptist Swinkels had been the first provincial of the Dutch province in 1855, an office he held until 1865, the year of his appointment as Vicar Apostolic of Surinam. The coming of the Redemptorists was an evident advantage, as the records show for the year 1867, when there were in the Vicariate besides the Bishop four priests and three Brothers besides the two priest novices.

⁵⁹ A. Bossers C.S.S.R., *Leven van den H. Alphonsus de Liguori*, Amsterdam, 1855.

⁶⁰ *Positio*, 538-539.

⁶¹ *Positio*, 527.

⁶² *Positio*, 528.

⁶³ *Positio*, 543-544.

⁶⁴ Henry Schaap was born 27 IX 1823, professed 24 V 1845 and ordained 13 VIII 1850.

His health is sound and his constitution remarkably tough, proved by all sorts of holy excesses. In outward appearance he is like the Curé of Ars. He is a man of short stature, thin, white haired, without teeth and a little stooped. He is young in heart. He is hard working, ready for any task, cheerful in the community, in conduct indistinguishable from all the rest. He has the spirit of our Congregation in its fulness. His memory is good, and his judgement sound and enlightened. He knows enough of the profane sciences as is of advantage to the Negroes and Indians⁶⁵.

He was professed on 24th June 1867⁶⁶ and sent back at once to Batavia, now with another Father as companion and superior⁶⁷. For a man who had lived a solitary life for twenty-four years the religious community must have occasioned some strain; but no indication of anything of the kind appears in the evidence.

One of those who knew him in the Minor Seminary said that Peter Donders had never been looked on as in any way singular, in spite of his austere and prayerful life⁶⁸. And Father Oomen was able to quote Father Donder's own testimony to his appreciation of the companionship he found among the Redemptorists. « After twenty-six years in the leper station the Bishop was so good as to give me the chance of enjoying the company of confreres, a thing I had not known for so many years »⁶⁹.

Father van Coll related that in 1883 Bishop Schaap transferred him for a time from Batavia « on account of his desire for the community life »⁷⁰. That is the way his three years' absence from Batavia seems to have been understood, as one finds similar expressions used by other witnesses. No doubt the transfer of the old man of seventy-four to the city was an act of kindness, but the circumstances made it something of a humiliation, as several witnesses reported. For example, Father de Kuijper C.S.S.R. gave the following account.

I have heard that one of Father Donders' boatmen, resenting his reprimands, reported to the Bishop that he preached badly, not loud enough to be heard. The Bishop then removed him from Batavia, and the rest of the people took his departure badly⁷¹.

⁶⁵ *Positio*, 529.

⁶⁶ *Positio*, 527.

⁶⁷ *Positio*, 107.

⁶⁸ *Positio*, 35.

⁶⁹ *Positio*, 219.

⁷⁰ *Positio*, 136.

⁷¹ *Positio*, 246.

Another witness added that in his last sermon in Batavia Father Donders said to the people: « We are all under the Bishop's authority and must obey. However, even though the Bishop is taking me away from here, I promise you in God's name that I shall die among you. In the day of resurrection I shall be among the lepers to face God's judgement»⁷².

Work for the Indians and Negroes

As early as 1846 Father Donders had written to his old benefactor, van Someren, of his wish to work among the wild peoples of the bush⁷³. Lack of numbers, however, did not make it possible until the coming of the Redemptorists. Shortly after his profession, with now a second man in Batavia, he once more took up the project. He suggested to Bishop Swinkels that he be allowed to visit these peoples in their encampments and instruct them. « The Bishop not only agreed », he gleefully reported, « but even encouraged me ».

The Indians were the original native population, nomad peoples living in the steamy network of rivers that made up Surinam. There were three different races among them, Arrowaks, Warros and Caribs. In the chronicles of the Batavia house there is a concise and most informative account of the Indians and of the mission among them written in Father Donders' own hand: it is appended to this article as one of the very few documents that remain to illustrate the character and pastoral skill of its author.

He was able to commence his long desired work among the Indians in 1868, as Father van Coll reported.

Father Donders went to Kaashoop near the river Saramacca, where between twenty-five and thirty Arrowaks were working. On 9th May 1868 he baptised the first Indians there and put up a hut to serve as a chapel. The Servant of God blessed it on 30th August 1870 in honour of St. Alphonsus. [...] These Indians were industrious and well behaved, but afterwards they went on to another place⁷⁴.

The account continued, like many of the other statements on this topic, with stories of long and arduous journeys to visit the scat-

⁷² *Positio*, 349.

⁷³ *Positio*, 107.

⁷⁴ *Positio*, 132.

tered encampments of the nomads. For the most part, it was possible to work for only small numbers at a time. Father van Coll said that this work went on with little interruption up to Peter Donders's death⁷⁵. He experienced many a disappointment, especially with the Caribs, who were notorious drunkards. Father Oomen quoted Brother Alphonsus who accompanied Father Donders on a visit to the Indians in 1870. Arriving at one encampment after two days in the boat, they found everybody drunk, « men, women and children ».

After going about the camp for two hours exhorting and beseeching these people to attend to their duties, the Reverend Father in the end had to say his Mass with only three present, myself and two bush Negroes. And even they did not know what they were doing. One of them called out « Hello » when the Father went to the altar, and the other wanted to light his pipe from the altar candle⁷⁶.

He had to put up with a very great deal of frustration of this kind. And there was also danger enough to alarm the boatmen who were his usual companions. He himself seems to have been quite impervious to fear, as is clear from an incident told by many of the witnesses in Pamaribo. Father Bazelmans C.S.S.R. told it this way.

I heard from Rups that when he was schoolmaster in an Indian encampment one of the women was in danger of dying in childbirth. Father Donders came on the scene and gave Rups a razor to hone so that he could do a caesarean section if necessary. Rups said: « Don't do that, Father, or the Indians will be sure to kill you ». The Servant of God replied: « That doesn't matter provided I can baptise the baby ». Rups saw Father Donders praying in the boat with his arms outstretched. Shortly afterwards the woman gave birth; the child was baptised; and the woman is still alive⁷⁷.

Together with the Indians Father Donders mentioned the bush Negroes when he wrote to his provincial. These were runaway slaves who had found refuge in the jungle. Naturally they were suspicious and frequently quite dangerous, as the following incident shows. It was related by a woman of Batavia, Amarantha Tijdig.

⁷⁵ *ibid.*

⁷⁶ *Positio*, 314.

⁷⁷ *Positio*, 174. Francis Xavier Bazelmans was born 10 I 1866, professed 29 IX 1890 and ordained 7 X 1896.

I heard from Father Donders' boatmen that one day he went into the bush at Kraaishoop to pray, and a Negro who had been a long time on the run came on him. He attacked Father Donders, shouting: « I'm going to kill you! » The Father said: « Just wait a little, will you, while I finish my prayers ». The Negro let him go then, and he went back to the boatmen. I myself later saw the marks the Negro had left on the Father's neck ⁷⁸.

The Negroes had been in Father Donders' mind as long as the Indians. After he had tasted that early gratifying success among the Arrowaks, he began to consider what he could do for the Negroes. In 1871 he wrote to his provincial:

During what we call here the dry season of the year I was to have gone to the bush Negroes to try and convert them to the holy Faith, but circumstances and my superiors did not permit me; or rather it was not God's Will that I go now ⁷⁹.

He was often frustrated in his wish to go in search of the Negroes; and it was usually on his visits to the Indians that he was able to do some little service for them, as we may gather from the incident of the man who tried to light his pipe from the Mass candle. It was a great joy for him when he could report to Father Oomen, then his provincial, in 1886 « that some Negroes had been settled close to Batavia, and their numbers had grown from about thirty to close on three thousand » ⁸⁰.

By then he was close to the end of his life, and his last word on them was of his hopes for this settlement right under his own eyes. « With the bush Negroes everything is not going as I would like, but we must have patience and trust in God, Who is rich in mercy and omnipotence » ⁸¹.

It seems that after his death rumour busied itself a little with Father Donders' reputation. One story that got about alleged that Bishop Schaap had occasion to take away the good Father's faculties. The affair, which after all had very little substance in it, was mentioned only in the evidence given by Father van Coll. As vice-provincial he was in a particularly good position to know the facts, and he investigated them thoroughly, answering the implied objection and

⁷⁸ *Positio*, 309.

⁷⁹ *Positio*, 119.

⁸⁰ *ibid.*

⁸¹ *ibid.*

explaining what really had happened. His treatment of the incident provides an excellent illustration of the pastoral attitudes and practice of Father Donders.

I have heard rumours lately of something I had never heard of before, that Bishop Schaap once took away the Servant of God's faculties. If this were true it would be an argument against his prudence, since his faith and morals were beyond question. In answer to the charge, one must reply:

1°. - At the age of seventy-four the Servant of God had worked as a missionary in the colony for about forty-one years, winning praise from everyone, serving under four Bishops and even having himself filled a distinguished term as Pro-vicar. He held faculties *usque ad revocationem*, and it is beyond doubt that a canonical reason would have been needed to have deprived him. No one has ever heard of one.

2°. - Everyone who was in the city at that time, and there are some of them still alive, saw the Servant of God exercising faculties under the Bishop's eye. And if he was without faculties when he was sent away from the city, what apostolic ministry could he have performed?

3°. - If his faculties had been restricted in one or other point, I would have had to know it, since I had been appointed by Bishop Schaap to act in everything as his vicar when he was absent. I not only conferred the ordinary faculties of the Apostolic See, but I acted in the name of the Bishop when he was away. Some men had only limited faculties; and if there had been any truth in the rumour, then Bishop Schaap would have told me; and the Servant of God, whom I always found as simple and straightforward as a child towards me in spite of his long years in the service of God and of souls, would himself have told me or would at least have referred a case to me. But nothing like this happened. What, then, occasioned the talk?

Right from the beginning of his missionary work the Servant of God used to marry slaves without informing the government. The same happened with the lepers in Batavia, and with connivance. That is the way things were until the emancipation of the slaves; and even now it is allowed with the connivance of the government for the Indians and bush Negroes. But Bishop Schaap did not dare to allow the Servant of God go on performing marriages in his old ways in the city and under the eye of the government.

On the other hand, if the Servant of God came across a case in which a secret marriage would put an end to sin without offending the government, it would cause him more pain than I can say not to use the opportunity⁸².

⁸² *Positio*, 278-280. Though Father van Coll did not say as much, it seems

Death

Father Donders was stationed briefly at Paramaribo after he left his lepers in 1883, and from there he went to the mission of Coronie, where he remained until late in 1885, when as he had promised, he came back to Batavia. He was now seventy-seven years old, and it was soon plain that his old programme was beyond him. A man who had been medical assistant among the lepers related:

When in December 1886 Father Donders came back to Batavia from his last sacred expedition, he was already a little ill, but he would not hear of medicines. During the night of 31st December the illness became serious⁸³.

According to the necrology written by Father Bossers, the trouble was in the kidneys, and it gradually became worse, making it clear to everyone that the end had come.

During the night of 5th-6th January he himself asked for the Holy Sacraments, and Father John⁸⁴ at once did as he asked. On this occasion he made two requests of his confrere, first in his name to ask the pardon of the people if he had offended them in any way, and secondly to tell them how sad he was at the sinful lives of many of them in spite of his repeated pleading. Rev. Father John fulfilled this charge with great emotion during the Mass of the Epiphany. Apart from that occasion Father Donders spoke very little during the illness, never complaining, always satisfied with whatever was given him. In this way, fully resigned to God's Will and with his thoughts filled with his Jesus and the things of heaven, he continued to suffer without losing consciousness until 3.30 in the afternoon of Friday, 14th January 1887. In that moment the good, zealous, devout and exemplary old man gave up his soul into the hands of his heavenly Father⁸⁵.

In the end it seems to be useful to return to the comparison with the Curé of Ars, which appears from time to time in the *Positio*. The two men are alike in so many ways: the poverty of their home life, their lack of schooling, their extraordinary resolution in win-

clear that the rumour was in some way associated with Father Donders' transfer from Batavia in 1883.

⁸³ *Positio*, 446.

⁸⁴ Father John Bakker was born 25 III 1833 and professed as a Brother 15 XI 1860. He was in Surinam as a Brother from 1867, and after being ordained 26 VIII 1883 he returned there. Those who mention him call him Father John.

⁸⁵ *Positio*, 572.

ning through to the priesthood and their entire dedication to routine pastoral duties. The main difference seems to be in the type of ministry each performed; and there the comparison rather seems to favour Peter Donders. If such a comparison is justified, and it does seem to be, then what one ought to discover in the life of Blessed Peter Donders is a Saint John Vianney among the lepers, the Indians and the runaway slaves. And there is no lack of detail in the *Positio* to add colour and form to that portrait.

DOCUMENTS

The foregoing sketch of Peter Donders' life has been expressed in the words of those who gave evidence in the two diocesan processes. Though it has some merit in that it shows the man as he appeared to his contemporaries, it remains no more than a framework, a fleshless skeleton. To help clothe the bare bones we add some of the documentation offered to the tribunals.

The documents we cite were composed for various purposes. They are the work of men who lived with Father Donders in Surinam, so that their value lies in the more comprehensive view of the man that these personal friends of his present. The final document is one of the rare pieces we have from Father Donders' own hand. They have been translated from Latin into English in the hope of their being more widely read and used.

I

Notes concerning Rev. Father Donders
by Rev. Father J. Romme C.S.S.R.¹

J.M.J.A.

Paramaribo 1st October 1874

I am not very familiar with Father Donders' life in Europe. It is well known that when he was in the Seminary everyone considered him holy. Even now in the diocese of 's-Hertogenbosch, espe-

¹ Document X of the *Summarium*. This short appreciation of Father Donders by his novitiate companion was very likely written at the request of Bishop Schaap. In the same year, 1874, the Bishop had Father Donders prepare for him a short *curriculum vitae*. One may reasonably conjecture that the Bishop already had in view a future beatification process.

cially among the older priests he is commonly called « holy Peerke ». From the time of his coming to the colony of Surinam on 17th September 1842 up to the present his life has continued to be holy and edifying. Soon after his arrival Bishop Grooff wrote in a letter to Holland, to Bishop Wijckerslooth², I think, that he was most satisfied with Rev. Donders; and begging for further missionaries, the Bishop hoped that they would be filled with the spirit of Rev. Donders.

For more than ten years it has been my good fortune to know Rev. Donders, as a secular priest for two years and for about eight as a member of the Congregation of the Most Holy Redeemer; he has always edified everyone and won their praise by a life that is holy, simple and most of all kindly. I say « everyone » with some emphasis, and by that I mean not only the secular clergy among whom he used to live, nor just the present Redemptorists, nor even just the nuns, who hold him in the greatest veneration and honour, but I mean everyone who has ever known him or has ever met him. The people on the plantations are always asking me most earnestly about him, even the careless Catholics and especially Protestants and Jews. I have often heard even the Jews calling him a saint: « Yes, Father Donders really is a holy man: if he doesn't get to heaven, which of us ever will? » That sort of thing.

And what is the reason for this praise, spoken almost spontaneously by non-catholics who have very little personal interest in the things of God? It is due to his exceptional and heroic virtue, his tireless zeal for the salvation of souls. His zeal knows no limits other than those imposed by obedience. When he arrives home exhausted by a journey around the plantations or an expedition to the Indians, you can do him no greater service than let him take the children for catechism, give an instruction to the Holy Family³ or preach a sermon. When he is in Batavia he has an instruction on Christian doctrine every evening, and he usually does all the preaching.

His zeal is unflagging in visiting and instructing the people on the plantations, even though in some places he gets little return

² Bishop van Wijckerslooth, titular Bishop of Curium, residing at Duinzicht, was procurator of the Surinam mission. He had ordained Peter Donders deacon in his private oratory on 10th April 1841 and priest on 5th June of the same year.

³ The Archconfraternity of the Holy Family was founded in Liège for the benefit of working men. From the beginning, principally through the interest of Father Victor Dechamps, later Cardinal and Archbishop of Malines, it was warmly supported by the Redemptorists. Particularly during the nineteenth century it was very widely propagated. Cf. John F. Byrne C.S.S.R., *The Redemptorist Centenaries, Philadelphia, 1932, 244-249.*

for his efforts. It is the same with the Indians. With them his zeal appears in an heroic degree. He saves the wine and beer he takes with him for his own use and drinks only water from the rivers and creeks, which is usually quite smelly and even unhealthy if one is not used to it. Why does he not use the wine and beer? It is in order to give it to the Indians and so win them for God.

Who are the Indians he visits? First, there are the Caribs on the Tibiti, the Wayombo and the other rivers. They are given to strong drink and are so irreligious that they can be brought together only with the greatest difficulty, and then after listening no more than a few minutes, they go off one after the other. In spite of all the difficulties, which would try the patience of Job, by God's grace he has reached the point where he has been able to baptise, not only the children, but even adults. In fact, I think he has been able to baptise almost all the adults and join them in Christian marriages.

Then there are the Arrowak Indians. They are the most receptive of religion, but one has to go a long way to reach them. Some of them live by the Maratakka creek, a branch of the river Nickerie. It is some eighty hours' travel from Batavia, which requires a journey of eight days under a burning sun and with no other shelter at night than the tent on the boat.

Others live on the Upper Saramacca, some a short distance from the river; but to reach others requires travelling for six hours on foot through dense jungle. Not realising that there was another way by the Surinam river and Parakreek, he set off once about mid-day through the jungle and swamps, accompanied by Joseph, his head boatman who usually goes with him and is a great help to him, and an Indian guide. They came on several streams, which they bridged by trunks of trees or logs, so that the way was extremely dangerous for one who was not used to it. They arrived quite worn out, spent the night in an Indian hut and came back the same way the following day. Father Donders certainly would have gone back there, even though Joseph said he would not face that dangerous journey with him again. The Bishop, however, forbade him and told another Father to visit the Indians by way of the Surinam river and Parakreek.

Everybody knows of his humility, meekness, love of mortification, love of prayer, charity towards others and so on, his patience with the boatmen when they are ill.

II

Letter of Rev. Fr. J. Romme C.S.S.R.
to Very Rev. Fr. P. Oomen C.S.S.R., Provincial.⁴

J.M.J.A.

Batavia, 18th April 1887.

Your Reverence asked me to write down for you what I remember of the edifying life of my holy predecessor, Father Donders. It is not easy to write much about him that is new, since Father van Coll has already published in his fine article in the *Volksmissionaris*⁵ the things that were best known; and you yourself know that the humble Father always kept his virtue and good deeds as secret as he could.

What I sent to the archivist in Paramaribo shortly after his death may possibly be known to you, either in part or in whole. It dealt mainly with his love of prayer, for the salvation of souls and of mortification.

During the twenty-three years I knew him on the Surinam mission only twice were we together in the same house. The first time was for about a year during our novitiate in Paramaribo. There is information about that in the chronicles of the time. For my own part, I gladly admit that he always edified me, and that I always gratefully remember that, after the good God, I owe my vocation to the Congregation mostly to his example. About four or five months after the arrival of Bishop Swinkels I heard that Father had been accepted, and then I began to think seriously about it myself. As far as I recall I had never for a moment thought of it before that.

The second time was when we worked together for two years in Coronie, from November 1883 to November 1885. I shall speak in more detail of these two years as far as I remember them.

From the start he showed himself to be a man of God, all on fire for the salvation of souls. No obstacle was too great, no sacrifice too heavy: rather the harder the work, the better he liked it.

⁴ Document XI of the *Summarium*. This reply to the provincial's request for information proved an important source of the evidence Father Oomen gave in the process at 's-Hertogenbosch. Father Romme, a careful witness, preferred to keep to what he had seen for himself when Father Donders was with him in Coronie.

⁵ C. van Coll, *Pater Donders* in *De Volksmissionaris* 8 (1887) 147-165. The periodical was a pastoral publication of the Dutch Redemptorists. The article was also used by Father Oomen in his evidence.

I remember that shortly after he arrived I had to go to Welgelegen on foot, because the horse was not available. It was two hours away under a tropical sun and in the dry season; and Father Donders had never been there.

At midday I said to him with a laugh: « Well, Father, are you coming to Welgelegen with me? ».

« Oh, yes », he answered.

« But do you know that it is a good two hours' walk, and we have to go there and back? ».

His only reply was: « Are you going? Then I must do the same. I can do it too ». And he did the trip easily. He was then seventy-four years old.

In spite of his tough constitution, in those early days he suffered two severe illnesses. The first was a fever which began on 26th December. Very likely it was partly due to the sea air, but also to his indulging too much his love of mortification during Advent. Whatever the cause, the fever lasted, becoming worse until about ten days after the New Year his feet started to swell badly. Because of the fever he could not sleep at night. We decided to make a novena for his recovery, and at his wish we made it to St. Joseph. His condition was unchanged during the novena, but he had a good night's sleep after it ended. The fever left him, and after a few days he was able to take up his duties.

This did not last long, because about the middle of February he had more trouble, a large swelling or an ulcer on his left knee, which for more than two weeks kept him from saying Mass; and since it was slow to heal, for a longer time still he could not go out. But he never gave a sign of complaint, either when the surgeon was treating him or during his long convalescence, so that we often said to each other: « This is strange. We know how much he wants to get back to work and visit the poor and the sick, and yet he never says a word about it ». It was always: « As the good God wishes ».

He no sooner felt himself strong enough than he was out of the house twice a day, going about the neighbourhood, not for the sake of exercise — he never thought that way — but in order to do a little good. I often had to urge him to be careful.

Then the following Lent, and indeed all fast days, became a time of sacrifice for Father, since he had to restrain his love of mortification: the Bishop had forbidden him to fast because of his age and his recent illness. When he thought he was strong enough, he begged me again and again to try and get the order withdrawn; and when I thought it best not to, he submitted without delay, but not

so as to indulge the pleasures of the senses. He would take a scrap of bread as small and as thin as possible.

In July Bishop Schaap came to Coronie for confirmation; and what was the first, perhaps the only favour Father asked? Permission to spend the night on the bare ground. He used this permission right from the first night. It so happened that the Brother saw him when he had occasion to go to his room in the evening to fetch something. As far as I know, he always spent the nights like this up to his last illness.

You already know that he used to get up every night to spend a long time before the Blessed Sacrament, and that he took the discipline practically every evening and often of a morning as well, frequently scourging himself to blood. I sent his discipline to the Bishop: it had sharp points and nails attached to it and was all stained with blood.

Coronie, as you know, is simply alive with mosquitoes, and they often make meditation time almost unendurable, especially in the morning and evening, when they plague everyone; and yet we have hardly ever seen Father trying to chase them away. If we should walk up and down so as to be less troubled, then Father would follow our example so as not to seem different.

As you know too, at Coronie we have two succursal churches, each about two hours' walk from our house and church at Marishope, one to the east and the other to the west. We used to visit them in turn. Father never missed his turn if it was at all possible; and it was humanly speaking very hard for him when two or three months of the year he could not get to the church of Welgelegen. Part of the road was subject to flooding and we could travel only on horseback and not in the buggy. He would very much have liked to ride there, but he decided rightly that it would not be prudent at his age to try to learn on a somewhat restive horse. Just the same, whenever I came back, his first question was always what was the road like, and he would even often go out himself to have a look at it.

In Burnside at that time we used to have lunch with the manager. He preferred it when the manager was away; but when he was at home, he would get away as soon as he could after lunch to busy himself in the houses of the Negroes with the religious needs of the people.

On the way to and from the succursal churches he always said the Rosary with his driver, together with prayers for sinners, for the dead and so on. When the two of us went together in the buggy, he was always happy if I suggested after the Rosary a little

time of private prayer. Whenever the clock struck, his lips would move: very likely he said the *Ave Maria*.

A word now about the fruit of his zeal. It was not always given him to see his efforts get quick results, but he never lost heart. Once he heard that a European who never went to the church and had been living in concubinage for twenty years had declared that he would make his confession to nobody but Father Donders. The day after he got to Coronie he called on the man, who raised all sorts of difficulties at first; but Father kept up his visits until in the end he brought the man to a lawful marriage and to Mass and the Sacraments. This is one case among many.

He was not able to see such a happy outcome every time, but I know of many a case of conversion which occurred after he had gone away and which I could recognise as the result of his zeal.

I could give him no greater pleasure than to point out a few old people who needed to be prepared to receive the Sacraments. He could be seen many times a day teaching them the *Pater*, *Ave* and so on. It is no wonder that everyone thought highly of Father Donders and that many even called him Holy Father Donders.

These jottings, Very Reverend Father, are what I recall of Father's work in Coronie. As a priest and religious he was for our little community and for the faithful an example of every virtue. May God be his reward exceeding great. This is our confident hope. In so far as I can I spend a little time each day at his grave, and I do not forget to say, as you ask, a *Pater* and an *Ave* for your intentions. I am quite sure that by his intercession great blessings will come to Batavia, to the mission of Surinam and to the whole Congregation.

J. Romme C.S.S.R.

III

Panegyric of Father Peter Donders
by Most Rev. H. Schaap C.S.S.R., Vicar Apostolic of Surinam⁶

« Be wise as serpents and innocent as doves ». (Matt. X, 16).

I am sure, my dear people, that we shall never find a man who has better fulfilled that precept of the adorable Saviour of men than the venerable Servant of God, lately taken from us by death. An amiable simplicity accompanied by heaven's gift of prudence, that is the basic quality we find in Father Donders' life. I believe that if I had had the good fortune to be with him when he was dying, I would have ventured to whisper to him: « Dear confrere, will you let me speak to the people after your death about the great things God's fatherly Providence has done for you? » And certainly that good, honest man who sought God and God alone in everything would have agreed. And why not? After his death there would no longer be any danger of offending God by vanity. It is true that in this life it is good to hide the secret things of God; but when we are saved and gone up to God, it is praiseworthy to reveal and confess His works. With my conscience undisturbed and fully convinced that I am in no way offending the holy sensitivity that our deceased brother cherished all his life until his death, I shall speak to you about him.

We shall distinguish four periods in his life: his life in the world, his life as a seminarian, his life as a secular priest and his life in the Congregation of the Most Holy Redeemer. It is my intention to show you how throughout his life there was this wonderful harmony of simplicity and prudence.

I

Father Donders was born at Tilburg 27th October 1809. The family of this admirable priest is yet another proof of the Lord's love of the poor. « Has not God chosen the poor in this world? »

⁶ Document XV of the *Summarium*. Bishop Schaap had collected evidence of Father Donders' sanctity at least from as early as 1874. He is surely to be credited with much of the initiative shown in forwarding the cause.

(Jas. II, 5). « My parents were poor ». That is what he wrote in an account he compiled at my request in 1879. For this reason, after being at school only a short time, he had to learn a trade. « And the trade », he says, « was spinning and weaving ».

You know, my friends, that anyone as simple and therefore as humble as Father Donders was could never understand how a person could be ashamed of his family. He never tried to make a secret of it, except when he had to do with people who make family and wealth the sole norm to judge a man's honesty, skill, knowledge and rectitude. Then the prudent man did not mention his origins, lest he do harm to God's cause. « Be wise as serpents ».

II

Can you understand, my friends, how a young man, placed by Providence in such poverty, could ever dream he would one day be a priest? And yet that is what he had in mind.

« My parents were poor and would never have been able to pay for my studies; but in spite of this from the time I was child I had the desire and even the assurance that one day I would be a priest. The special help of Divine Providence which I constantly experienced, nourished this confidence and rooted it ever more deeply in me. When I was eighteen, I had to submit to the ballot for military service; but though all the rest were enlisted, I was put off for five years on account of my bad health, and in the end I was completely exempted ».

These words reveal both the Christian simplicity of his unwavering confidence and at the same time his wisdom and prudence in what he did to satisfy the desire of his heart.

« I understood », he continues, « that I had to do something for myself, and I wrote to my parish priest asking him to help me begin the study of Latin. The parish priest wrote to the Seminary Director, Rev. Smits; and I was admitted to serve the students, in my free time being allowed to give what attention I could to my own studies. There was no opportunity to study at first, but after half a year another servant was taken on and I was able to go to the classes ».

Through reading the Annals of the Propagation of the Faith he began to think of working on the missions of North America; but his superiors in the Seminary advised him rather to join a religious

institute. First he was sent to the Jesuits at Ghent. Understandably, they did not receive him on account of his age (he was twenty-six) and lack of schooling. Nor was he received by the Redemptorists in St. Trond and Liège, and for the same reasons. They advised him to try once more, this time with the Franciscans. But they thought his health too frail for their hard life, and they were unwilling to hold out hope for him even if his health should improve, before he had completed his philosophy and theology.

He went back, therefore, to the Seminary to devote himself completely to his studies. « These studies », he writes, « made better progress than the humanities ». No wonder! Could such simple obedience fail to win heaven's blessing? That is the way he saw it himself, as I find in what he has written; and I think he shows by that how richly endowed he was with true prudence and wisdom. This soon became evident.

In 1839 the Prefect of the mission in Surinam visited Holland, and he was informed by Very Rev. van Someren, a generous benefactor of our Peter, that he wished to go to this mission. The Prefect was willing to accept him at once, but provided he first finish his theology.

The closer the time came when his heart's dearest wish should be satisfied he tried even harder, if that were possible, in applying himself to his studies. In 1841 he was ordained priest; but since there was no opportunity of making the voyage, he could not leave for Surinam until the following year.

He left the Seminary, leaving behind with everybody, professors and students, the memory of an exemplary young man adorned with all the virtues, especially holy simplicity and prudence. How could he have persevered in the Seminary where he was both student and servant if he had not been both prudent and simple? He seemed to everyone an unattainable ideal of virtue. In later years the greatest praise one could give a good student was to compare him with Peerke Donders. How often I have received money, gifts of venerable priests who were with Father Donders in the Seminary, with the condition that « Father Donders say some Masses for them or at least pray for them ».

III

On 16th or 17th September 1842 he arrived in the city of Paramaribo in Surinam, to remain there until 1856. And what great

deeds of fortitude, sacrifice and charity were performed by the venerable missionary in the simplicity of his heart and guided by God's Wisdom.

Shortly after his arrival, by the adorable design of Divine Providence the entire burden of the mission in the city was placed on his shoulders, since the other two missionaries then in Paramaribo, Rev. Grooff and Rev. Jansen, fell ill with dysentery. The latter died of it in fact, and the other needed a long convalescence and was unable to attend to his duties. Then, just when he had recovered sufficiently to assist his overworked companion, he was recalled to Holland to be consecrated Bishop and to take up the office of Vicar Apostolic of the East Indies.

The parish priest, Rev. Scheepers, came from the coastal district to Paramaribo to share Father Donders' work. Shortly afterwards further help came from Holland.

In 1851 there was an outbreak of yellow fever in the colony. Father Donders went about all the homes where there were sick; and twice a week he went to the hospital, which in those sad days in spite of its size proved far too small. He soon caught the contagious disease himself, and then after four weeks he recovered and took up again his heroic work of mercy, sacrifice and charity.

The older ones among you, my dear friends, will still remember how in those days he was already venerated by everybody, Catholics and non-catholics alike, as a saint for his angelic simplicity and his burning fervour. Even his ecclesiastical superiors showed how highly they regarded his prudence when on Bishop Scheepers' return to Holland and Father Donders' being left in the city with Rev. Meurkens, he was appointed Pro-Vicar.

In 1853 Bishop Scheepers came back to the colony and he kept Father Donders with him in the city for a few years more because of his marvellous zeal for souls. Then in 1856 he sent him to Batavia on the Coppename, where for ten long years he worked for the lepers of this station.

IV

Towards the end of 1865 it was announced in Paramaribo that the Holy See had entrusted the mission of Surinam to the Redemptorist Fathers of the Dutch province. For Father Donders this was quite unexpected. Now, heartened by God's Providence, unforeseen and adorable as it was, he ventured to satisfy a wish that

for thirty years had been very close to his heart, to be counted among the sons of St. Alphonsus. As soon as he could he came from Batavia to the city and humbly begged the first Redemptorist Bishop to receive him into the Congregation of the Most Holy Redeemer. Would his request be granted? Must not the Bishop have known that Rev. Donders was already fifty-seven years old? Certainly he was good, fervent, pious, an example of all the virtues; but it is one thing to seek the highest perfection in one's own way but something quite different to do the same in total dependence on another person! And even to bind oneself to this by vow! To bear the yoke of religious obedience, though it is a sure and safe way to salvation, can be very burdensome to a man who takes it up when he is already advanced in years. And then the community life in the monastery requires of those who follow it a certain suitability, such as even holy men do not always receive from heaven.

But after Bishop Swinkels had known Rev. Donders only a few days he did not hesitate to ask the superiors of the Congregation to receive him as a novice. Thanks be to God! We welcomed a saint amongst us. From the first day of his entry he showed himself a perfect religious, perfect in everything.

Never once did his superiors or confreres find in him anything deserving of reproof. From the very first we had to confess, with thanks to Him from Whom all good comes, that in Father Donders we had been given a treasure of religious and priestly virtues. We used to say to each other that in Father Donders we had found our teacher. Here once more he was an unattainable ideal. For us Father Donders was always an object of veneration. If he spent a few days with us before going back to his beloved Batavia, then spontaneously and as though moved by some supernatural power, singly or all together we would kneel to get his blessing.

I cannot nor do I think I should tell you everything about the penances he performed to win from God the conversion of his unhappy flock of lepers and Indians. Possibly, you could not bear to hear it, and you might gently rebuke us, his superiors, for allowing these things. However, do not forget that all those nights spent before the Blessed Sacrament, that daily fast and the continual abstinence from meat, the harsh scourging of his body for years on end did not prevent his being always in good health and reaching the age of seventy-seven. That is our justification.

I wish to say once more that the chief reason for our deep love and veneration for Father Donders was his unfailing practice of the virtues that make community life so pleasant, that make a

religious all things to all men even while his heart never ceases to beat for God and God alone, namely simplicity and prudence. Only those who live in community can really appreciate what I am saying to all of you, and what a tribute I have paid to the man.

After a novitiate of six months, which for a man like Father Donders was rightly considered sufficient, he took his vows into the hands of Bishop Swinkels, and shortly afterwards was sent back to Batavia, where he was to die. For more than twenty-five years all together he worked among those unhappy people. On the day before this last New Year he preached his last sermon.

By New Year's Day this was beyond his strength, which was a great disappointment, the more so for its being a Saturday and the devout servant of Mary had long been accustomed to preaching on Saturday in praise of the Divine Mother. He could not even say Mass.

For two weeks he suffered greatly but spoke little. Simple and prudent even until death, he answered all the questions of the confrere who looked after him and gave him the last Sacraments. « I have nothing to arrange or to settle », he said, « and just this one thing to say. Tell those wretched people to follow my instructions when I am dead better than they did while I was alive ».

I had sent Father de Kuyper⁷ to Batavia with another doctor to help the Father and the doctor already there. When he arrived the Servant of God had been dead just one hour. That was 14th January at half past three in the afternoon.

IV

Necrology of Rev. Father Peter Donders who died piously
at the leper station at Batavia, Surinam on 14th January 1887

By Adrian Bossers C.S.S.R., Chronista and Archivist
of the Mission of Surinam⁸

Father Donders was born on 27th October 1809 at Tilburg in the diocese of 's-Hertogenbosch of parents who were Catholic and pious, but poor and humble. His father, a poor working man, was

⁷ Father Alphonsus de Kuyper was born 2 VIII 1850, professed 17 X 1870 and ordained 8 X 1875.

⁸ Document XVI of the *Summarium*. Father Bossers, an assiduous writer, had the advantage of his being on the Surinam mission. He is most meticulous in checking dates and similar details — to the point of sometimes becoming wearisome, one has to admit.

Arnold Denis Donders and his mother Petronella van den Brekel. We learn from a document he wrote on 13th August 1879 that from childhood he was much given to prayer and had a special devotion to the Blessed Mother of the Lord, to whom he owed his twofold vocation, to the priesthood and to the religious state.

At a very early age he had formed the wish to be a priest, impossible as it seemed to be on account of his parents' poverty. In spite of everything, he was unshaken in his confidence that he would one day reach the priesthood, and he set about laying solid foundations of the priestly virtues.

After his childhood, when he had been taught enough in church and in school, he was required to help his family in its poverty by the work of his hands. He became a weaver, a trade he followed until he reached the age of twenty-two in 1831.

When he was eighteen he became subject to the draft for the national militia, and since he drew a low number he should have gone into the army; but he was at the time in poor health and looked quite weak, and so after he was examined by a doctor his service was put off for a year. Each year he appeared before the commission and each year he was put off, until after five years in 1831 he was exempted from military service. Freed of this bond, he wrote at once to his parish priest and confessor, Rev. W. van de Ven, who had been pastor of 't Goirke since 1826. In his letter, written about Pentecost of 1831, in his simplicity he revealed his desire and the reasons that seemed to show that he had a vocation to the priesthood⁹.

The parish priest, seeing no problem other than the need to be allowed to study free of charge and at an advanced age, spoke about his devout parishioner with Rev. H. Smits, the Director of the Minor Seminary in Gestel-St. Michel. They decided he could go to the Seminary and test his vocation to the priesthood, provided he agree to do domestic service in the Seminary, attending classes and studying as far as it was possible. The Director had come to this decision partly on account of the shortage of domestic staff in the Seminary. It had become very difficult to find suitable servants, since at that time the young men were conscripted into the army.

The parish priest soon received this favourable reply; and Providence arranged that the new student should learn of his conditio-

⁹ The incident of the ballot for the draft clearly had assumed extraordinary significance in Father Donders' mind. Father Bossers probably learned from himself that it occasioned his taking the first steps towards the priesthood, as he represents it in the necrology.

nal admission into the Seminary from the curate at 't Goirke, Rev. Aegidius Vogels, later a well known Redemptorist Father¹⁰. Shortly afterwards the humble student set out and, strong in his trust in God's Providence, faced the trial of his virtue. At first he was the only servant, so that he had no opportunity to study or even to go to class.

This state of things lasted more than half a year, until a second servant was taken on. Then he could attend the classes, but in the rest of the time he had to help the other servant in his work. In this fashion he spent four or five years in Gestel-St. Michel. While serving his fellow students and edifying all of them by his humility and piety, he was able to husband his free time so well that in that short space he had made sufficient progress in the preliminary studies. The humanities, however, occasioned him more trouble with less success than his higher studies.

During the five years he was in the Minor Seminary the President of the Major Seminary, Rev. Philip van de Ven, who died on 13th November 1837, got him to read the Annals of the Propagation of the Faith, and this led him to desire, once ordained, to work on the foreign missions for the conversion of the unbelievers.

At the end of 1835 his early studies were judged sufficient, and a decision had to be made about his further course. The exemplary and diligent student was then twenty-six years old. Rev. Philip van de Ven thought that Peter Donders had a vocation to some Order or Congregation of missionaries, and advised him to apply to the Jesuits at Ghent. The President sent him with his own recommendation, but he was told the Society would not accept him. When he returned home the President sent him to Belgium again, to the Redemptorists at St. Trond with the advice that if they rejected him to go to the Franciscans.

After being examined in St. Trond, he was sent to the provincial at Liège. Very Rev. Fr. de Held's practice was to examine aspirants there with Father Bernard Hafkenscheid of Amsterdam. He was found to have insufficient schooling to be admitted to the novitiate.

Out of obedience he next tried to see if he would have better luck with the Franciscans at St. Trond. He was not received by the Friars, but they gave him a letter for the President which, without

¹⁰ Father Aegidius Vogels was born 20 VII 1804 and ordained 1 III 1828. He was professed as a Redemptorist 16 VII 1844.

holding out any hope, suggested that he study philosophy for a year in the Seminary and then come back if he still wanted to be a Franciscan. The President judged that his protege should give up the idea of being a Franciscan, as this was certainly not his vocation. It was decided, then, that he should go on to the Major Seminary to study philosophy and theology, leaving it to God's Providence to choose a task for this fervent disciple of Jesus Christ. In all these troubles, humiliations and trials he drew strength from the thought of God's Holy Will, his obedience to his superiors and his unwavering confidence that he would one day be a priest and a missionary.

At the end of 1835 or the beginning of 1836 he began the study of philosophy, which at that time lasted only one year and from 1829 to 1836 was done in the Minor Seminary at Gestel-St. Michel and not in the Major Seminary at Herlaer. The following year, 1837, he went to the Major Seminary at Herlaer, whether he had finished his philosophy or not, because at the beginning of 1837 the philosophy course was transferred to there, where for seven or eight years there had been only theologians.

In 1837 he began to study theology in the Major Seminary at Herlaer, continuing in the new building at Haaren from July 1839 to July 1842. The successor to Rev. Philip van de Ven after his death on 13th November 1837 at Herlaer was Very Rev. James Cuyten, appointed on 22nd November. He took the students of philosophy and theology on 16th and 17th July 1839 to the new Seminary erected by himself.

In the Minor Seminary he had been known as « holy Peter Donders », and a student who followed his example was called « Peerke ». He was still in Herlaer when Very Rev. J. Grooff, Prefect of the mission of Surinam, came there in 1838 or in the first months of 1839. The Prefect arrived in July 1838 and left from Nieuwediep with Rev. Theodore Kempkes, whom he had recruited, on 20th February 1839, arriving in Surinam at the beginning of April.

While the Prefect of Surinam was in Holland and was expected to visit the Seminary, the philosophy professor, Rev. G. van Someren, who knew as others did that Peter Donders wanted to be a missionary, said to him: « You want to go to North America as a missionary. That is what everybody does these days: I would prefer to see you go to a Dutch colony that also needs priests. I think it only fair that we prefer our own colonies to foreign lands. If you are willing to go to Surinam, you will soon have a fine opportunity to speak with the Prefect of the mission there ».

A few days later the Prefect came to the Seminary and spoke with the theologian who wanted to be a missionary. He found him suitable and accepted him on condition that he continue with his theology, coming out to Surinam only when he had been ordained and finished his studies. The faithful servant of God remained true to this agreement, which was made in 1838 or early in 1839 in the Seminary of Herlaer.

He went on calmly and happily with the study of theology, which was more agreeable to him than philosophy or literature. He never relaxed his austere and pious life, laying deep foundations for the life ahead of him.

In 1840 he received tonsure, the four Minor Orders and the Subdiaconate in Malines. The following year Most Rev. Louis Cornelius Baron van Wijckerslooth, titular Bishop of Curium, ordained him Deacon on the Saturday of Quarter Tense before Easter and on 5th June 1841 ordained him Priest in Duinzicht near Oegstgeest. After his ordination Rev. Donders had to remain more than a year in the Seminary, so that he had an excellent opportunity to prepare for his great venture by still greater efforts at virtue and learning.

Finally, about July 1842 Mgr. van Curium, procurator of the Surinam mission, summoned him to Oegstgeest to prepare for the voyage. During the month before he sailed he served for three weeks as assistant in the parish of Warmond. On 1st August he set out full of joy from Nieuwediep in the ship *Rathuizen*, and after a voyage of forty-six days arrived in Paramaribo on 16th September.

On Sunday 18th September he celebrated a High Mass assisted by Rev. Jansen and Rev. Kempkes, while the Prefect preached. On 8th October the Prefect took him to Batavia, returning to the city on the 20th. There on 31st October he preached his first sermon, his theme being the value of the soul. From this time he gave himself wholeheartedly to his duties in the city and in the plantations. In the beginning he visited the plantations of the Lower Surinam and the Lower Commewyne, but he also went often to the Upper Surinam and the Saramacca. From September 1842 to August 1856 he was based in Paramaribo, from there going to the plantations and occasionally to Batavia.

During the absence of Mgr. Scheepers from May 1853 to September 1854 Rev. Donders was in charge of the mission and with Rev. Meurkens was responsible for all the pastoral work in the city and on the plantations. Though not sturdy in build, he took on all sorts of work and rarely had to interrupt them on account of illness.

In 1851 there was an outbreak of yellow fever. Many sol-

diers and other Europeans died of the disease. Rev. Donders used to visit the sick in the hospital with the greatest zeal and unselfishness; and that is probably why he caught the disease himself and for a month was unable to perform his duties. While he was in Batavia between 1856 and 1866 he suffered from a troublesome rash which he had to have treated by the doctor.

During the twenty-six years from August 1856 that he lived in Batavia he not only looked after the lepers with zeal, humility and kindness, but he used to visit the plantations on the Saramacca, and from July 1864 until March 1866 even Pieterszorg on the Comewyne and Resolutie on the Surinam. It was the shortage of priests that was the reason for Batavia's often being deprived of its pastor for long periods¹¹.

After the Surinam mission was entrusted to our Congregation he was moved by his reading of the life of our Holy Father Alphonsus to ask Bishop Swinkels to receive him into the Institute. On the recommendation of the Vicar Apostolic because of his virtue and apostolic zeal he was admitted by Father General to the novitiate and later to profession.

He began his novitiate in Paramaribo under Bishop Swinkels and in the company of Rev. J. Romme. He left Batavia early in October and reached the city on 14th. On 1st November he received the religious habit from the hands of his Bishop and novice master. Needless to say, the novitiate did not provide total seclusion and undisturbed attention to the spiritual life: fewness of numbers made it necessary for the two novices to assist the community and to take their share of the apostolic works with the other Fathers.

Both were clearly priests of proven virtue, and Rev. Donders was already in his fifty-seventh year. With a dispensation from Father General the novitiate was shortened, so that on 24th June 1867 after a retreat of two weeks they made their religious profession in the hands of Bishop Swinkels. Father Donders remained in the city until 13th August, when he was sent once more to Batavia to relieve the two Fathers who were recalled from there. A few weeks later he was joined by Father Verbeek¹².

This was his home until February 1883, and except for a space of two years he always had another Father as companion. At the be-

¹¹ This is the only indication of how heavy the demand was on Father Donders during his ten years in Batavia before the coming of the Redemptorists.

¹² Father Gerard Verbeek was born 14 II 1820 and ordained 20 XII 1845. He was professed as a Redemptorist 15 X 1860.

ginning of 1868 he began to work for the conversion of the Indians who lived about the regions of the Upper Saramacca, the Coppename, the Tibiti, the Wayombo and the Maratacca. From that time he would usually spend about half of each month in these works away from the mission. In the course of fifteen years he baptised about six hundred Indians, most of them children. Since the encampments rarely contained more than about five hundred souls, the average of forty baptisms a year must be considered very high.

After the good Father had been in Batavia fifteen years and had been without a companion from September 1880 to January 1883, he was transferred to the city, where he was stationed from February to 2nd November 1883. From 3rd November 1883 to 9th November 1885 he was at Coronic with Father Romme.

When Father van Coll had to leave Batavia and go to Europe, Father Donders went there to take his place. After fourteen months back in Batavia he took his departure for eternal life.

Wherever he went he always won the praise of everyone for his virtue. His fellow missionaries called him « holy Father Donders ». He has merited beyond doubt to be numbered among the sons of St. Alphonsus and to join those who surround our Holy Father's throne in heaven to praise the mercies of the Lord for ever.

I must now speak of his holy death and his edifying life. Father Romme, who succeeded his dead confrere in Batavia on 16th January, gathered information from Father John Bakker. He was himself for some years a witness of the life and virtues of the saintly man. He is my chief source for what I write. First I shall give some details of his last sickness and his beautiful death and then some general remarks concerning his saintly life.

I

According to the doctors his last illness was an inflammation of the kidneys. About a month before his death he had mentioned to his companion, Father John Bakker, that he was experiencing some pain and some blockage of the kidneys. From that time for his own peace of mind the Father often asked him how he was, always getting the reply: « Quite well, a little better if anything ».

Things went on this way up to the last day of the year, when he preached in the evening. Even while he was at recreation he said not a word about feeling ill. That same night, however, his condition became so acute that he had to call his companion, and he summoned the doctor. It was only after two days that various medica-

tions were able to afford some relief, only to reveal how advanced the inflammation had become.

From that evening he no longer left his room. On the night between 5th and 6th January he asked for the holy Sacraments, and Father John administered them at once. On this occasion he asked his confrere to do two things for him, first to ask pardon of the people if he had in any way offended any of them, and secondly to tell them how sad he was that many of them were still leading sinful lives in spite of all his instructions. Father John performed this charge with great emotion during Holy Mass on the feast of the Epiphany.

Apart from that occasion Father Donders hardly spoke at all during his illness, making no complaints, always satisfied with what was given him. He suffered in this way, totally submissive to God's Holy Will and with his mind fixed on Jesus and the things of heaven, without a moment's delirium until 3.30 p.m. of Friday 14th January 1887. At that moment the good, zealous, holy, exemplary old man gave up his beautiful soul to his heavenly Father, leaving us the sweet confidence that he received the crown of justice, if not immediately after death, then without a long delay in Purgatory.

The next day his body, clothed in the habit, lay in the church during Mass, which was attended by the faithful. In the afternoon he was buried with as much ceremony as was possible in the presence of the entire population of Batavia. The sacred rites were performed by Fathers A. de Kuyper and J. Bakker. Father de Kuyper had arrived the day before, an hour after the Father's death, bringing with him a trainee doctor for the hospital named Batemburg. At the burial he edified all present by his sincere words on the holy life and blessed death of the venerable old man.

Whoever knew the saintly man called him blessed. Would that our end should be like his. His body was buried beside the grave of Rev. G. Heinink, who had died in Batavia in 1849.

II

« With regard to his exemplary life », so Father Romme wrote to me, « I would gladly send you an account of some incidents or great works — extraordinary things are expected of men like Father Donders who have a reputation for holiness — but you know very well yourself that his beauty was mainly within, that in his humility he was always careful to serve God in silence, never making an out-

ward show of virtue, so that nothing extraordinary was to be seen in his day to day conduct ».

I fully agree with what Father Romme wrote; but I would add that Father Donders was an extraordinary man, but in the ordinary way of virtue and holiness. What we admire most in many of the saints is the extraordinary gift of miracles, prophecies and special gifts, together with extraordinary ways of contemplation and unusual gifts of soul and body, by which one becomes mighty in word and work, making wonderful conversions and performing great deeds and winning glory for oneself. Peter Donders in his humility was not a saint of that sort: as is well known, he was poorly rather than richly endowed in body and soul. He had not the voice, the stature, the ability, the eloquence or the knowledge to win renown. His greatness was in his virtue, in his humility, his mortification, his modesty, meekness, patience, obedience, poverty, love of God, spirit of prayer and his burning zeal for souls. With this comment, I return to what Father Romme has written.

« I knew him for about twenty-three years in the colony, first as a secular priest, then as a fellow novice and finally as a confrere in the Congregation. I often worked with him in Paramaribo, Coronie and Batavia, and I have to say that everywhere and in everything I found him a source of edification. Even though he was more than twenty years older than me and more than twenty years longer in the colony, he obeyed me always with the simplicity of a child and with the utmost submission. In fact, the more work I gave him and the harder, the better he liked it. One has to say that he tried to excel in all the virtues; and if he heard or read something of some saint or other that moved him, then he did his utmost to imitate it. In particular, what impressed me most was his effort to excel in prayer, mortification and zeal for souls ».

These three virtues, which were beyond doubt characteristic of Father Donders, should be briefly described.

His Love of Prayer

Besides the meditations and prayers prescribed by the Church and the Rule, when he was at home and his duties permitted it, he used to spend an hour in prayer morning and evening before the Blessed Sacrament. At the time of a community exercise in the church or oratory he would be in his place before the signal, already preparing himself by prayer. With his superior's permission he used

to get up every night to spend a long time before the Blessed Sacrament. How much time he spent in prayer when he was alone in Batavia or travelling in a tent-boat to a distant Indian camp is known only to heaven.

He said many ejaculatory prayers. Whenever the clock struck, even if he was with his confreres at recreation, the movement of his lips showed he was saying a prayer, probably an *Ave Maria*.

If the conversation was about worldly things or the news of the day, he was uninterested: he rarely joined in the talk; and in fact some times he began to nod. But if the talk was about a spiritual topic, about the life of a saint, the Church or the Pope, then he was all attention and only too ready to join in.

Until he was an old man he usually prayed on his knees or walking up and down in the church. The tracks worn into the floors of the churches in Batavia and Coronie bear witness to the thousands of paces he took in his prayer. His constant prayer is to be admired especially in that it did not seem that he was able to call on some source of prayer, either natural or supernatural, but was rather dry and hesitant of speech in God's presence. And God on His part gave him only sparingly of that delight by which the soul is drawn and made rich in heart and voice and is even taken up to contemplation.

His prayer was much more frequently vocal than mental, and he depended on the frequent recitation of the rosary, spiritual reading and the use of prayer books to arouse and nourish his devotion. During the night, perhaps, he would occasionally hear the Lord's voice more clearly, see the light of heaven and open his heart in tender and fervent expressions of love. Sometimes a confrere caught a glimpse of him during the night in Coronie and Batavia, and he was seen by the light of the sanctuary lamp kneeling on the altar steps.

In Batavia when the Angelus bell rang, he knelt at once, wherever he was, even in the street.

These are just a few signs of his piety; and I think I can say that his way of speaking with God remained always the same. It was always substantially the same, though there might have been some slight variation in unimportant things.

His Love of Mortification

If I have said he was a man of prayer, then of necessity I must say also that he was a mortified man. There can be a mortifi-

cation that is in a sense natural. Education, bodily health, various circumstances, all require that a man be more or less mortified, so that he takes it for granted. This was certainly the case with Father Donders. But the extent and the motives of his continual and extraordinary mortification make us say that in his case it was supernatural and almost heroic.

During the time he was a missionary his constitution was strong and healthy, needing good food; and one who watched him closely could not fail to notice that he liked his food and drink. When he was with others or in the community, he concealed his spirit of mortification as much as possible, fitting in with the others. But when he was alone, he was satisfied with what was least appetising. It was often noticed, for example, that if there was a choice at table between a loaf of bread that was fresh, soft and tasty and another that was old and hard and mouldy, he would choose the latter, scraping away a little of the mould.

When he was alone at Batavia and happened to know that there was some food in the house that the servant had forgotten to bring, he would never ask for it, even when it was something he liked. He was fond of chocolate; and though he lived where there was an abundance of cacao, he preferred to go without the chocolate and sell all the cacao rather than offend the slaves by satisfying his own taste. He was never heard to complain if something was not ready or was badly prepared.

When he was alone he usually drank nothing but water. On his journeys he took beer and wine; but ordinarily drank river water and gave the beer to the boatmen and the Indians, if he was allowed by obedience.

He kept the fast days of the Church and the Rule up to his seventy-fifth year, and then at his superior's orders he would take a piece of bread in the morning. He obeyed the command indeed, but saw that the piece of bread was as small as possible.

In the last years of his life he usually slept on bare boards; and he took the discipline nearly every night and morning when he was at home in Batavia or Coronie. Also when he was at home he would wear a cilice each morning. He had so completely controlled natural repugnance at visiting and helping the poor lepers, even the most deformed, that he never gave the least sign of disgust or horror.

Finally, there is the work he did alone at Batavia for years and years without another priest, all those journeys by river in all sorts of weather, circumstances and dangers, living all the time with people who were uneducated, vicious and ungrateful. To live happily

like that and to go on for so many years demands a spirit of mortification in a very high degree. Truly, if this be not heroic mortification, it seems very little short of it.

His Love of Neighbour and Zeal for Souls

A burning zeal for souls brought him to Surinam, kept him there for more than forty-four years working for the poorest, most ungrateful and most abandoned, and made him a true apostle of Jesus Christ crucified in his heart and seeking only that his Divine Master be known and loved. That zeal was just as strong in his seventy-seventh year as it was when he came to the colony at the age of thirty-three. If anything, it was stronger and more solid. His zeal is shown by the innumerable obstacles, the thousand and one setbacks on his journeys, on the plantations and among the Indians which he faced, though results were so meagre in Batavia and on his expeditions, especially among the Caribs.

One needs to know a ministry like this from experience or close at hand really to know it and understand its hardship and its worth. The people of Surinam, Protestants, Jews and Catholics, esteemed the man of God, not for any outward gifts or talents, but for his goodness and for his sacrificing himself for the good of the poorest, the most despised and the most abandoned. Father Romme has given me some instances of his zeal.

He fell sick shortly after he came to Coronie and was not able to visit the Catholic parishioners. This was a work especially dear to him, and yet Father Romme never heard him express the least complaint, annoyance, impatience or regret and never saw in him the least sign of anything of the kind. He saw everything that happened and every disappointment with the eyes of faith, seeing God's Will, so that he was always at peace and happy in the arms of Divine Providence. But as soon as he was able to go out again he was busy morning and evening visiting the sick, teaching the ignorant and searching out the backsliders.

Again, when he and Father Romme were together at Coronie, they used to take turns to visit the two succursal churches at Burnside and Welgelegen. It so happened that part of the road to Welgelegen was subject to flooding so as to become impassable to vehicles and could be used only by one on horseback. Since the old man could not ride a horse, he had to give up his turn to Father Romme.

The kindly and zealous old man found this hard; and as soon as Father Romme would get home he would question him about the flooding, if it was going down and how soon it would be fit for the buggy.

It seems to me that I may finish at this point and use the words with which Father Romme ended his letter on the death and virtues of Father Donders last January. « These are the few things I thought I should write about the life of our truly holy Father Donders. I am quite sure he possesses the reward of his saintly life among the blessed and with St. Alphonsus, and that he is a powerful mediator in heaven for the Congregation and for the mission of Surinam ».

Paramaribo, 26th March 1887

Adrian Bossers C.S.S.R.,
Chronista and Archivist of the
Mission of Surinam.

V

Extract from the *Batavia Chronicles*
written by Father Donders and concerning him ¹³

The Indians

May 1868

The Indians are the original inhabitants of Surinam. They used to be quite numerous, but through their misuse of alcohol and their very disorderly lives they have dwindled very much. There are three tribes, each with its own language, very different from those of the others: the Caribs, the Arrowaks and the Warros. Through association with the Negroes and Coloureds, most of them speak and understand pidgin English, with the exception of the women, children and old men of the Caribs. They all used to be pagans, but I have not found among them any idolatry in the proper sense of the word.

¹³ Document XVIII of the *Summarium*, I in the process at Paramaribo. Father Donders is speaking about the beginning of his work among the Indians and recording what he had gathered for himself about them by observation and some study in all probability.

They have magicians or witch doctors, whom they call *Paije* — doctors, or *Padjassi* — great doctors. They have no word to mean God: the word *Tamvesie* in their language also means grandfather. They believe vaguely that there is some sort of life above. In the history of Surinam we learn that in the past some ministers of the Moravian Brethren began to preach to the Arrowaks in Nickerie, but they did not continue. Some French priests, too, from Manna in Cayenne baptised many children, so Bishop Grooff said, near the river Marowijne. Since, however, the Indians are nomads, wandering about the whole region, nothing can be done with them unless they are properly instructed.

I attempted this several times in the past, when I was working among the lepers here in Batavia, but without success. Now that we have two Fathers here, I thought I should try another way, for it is truly a matter of sorrow that these poor people, redeemed just like ourselves by the precious Blood of Jesus Christ, should live and die under the power of the devil. I, therefore, wrote to ask the Bishop to allow me by way of experiment to seek out and instruct them in their own houses and encampments. The Bishop agreed and readily commended the work. Really, of the Indians and of some of the Negroes it can be said in these parts: *Compelle intrare*, as Jesus said in the Gospel.

My first visit was to the river Tibiti, ten or twelve hours from Batavia. The babies there have been baptised and the older children and adults are being instructed for holy baptism (Caribs).

At the river called the Wayombo again almost all the children (Caribs) were baptised and the rest are under instruction. This is a slow procedure. The *Our Father* and so on must be repeated hundreds of times for them before they can keep anything in their memories, but as always there are exceptions.

On the Upper Saramacca twenty-five hours from Batavia in the opposite direction there are many Arrowaks, more civilised, better clothed and with a better knowledge of pidgin English. I baptised not only the children but the adults as well, married them and gave some of them Communion.

Seven hours further on there are Caribs, who at first refused, but now give hope that they can be taught. The biggest difficulty in their regard is to get them together, because they live a distance of some hours from the river, so that many streams have to be travelled in a canoe, which is a hollowed out tree trunk. If we could bring all the Indians together, at least each tribe, and if we had enough Fathers for two to stay with The Caribs, then with God's

help, without which we can do nothing, we could make something out of them.

First one has to win their confidence, because they are suspicious, especially the so-called witch doctors or magicians. I have seen the way these *Piajmans* or witch doctors behave. In the beginning they tried to tell the rest that I was going to take away all their children after I baptised them. When that did not happen, they said the children would all die; and once that was seen to be false, several of them agreed that the children be baptised.

One Indian said to me that if one could not be saved without baptism, he preferred not to be baptised so as not to be separated from his ancestors. I asked him to come with me to the church (a hut consisting of four or five poles and a roof of branches) where I was to celebrate Mass. He promised and came along. After Mass he said to his wife: « Let us have our baby baptised ». I thanked God and did it at once.

An Indian woman was very ill, and I thought she could live only a few days, since she was unable to eat. The witch doctor or magician was worn out with practising his arts. He would suck a hand or an arm, blow in tobacco smoke and suck it out again. He would go through this process of sucking breathing tobacco and sucking and then stand up and breathe out the evil spirit into his hands. I asked him if the woman would get well, and he answered he had no idea, since he had not been a magician for long. I asked the woman if she preferred to be baptised, and she agreed. I did what I could to teach her the most necessary truths and dispose her as well as I could to contrition, and then, telling her to have nothing more to do with these foolish practices, baptised her. To my amazement the woman did not die. She got better, but fell back into her old ways. I think she is still alive, though this happened five months ago.

The Caribs are almost naked, but are learning modesty, and some of them are getting themselves clothes. I am constantly urging the rest to buy clothes. When they work cutting timber or sarsaparilla wood they can get money or clothes; but they prefer to buy alcohol. The Coloureds and some Europeans provide them with spirits for their own material gain.

The Arrowaks and Warros are better clothed, more civilised and not as much given to alcohol as the Caribs.

The Caribs — their way of life — houses — clothing

These people live in the bush, generally preferring the higher ground. They live by hunting and fishing and they grow cassava, bananas and the like.

They use bows and arrows. Some, many of them in fact, have guns. They work for the Europeans and the Coloureds, cutting sarsaparilla wood and clearing land, being paid in alcoholic drink (rum), tobacco and clothes. Generally speaking, they do not live long on account of the abuse of alcohol; and for this they blame the Europeans and others through whom they get the liquor (gin and rum).

When these cannot be obtained, they make an alcoholic drink they call *tapana* or *wokoe* from the ripe cassava (*Latropha*). They also have a reddish coloured drink they call *kasve* and another that is black and called *pajewaroe*. There are some exceptions, persons who reach a fairly advanced age.

Their Houses

Their houses or huts are open to the air at both ends and can not be locked. Furniture consists of hammocks, bows and arrows, guns and fish hooks. The women make the hammocks from cotton, and with a certain type of clay mixed with bark of a tree they make pitchers and dishes of various sizes. They also work in the field and do the cooking, so that they work much harder than the men.

Ordinarily, they are practically naked, with large knives in their belts. Now, as a result of our urging, they are starting to buy clothes for themselves. They are at home in the water: everyone can swim, men women and children. They use canoes made by hollowing out tree trunks.

Their Religion

Last century ministers of the Moravian Brethren began to evangelise the Arrowaks, but had to give up. Some little children were baptised in various places by Bishop Grooff and the early priests. If they survived beyond the age of seven, there was no provision for further care of them. Many people near the river Marowijne were also baptised by French priests from Cayenne.

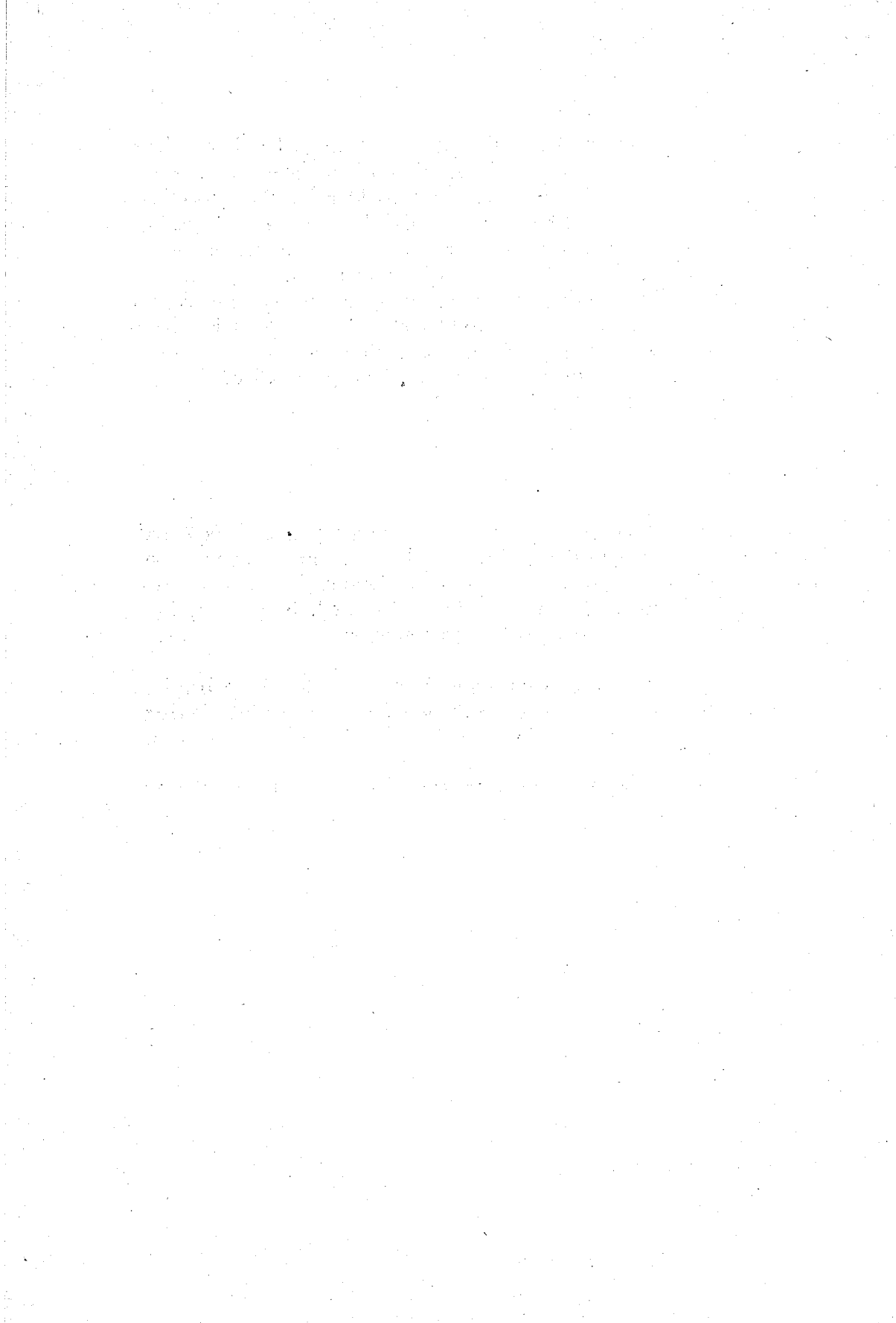
We have begun now to visit and teach them in the places where they live; and it is necessary to keep this up if we want to have any hope for them. It would be good if we could bring them together; but that is not possible, because they live by hunting and fishing, which means that they cannot be restricted to a particular place. They now live scattered about in small groups: in many cases just a few families live together. By God's goodness, though, we are not losing heart that if we win their confidence and God gives His help, without which we can do nothing, we shall overcome every difficulty. By now I have reached the point when nearly all of the children have been baptised.

The Arrowaks

These are better clothed, work well, understand and speak pidgin English better than the Caribs; but they are few in numbers and they, too, are scattered about the country. Among them not only the children, but also the adults have been baptised. Some, too, have been married and admitted to first Communion.

I have occasionally seen some Warros, and I have baptised a few of their children. These people are fewer in number. Perhaps at some later time I shall be in a position to write more about them.

These three tribes have languages that are different the one from the other.



COMMUNICATIONES

ANDRÉ SAMPERS

THE FIRST OFFER OF A REDEMPTORIST MISSION IN AFRICA, 1854

SUMMARIUM

Circa an. 1730 s. Alfonsus semel iterumque secum agitavit, an forsitan a Deo ad evangelisandos infideles esset vocatus; quod dubium ab ipsius conscientiae moderatore sensu negativo solutum est. Varii inter Sancti sodales in Congregatione SS.mi Redemptoris eundi ad missiones externas paratos se declaraverunt; paucitate tamen operariorum aliisque rebus adversis eorum desiderium ad effectum perducere nequivit.

Anno centesimo a Congregationis fundatione Redemptoristae laborem apostolicum extra Europam assumpserunt, et quidem in Statibus Foederatis Americae; sed potius inter advenas, quamquam initio etiam indigenis evangelium nuntiaverunt. An. 1854 S. Sedes primum Congregationi proposuit missionem assumendam inter non-christianos, et quidem in territorio ad oram occidentalem Africae sito, quod dicebatur Guinea-Senegambia, tunc temporis sub dominatione franco-gallica. Non cognoscimus responsum datum; pro certo tamen scimus an. 1899 tantum Redemptoristas missionem in Africa suscepisse.

One of the most striking characteristics of St. Alphonsus de Liguori, during his entire career as priest-religious-bishop, was undoubtedly his zeal to win souls for Christ: not for nothing has he been dubbed « Most Zealous Doctor ». His ambition embraced the entire world and the whole of mankind; he tried to win some by preaching, others through writing, and those he could not reach by the spoken or printed word — not less effectively — by his constant prayers. In this last group the people of the so-called mission countries had a privileged place. So it is by no means surprising that for some time, around 1730, he harboured thoughts of devoting himself to the conversion of non-Christians. Eventually, however, his

spiritual director made it clear to him that it was God's will that he dedicate himself to apostolic work among the people of his own country¹.

Alphonsus' early followers in the Congregation of the Redemptorists, founded in 1732, were animated by the same spirit as their Father. Most significant is the special vow, inserted in the oldest Rules and Constitutions² and in the profession form of 1743³, to go, on the Pope's or the Superior General's order, to the foreign missions. At the request of the archbishop of Naples, who wanted the members of the new Institute for work in their homeland, this vow was left out of the definitive Constitutions and Rules approved by Benedict XIV in 1749⁴. But even after that, on several occasions members volunteered to labor among the non-Christians. However, pressure of work in the Kingdom of Naples, lack of personnel and other adverse circumstances made the realisation of this ideal impossible⁵.

Only in 1832, i.e. a hundred years after its foundation, the Congregation began to work outside Europe, namely in the United States of America. About 10-25 years later there followed several calls from bishops for Brazil and Argentina; but these requests — urgent as they were — could not be complied with⁶. However, the work the

¹ All biographies of Alphonsus mention his keen interest in the foreign missions; more amply in R. TELLERIA, *S. Alfonso M. de Ligorio*, Madrid 1950-1951, 2 vols; see the index (v. II, p. 1015) s.v. Misiones de infieles. There are several good studies on the subject: J. van der HELDEN, *Wat de H. Alphonsus deed voor de vreemde missiën*, in *Het Missiewerk* 3 (1921-22) 23-27; J. NIELEN, *Der hl. Alfons v. L. und die auswärtigen Missionen*, in *Zeitschrift für Missionswissenschaft* 16 (1926) 25-38; J. DREHMANN, *De H. Alphonsus en de vreemde missies*, in *Het Missiewerk* 14 (1932-33) 96-104; R. TELLERIA, *De S. Alfonso et de missionibus inter infideles adnotatiunculae*, in *Analecta CSSR* 20 (1948) 133-136; O. GREGORIO, *S. Alfonso e le missioni estere*, in *S. Alfonso* (Pagani) 23 (1952) 167-170; Id., *L'ideale missionario del Giappone*, *ibid.* 29 (1958) 75-77. There is also a draft of a study by J. CUVELIER, *St. Alphonse et les missions étrangères*, drawn up by the author about ten years before his death (1962) in which he states: « Il y a quelques articles. Mais le sujet mérite une étude spéciale, plus étendue, plus approfondie ».

² These texts have been edited in *Spic. hist.* 16 (1968) 293 ff.

³ The profession form of 1743 is edited in *Analecta CSSR* 1 (1922) 47-48, facsimile on pp. 44-45.

⁴ Cardinal G. Spinelli's 'votum' for the Roman authorities on the Rules submitted by Alphonsus for papal approval, dated from Naples, October 11, 1748 is edited in the *Documenta miscellanæ ad regulam et spiritum Congregationis nostræ illustrandum*, Romæ 1904, 75-78. This document is of great importance in the early history of the Institute.

⁵ Several details on the mission-spirit of Alphonsus' companions are given in the publications quoted in note 1. There is no specific study on the Congregation and the foreign missions.

⁶ On the first calls to South America (1843-1857) see a study in this review 21 (1973) 9-27. In 1843 the Redemptorist Francisco de Menezes, born 1806 at Goa,

fathers were called for in these countries was mainly to preserve and revive the faith of the Catholics, the native population and, especially, the immigrants; therefore, it cannot be called foreign mission work in the traditional sense of the word.

The very first time the Redemptorists were asked to extend their work explicitly to the conversion of non-Christians was in 1854 when the Congregation of Propaganda inquired if they felt able to assume responsibility for a new vicariate apostolic, should the vicariate of the Two Guineas, to which the mission of Senegambia at the time belonged, be divided. This territory was at that time for the most part under French rule.

So far we have only the original letter, written May 16, 1854 by the Secretary of Propaganda, Archbishop Alessandro Barnabò, to the Redemptorist Procurator General, Fr. Domenico Centore, which is given below. In the General Archives of the Redemptorists in Rome (hereinafter: AGR) we did not find any further documentation. They are, unfortunately, rather incomplete for the period 1853-55 as a result of the troubles the Congregation endured in these years. Strangely enough no reply to Barnabò's request was found in the Propaganda Fide Archives⁷ (hereinafter: APF).

In any case, we know with certainty that the Redemptorists did not evangelize in Africa until 1899 in which year the Belgian Province of the Congregation founded a mission station (March 1st) at Matadi in the then Belgian Congo⁸.

was sent by Propaganda as an apostolic missionary to Bombay. He spent the rest of his life working in Ceylon (Sri Lanka) and in India, mainly in Bombay where he died in 1863, « fidelis vocationi suae ». Biographical sketch of Menezes in *Spic. hist.* 23 (1975) 200-220. We may mention here that since then we have obtained further documentation on Menezes, partly from the Propaganda Fide Archives, partly from archives in India and in Sri Lanka through our confrere Fr. Francis da Costa. At the conclusion of the somewhat laborious research, this review will publish a supplement to the above-mentioned article.

⁷ No documentation on the Propaganda proposal to the Redemptorists was found in APF, *Scritture riferite nei Congressi, Africa, Angola, Congo, Senegal, vol. 7 (1841-1860)*. There are a number of documents concerning the intended division of the vicariate apostolic of the Two Guineas; the lack of personnel and the need for missionaries from other Congregations are stressed.

⁸ For the beginnings of the Redemptorist mission in the Belgian Congo, see the excellent study of M. KRATZ, *La mission des Rédemptoristes belges au Bas-Congo. La période des semailles, 1899-1920* (Académie royale des Sciences d'Outre-Mer, Classe des Sciences morales et politiques, NS XXXVIII 3), Bruxelles 1970. Abbreviated edition in German: *Id., Die Kongomission der belgischen Redemptoristen in den Jahren 1899-1920*, Siegburg 1969; reviewed *ante* 17 (1969) 420-421. A survey of the documentation on the Redemptorist work in Africa, kept in AGR, is inserted in the *Guida delle fonti per la storia dell'Africa a sud del Sahara negli archivi della S. Sede e negli archivi ecclesiastici d'Italia*, to be published shortly by the Vatican Archives.

DOCUMENT

Alessandro Barnabò, Secretary of Propaganda, to Fr. Domenico Centore, Procurator General of the Redemptorists; Rome, May 16, 1854. - Original in AGR XLI B 6⁹.

Dalla Propaganda, 16 Maggio 1854

Nel 1842 Gregorio XVI di s. m. eresse in vicariato apostolico le Due Guinee, regioni vastissime all'occidente dell'Africa, e ad esse pochi anni indietro fu unito sotto un medesimo vicario apostolico l'altro ben esteso paese che appellasi Senegambia¹⁰. La missione pertanto delle Due Guinee e della Senegambia comprende una lunghezza di 1500 leghe e per 5 in 6 cento leghe si dilata all'interno, con una popolazione che ascende approssimativamente a 50 milioni. Tanta moltitudine d'uomini, se si eccettuino 12 in 15 mila cattolici, è immersa intieramente nelle tenebre del paganesimo, dell'islamismo e del protestantesimo.

Ora una missione sì estesa e in cui la messe è sì grande, non può più a lungo formare un solo vicariato, né rimanere affidata alla sola Congregazione dello Spirito Santo e del S. Cuor di Maria¹¹, al cui zelo e sagrifizj si dee la conservazione del vicariato anzidetto. Quindi presso formale domanda del vicario apostolico delle Guinee e del superiore generale della lodata Congregazione¹² la Propaganda ha adottato il principio di suddividere quella missione in diversi vicariati, rimettendone peraltro la esecuzione al tempo in cui si avranno in pronto gli elementi necessarj ad effettuare la decretata divisione.

Ora richiedendosi all'uopo principalmente operarj evangelici, che animati da spirito apostolico vogliono recare il nome e la fede di Gesù Cristo fra gli Africani, tanto più degni della sollecitudine della Chiesa quanto più

⁹ Copy in APF, LDB, vol. 345 (1854), fo 538r-539v. The copybook indicates to whom the letter was sent: « Circolare diretta ai RR. PP. Preposito Generale della Compagnia di Gesù — dei Passionisti — dei Cappuccini — dei Francescani — dei Benedettini — dei Lazzaristi — [dei] Missionari del Preziosissimo Sangue — dei Liguorini ecc. ». So the request was forwarded to several Orders and Congregations, not to the Redemptorists only.

¹⁰ The vicariate apostolic of the Two Guineas was erected on October 3, 1842 and the same day Edward Barron (1801-1854), former vicar general of the diocese of Philadelphia, Pa., who since 1841 was engaged in missionary work in West Africa, was appointed vicar apostolic and bishop of Constantina i.p.i. He resigned his vicariate in 1844. In 1842 the recently founded Congregation of the Holy Heart of Mary had sent its first missionaries to the vicariate and one of them, Jean Benoît Truffet (1812-1847), became in 1846 vicar apostolic and bishop of Gallipoli i.p.i. Senegambia became a distinct vicariate in 1863 with Louis Kobès (1820-1872), bishop of Methone i.p.i., as its first vicar apostolic. See R. RITZLER-P. SEFRIN, *Hierarchia catholica medii et recentioris aevi*, vol. VII (1800-1846), Padova 1968, 161 and 189 (Barron); vol. VIII (1846-1903), Padova 1978, 173 (Truffet) and 382 (Kobès).

¹¹ The Congregation of the Holy Ghost was founded in 1703 in Paris by Claude François Poullart des Places; the Congregation of the Holy Heart of Mary was founded in 1841 in Strasbourg by the ven. François Libermann. The two Congregations merged in 1848 under the title: Congregation of the Holy Ghost under the Protection of the Immaculate Heart of Mary.

¹² In 1854 Bp. Jean Rémi Bessieux was vicar apostolic of the Two Guineas. Superior General of the Congregation of the Holy Ghost was Fr. Ignace Schwinden-

lontani¹³ dalla verità, il sottoscritto Segretario di Propaganda, in nome di questa S. Congregazione, invita V. P. R.ma a considerare, se la religiosa società cui Ella appartiene¹⁴, sarebbe in grado di accettare uno dei nuovi divisati vicariati apostolici, e se in questo caso potrebbe offrire un numero sufficiente di idonei sacerdoti ai quali affidarne la cura.

In attenzione di analogo riscontro lo scrivente con sincera stima si conferma

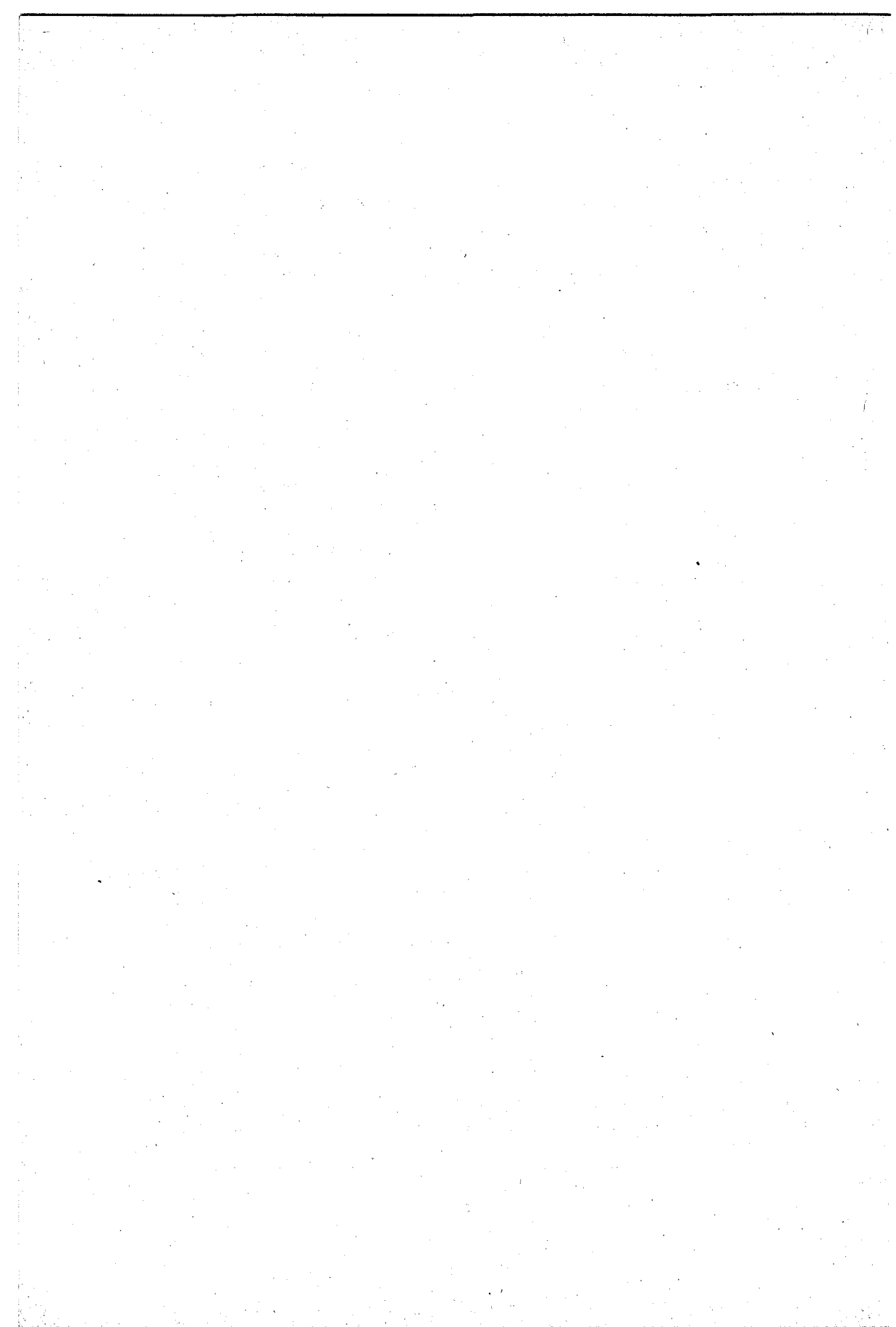
Dev.mo obb.mo Servitore
Al. Barnabò

R.mo P. Domenico Centore
Procuratore Gen.le dei Liguorini

hammer whose brother Edouard was a Redemptorist. (Fr. Edouard Schw. was in Rome during the years 1855-1862 as secretary of the Superior General Fr. Nicolas Mauron CSSR).

¹³ In the copy « più sono lontani ».

¹⁴ In the copy « cui Ella presiede ».



LIBRORUM NUNTIA ET IUDICIA

BAILY Michael, CSSR, *Small Net in a Big Sea. The Redemptorists in the Philippines, 1905-1929*; Cebu City, San Carlos Publications (University of San Carlos), [1978]; 8°, IV-120 pp., ill.

There is a particular interest in Father Baily's study of the early years of the Redemptorists in the Philippines. It was the Congregation's first venture into the Far East; there were pastoral problems quite peculiar to the Philippines; and it became necessary to modify certain attitudes towards both the apostolate and home life that had become almost sacrosanct. The author shows himself alert to the issues raised by his subject, and the result is a work that offers as much instruction as it does interest.

The Irish province sent a community to Cebu mainly because a warm-hearted provincial had responded after his own fashion to an appeal to help a people desperately in need of spiritual care. The parish of Opon on the island of Mactan occasioned distress from the start. The problems of the parish form the background of the period treated by Father Baily. There was a great deal of hardship, which in turn evoked a courage and endurance that made the foundation's survival and achievement the more commendable.

The troubles experienced are mainly traceable to that general reluctance, particularly strong in Ireland, to accept a parochial ministry. The struggle to introduce the popular missions to the Filipino people and to combine them with a conscientious, though unwilling, attention to parish duties provide the burden of the narrative. In developing the theme Father Baily shows the attitudes of those days, highlighting the very strong opposition of the General Government to the parishes. It is, in fact, an excellent illustration of that phase of the history of our Redemptorist ministry.

It is a lively account that does justice to the memory of the pioneers. The author shows his appreciation of men like Andrew Boylan, Matt O'Callaghan, Tom Cassin and Willie Byrne. They and their companions who guided the Opon foundation through its difficult early years are given the credit they deserve. There is much personal courage in the story, especially once the missions became accepted. The men faced hard journeys with most primitive transport — or none at all; they worked at visiting, preaching and hearing confessions from early morning until late at night; and they went from one laborious mission to another, often without even a day's rest.

Father Baily writes what he calls « a family history » and for that reason has chosen not to encumber his text with footnotes. (p. III) He has, however, carefully studied his subject, giving a list of his sources in his preface. The result is certainly both readable and accurate, as far as one can judge.

It is a welcome treatment of a most interesting little segment of Redemptorist history. The Philippines are the first Redemptorist foundation in the Far East, where during the present century the work has seen enormous growth. Further studies like Father Baily's of Redemptorist expansion in the lands of the Orient must surely be valuable as well as fascinating reading.

S. BOLAND

RUEF John J., CSSR, *Misiones Parroquiales CSSR, 1945-1976. Informe N. 2;* Roma, Secretariado General del Apostolado CSSR (offset), [1979]; 8°, XIII-269 pp.

This is the second of a series of three surveys being prepared under the direction of Father Ruef. The first was reviewed in an earlier number of *Spicilegium* (26 [1978] 242-243). As was explained by the earlier reviewer, the parish missions have had a most important formative influence on Redemptorist life and apostolic ministry. The years covered by the survey, that is to say the postwar period, have been long considered a time of crisis for the missions. The information brought together by Father Ruef's efforts should facilitate a sound evaluation of the extent of the crisis. After all, in many countries Redemptorists have long been considered among the foremost of the popular missionaries.

While it is obviously necessary for the sake of a collated survey that the reports collected be presented according to a formula, one might fear that such a pattern would inhibit the objectivity of the survey. This does not appear to have happened. The clear and concise report from the Lyons province, for example, is supplemented by an ample documentation; and the long report from Sao Paulo offers a great deal of valuable information presented with evident enthusiasm about the structure of the missions in that region, the plan of sermons and instructions and their content.

The material contained in the survey has been contributed by correspondents in the provinces of Naples, Lyons, Spain, Argentina, Sao Paulo and Colombia. A variety of cultures is covered in the reports, and naturally some variety in missionary practice is also observed. At the same time, one must remark that those who have compiled the various reports show a welcome common interest in the topic and all reveal a serious attempt at self-evaluation.

The first section of each report, the brief history of the missions since the war provides a useful means of estimating the gravity of the crisis experienced by the missions in recent years. Some reports speak of a reluctance manifested by parish clergy to invite missionaries to evangelise their people as they did in the past. It must be considered significant, however, that in Spain, the only country for which statistics are provided, there was a commendable peak in 1962 with 486 missions, after which the numbers gradually declined to 70 in 1976. Bare numbers like that do not tell the full story, of course, but it does seem that one should look closely at the sixties and seventies. The reports show that in recent years individual missions in the different countries occupy more time with preparation of the people and clergy of the parish and the follow-up period after the mission has been preached. Naturally, that has to reduce the total number of the missions.

Some of the reports speak of the problems of the missions today, and some of these are quite important. More than one report, for example, mentions the sharp decline in personnel available for the missions. And the report from Argentina, moreover, draws attention to a certain polarisation of attitudes to the missions, a phenomenon which must have been experienced in many countries, symptomatic as it is of a time of change.

The survey concludes with a contribution by Father Vincenzo Ricci of the Roman province. It is a brief but very informative essay on the history of the popular missions. As such it should prove a useful guide

to any assessment of the present position of the missions.

Father Ruef is to be commended for his industry and interest in assembling the two surveys which have so far appeared. The third volume which will complete the investigation, covering the most recent field of missionary work, namely Asia, promises much that will be of interest as well as of value.

S. BOLAND

CARRIERE Gaston, OMI, *Dictionnaire biographique des Oblats de Marie Immaculée au Canada*; Ottawa; Editions de l'Université d'Ottawa, 1976-1979; 8°, 3 vol. (350, 429, 485 pp.), ill.

It would seem, if we are to judge by the various biographical collections mentioned by Father Carrière in his introduction, that Canada is well furnished with such aids to the historical researcher. Though it is scarcely necessary any longer to justify such a publication by appealing to previous examples, it is gratifying to learn what a wealth of resources is to hand. The present work, treating the Oblates of Canada, is a welcome and extremely useful addition.

Canada has been well served by the Oblates; and that country must be happy to find so much information about men who have played an important role in its religious history. The contents, however, of the present work are of value to a public far wider than Canada. The Congregation, established at Montreal in 1841, spread not only throughout the country, but into the United States and as far afield as Africa and South America. The author provides tables showing the filiation of provinces of Canadian origin together with maps to illustrate the propagation of the Oblates in North America. Names which must be of interest and significance to the Church in so many regions are to be found in the three volumes.

Father Carrière has been generous in compiling his catalogue of something more than 1700 names. He has included Canadian Oblates, including those who came from other countries, provided they had reached ordination in the institute or, in the case of lay members, final profession. The work, consequently, has been one of extreme and meticulous labour. One might, in fact, wonder if the author may not have been too kind to his public.

The individual short biographical sketches are admirably concise, giving in a regular form information about the subject's origins and death with the places where he was stationed and other important events of his life. The author has paid careful attention to the dates he attaches to these details. There is no attempt to offer anything like a complete study of any individual. For further investigation the reader is referred to the bibliography available on the subject, this being offered in footnotes.

The third volume concludes with some very useful appendices. There is a list of places served by the Oblates in Canada, giving the names of Fathers and Brothers who have resided in each place. A further list gives the places of origin of Canadian Oblates. A more general bibliography is a most helpful final offering.

Father Carrière is certainly to be congratulated on an excellent production. On paging through this result of so much careful study and collecting of material one cannot but reflect how valuable similar collections by other religious are bound to prove themselves. And surely, it should

be most timely for Redemptorists to pay a tribute like this to the past achievements of their own men.

S. BOLAND

BARRETT Max, CSSR, *King of Galong Castle. The Story of Ned Ryan, 1786-1871*; n. p. n. d. [Sydney 1978]; 8°, 175 pp., ill.

In 1914 a decision of the New South Wales Court of Equity managed to unravel the complexities of the Will of the late Hon. John Nagle Ryan M.L.C., a document that had been very inexpertly drawn up by a well-meaning priest friend. This decision, which granted the Galong property to the Redemptorists, has remained an important one for the judiciary « by reason of the points of law decided in it » (p. 143). One of the important points of law that has subsequently frequently been invoked was the status of religious before the law. The decision assured to the Redemptorists title to over six hundred acres of the rich wheat and grazing lands of the New South Wales southern slops, and with them Galong Castle.

It was not entirely a fanciful name. The shopkeeper in tiny Galong township kept a treasured early photograph of the Ryan homestead on which he had scrawled « Galong Castle », the name by which the place was known in the neighbourhood. It was the home of the Ryans, whose scattered holdings about the Lachlan district almost defy rediscovery and which were the vast Ryan kingdom which Father Barrett has so diligently researched. The Ryans were renowned for their lordly hospitality to every passing traveller, no matter what his means or beliefs, be he swagman or hawker or miner or settler, all were welcome to shelter in the travellers' huts and to be sent on their way with their stocks of food replenished. The Ryan house was a favourite resting place for the pioneer clergy; and the man who wrote so nostalgically of them under the pen name of « John O'Brien » said of it that « no place in the whole country had a longer or closer association with our early southern Catholic history ». Among the many visitors beyond all doubt the one held in the greatest affection and veneration was Australia's first Archbishop, the lovable hard-riding John Bede Polding, whose memory is inseparably linked with Rosary Hill which he named and which looks down on Galong Castle.

The King of Galong Castle was Edward (Ned) Ryan. Condemned to death in his native Tipperary for his part in riots against military encroachments on property, his sentence was commuted into transportation for fourteen years. In 1830 on the expiration of his sentence he was a free man, and like many another in those adventurous years, he pushed out beyond the skimpy Nineteen Counties to which a harried government had tried at first to restrict settlement. Land could be acquired by government grant, by purchase at the rate of five shillings an acre or simply by squatting. Ned tried all three methods and established his « kingdom ». By 1848 he had his castle, to which at last, after a separation of thirty-two years, he brought from Ireland his wife and his two remaining children, Anastasia and John Nagle.

The story of the Ryans and their settlement in newly opened country is the sort of study that is attracting much valuable attention among Australian historians at present. After the dashing exploits of the explorers there is now being discovered the history of the development

of the new lands by men like Ned Ryan, a story of hardship, endurance and heroism and an ultimate success that laid the foundation of Australia's prosperity and, it used to be thought, of her national characteristics. To this study account of the Galong Ryans must be a valuable contribution.

Father Barrett confesses to having been early captivated by Galong, nestling on its rich green river flats within the embrace of its wide circle of granite hills, and by his discovery of relics of Ned Ryan, whose certificate of freedom is still preserved in St. Clement's Galong. His tracing Ned Ryan has been the work of years; and it is to his credit that his thorough research is presented carefully documented. His notes and his index should prove of value for other researchers in a field still new. He has produced a scholarly work that has the further advantage of an attractive presentation which is explained by his evident absorption in his subject.

There are some very useful maps of the squatting properties of the Lachlan. The illustrations, both in photographs and in delightful pen drawings, contribute to a really beautifully produced book. It should give pleasure not only to the scholar but to the general reader.

S. BOLAND

WILTGEN Ralph M., SVD, *The Founding of the Roman Catholic Church in Oceania, 1825-1850*; Canberra, Australian National University Press, 1979; 8°, XXII-610 pp., ill. - \$ A 24.50.

Father Wiltgen of the Society of the Divine Word has rendered excellent service to missiological and historical studies in this, the first account of the beginnings of Catholic missions in the vast region of Oceania. The year 1825 which he takes as his starting point saw the first Catholic venture into the Pacific with the establishment of the Prefecture Apostolic of the Sandwich Islands. It was entrusted to the newly founded Picpus Fathers, who were soon joined by the Marists, themselves not long in existence.

The extent of the missions and the magnitude of the task confronting the Church authorities appear vividly in the boundaries of the Prefecture Apostolic of the South Sea Islands founded in 1830: from Easter Island to New Zealand and from the equator to the tropic of Capricorn. It was, of course, principally ocean; but it was soon evident that the Pacific, so long overlooked, contained a surprising number of inhabited islands. To a large extent Catholic interest was stimulated by the quite extensive English and American Protestant missionary ventures in the region. They had been no less prompt than the traders to follow the voyages of discovery of Captain James Cook and the other great navigators of his time.

During the brief period of twenty-five years covered by the present study there was an extraordinary development. The second quarter of last century was a time of growth, not only for the many islands of Oceania, but for Australia, too, and New Zealand, which at this time received their first bishops. For the most part Father Wiltgen's history tells of the growing commitment of the New Picpus and Marist institutes to the foreign missions they had so generously undertaken. Their undoubted success in the Pacific was gained at a high cost. In 1843 Bishop Rouchouze of the Picpus missionaries was lost at sea together with the twenty-four

helpers he had recruited for his missions in Eastern Oceania and the entire crew of his new mission ship. The Marists had their martyrs who died like St. Peter Chanel at the hands of the Islanders as well as a great number who succumbed to disease.

The story is full of interest, not without its dramatic incidents, as when the Marists on New Caledonia found themselves besieged in their flimsy dwelling. The author does justice to his subject. He gives the reader the benefit of thorough research carefully documented and presented in a style that is clear and always eminently readable.

The narrative is principally in terms of the activity of the Sacred Congregation for the Evangelisation of Nations, which we used to call Propaganda. The author has thoroughly investigated its archives, calling on further material in the records, not only of the Picpus and Marist missionaries, but also in those of other religious institutes that concerned themselves in the missions of the Pacific. As a fortunate consequence, the history is gratifyingly objective, treating the anxieties, frustrations and hesitations of those engaged in the great venture as well as their triumphs. They did succeed against all odds, and yet they were so very human, as is evident from their correspondence. Bishop Pompallier, Vicar Apostolic of Western Oceania and later first Bishop of Auckland, appears as a very difficult character indeed, who sorely tried the patience of the venerable Marist superior and even succeeded in ruffling the diplomatic calm of the Cardinal Prefect. He claimed a disproportionate amount of the latter's attention.

A particularly pleasing feature of the work is the fine selection of illustrations and maps. The maps especially deserve to be commended. They are numerous enough to satisfy the most demanding, and they are either facsimile reproductions of those found in the archives or have been drawn according to information contained in the sources.

The principal value, however, of Father Wiltgen's excellent study is that it makes available to students and possibly to a wider reading public material about an important mission field not previously accessible.

S. BOLAND

Libri hucusque vulgati in
BIBLIOTHECA HISTORICA CSSR

Decreto memorabili « De instituendis commentariis historicis Congregationis SS. Redemptoris », quo Superior generalis Leonardus Buijs die 2 februarii 1953 maxime ad colendam exquirendamque Instituti nostri historiam incitavit, duplicem seriem scriptorum evulgandam esse constituit: illam scil. foliorum periodicorum, sub titulo *Spicilegium historicum CSSR*, aliamque voluminum, sub titulo *Bibliotheca historica CSSR*, « opportuno tempore edendorum, quibus documenta et studia historica maioris molis et momenti producantur ». Cf. *Spic. hist.* 1 (1953) 5.

Spicilegium, non sine duro labore et sudore Sociorum redactionis, feliciter usque ad vol. 27 pervenit. In *Bibliotheca* hucusque 9 volumina prodierunt, quorum hic sequitur index.

A. S.

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