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THE PASSERAT REGIME:
A WATERSHED IN REDEMPTORIST HISTORY

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When, towards the end of 1820, Father Joseph Passerat came to Vienna as Vicar General of the Redemptorists beyond the Alps, they immediately presented a new image. It was inevitable, of course, that a new major superior should have an effect on the Institute. In this case, however, the change was particularly marked. After the vigorous regime of St. Clement Hofbauer had ended in the tragic frustration of his many apostolic ventures, his successor, now at last under a more benign emperor, was able to make a completely fresh beginning. In effect, Father Passerat was a new founder. The fresh start was at once evident in the rapid growth both in numbers and extent. That was on the surface and visible; but more fundamentally there was a change of spirit from the Hofbauer regime. At first that occasioned some tension before the Passerat direction prevailed; and after 1869 the northern regime was accepted even by the Neapolitan Redemptorists, in spite of their closer contact with the authentic Alphonsian tradition. It is this Passerat direction, which extended well beyond the middle of the present century, that we now wish to examine.

The difference between what some have called the "Hofbauer tradition" and the "Passerat tradition" has been well discussed by

Otto Weiss.¹ The author has shown how both superiors have been affected by their times and current thinking in ecclesiastical and lay circles, Romantic or emerging Ultramontanism. We wish to look now at the effect of the change on the members of the Institute, their ways of acting and thinking. It was the "Passerat tradition", if it is right to speak that way, that has come to set the tone of the whole Congregation. Since the 1960's Redemptorist life has been subjected to a very radical rethinking, thanks most of all to directions of the Holy See. Perhaps the present situation will be better appreciated in the light of the older tradition to which a newer one is succeeding. In any case, it is inevitable that much of the older ways should have survived in individuals. Those older ways did not lend themselves easily to change.

Investigating the change that came with Passerat it is necessary to focus attention especially on the two earliest leaders of the Transalpines. If comparison of persons is always odious, it is doubly so when one is a saint and the other a venerable; and it is the latter who attracts the closer scrutiny. It is only fair to keep in mind two considerations. The first has been well made by Otto Weiss.² Both St. Clement and Father Passerat together with their companions were men of their times. They were far from being alone in matters one might find occasion to criticise. The second point is that we should not overlook the very considerable achievements of the Passerat regime. It was a fresh start, and credit for its great success must certainly go to the superior.

I. «THE HOFBAUER TRADITION»

It is at least convenient, and not without justification, to speak of two traditions affecting the Redemptorists outside Italy. That which stemmed from St. Clement Hofbauer had a very uneven course. In May 1788 the Superior General De Paola appointed him Vicar General "for all possible cases".³ These generous faculties were exercised during the turbulent years about the end of the

¹ O. WEISS, *Die Transalpinen Redemptoristen und der Zeitgeist* in *Spic. Hist.* 35 (1987) 155-174.

² *Ibid.*, 173.

³ *Monumenta Hofbaueriana*, VIII, Torun, 1936, 13. The *Monumenta* (quoted MH) appeared in fifteen sections (*fasciculi*) between 1915 and 1951, published in Cracow, Torun and Rome.

eighteenth century, the years that saw the final dismemberment of Poland, the wars of the French Revolution and Napoleon, years that caused an exasperated English Prime Minister to exclaim: "Roll up the map of Europe." Clement acted as Vicar General at first from an insecure foothold in Warsaw. He persisted despite his repeatedly frustrated efforts in trying to find a more permanent home in Germany and Switzerland. Finally, after St. Benno's in Warsaw was suppressed, he guided his widely scattered subjects from Vienna, where he was conducting a fruitful but demanding apostolate.

The busy superior was responsible for a large number of Redemptorists. The three men who came to Warsaw in 1787 had increased at an amazing rate. Statistics for these earliest years of the Transalpines are unsatisfactory, as the lists given in the catalogues of the time⁴ are incomplete, as are also the relations of the industrious Father Kuntz.⁵ There is, however, evidence enough of quite considerable growth of the Redemptorists in spite of the difficulties of their situation in Poland; and that was certainly due in large measure to the character of the Vicar. Clement was of a strong and attractive personality. Of that we have the testimony of a man who was his friend and admirer, that extraordinarily peripatetic Irishman who assisted Louis XVI at the end and continued as spiritual guide to the surviving Bourbons in Poland, the Abbé Edgeworth. Writing about Hofbauer to Lord Douglas in London, he said: "I am certain that the few minutes interview that you will grant him, will suffice for you to discover all the precious treasures God has heaped up in the heart of this angelic man, and will make you just as enthusiastic over him as I am."⁶ That was the character that left its mark on those of his disciples who passed under the authority of his successor. That is most of all what constituted his "tradition," which it should be helpful to examine more closely.

⁴ Cf. S. J. BOLAND, *A General Catalogue of the Redemptorists in Spic. Hist.* 38 (1990) 450.

⁵ Father FRIEDRICH KUNTZ, general archivist of the Redemptorists at the end of the nineteenth century, compiled a work in 21 manuscript volumes which remains in the archives under the title, *Commentaria de vita S. Alphonsi et de rebus Cong. SS. R., futuro eiusdem Cong.nis Annalium scriptori diligenter preparata.*

⁶ Quoted by J. HOFER in his *Life of St. Clement. ET* by J.B. HAAS, *St. Clement Maria Hofbauer*, New York, 1926, vii.

1. - *Dynamism*

Clement Hofbauer was first and foremost a man of action. Those who lived with him in St. Benno's had reason to know that, and when the community was disbanded in 1808, its members could hardly have failed to carry with them the memory of intense pastoral activity. In a letter to the Nuncio Severoli in Vienna in 1802 Clement described the schedule of services in the church.⁷ The round of masses, devotions, sermons, instructions and confessions appear at first reading to have been uninterrupted. Father Hofer concludes his account of the services in St. Benno's by remarking that the programme far exceeds what is ordinarily provided for the faithful in Catholic churches.⁸ In fact, he concludes: "A multiplicity of divine services, such as can hardly be crowded into the space of an ordinary mission nowadays, formed the regular daily order at St. Benno's for ten years." This is what he so aptly called "the Perpetual Mission," and it represents truly "the Hofbauer tradition."

Father Maurice De Meulemeester has drawn attention to a significant factor in the religious rule that the Transalpines followed in their earliest years.⁹ It was slightly different from the Pontifical Rule of 1749, still used by the Redemptorists in the Kingdom of Naples. The text had been slightly changed by the men of the Papal States in a general chapter held in Scifelli in 1785. This Scifelli chapter added to the brief mention of preaching in Redemptorist churches further mention of exposition of the Blessed Sacrament, and notes on the text spoke of sermons, exhortations and instructions as well as the erection of pious societies and retreats preached to the people in the church. It is quite reasonable to see such legislation as providing a man like St. Clement with justification for his "Perpetual Mission."

In addition to the intense activity in the church, Clement had been moved by the depressed condition of Warsaw to undertake works to relieve the prevailing ignorance and poverty. As early as 1788 he had commenced a school for orphans and others in the

⁷ MH, II, Torn, 1929, 44-46.

⁸ HOFER - HAAS, 100.

⁹ M. DE MEULEMEESTER, *Outline History of the Redemptorists*, Louvain, 1956, 123. The rule as followed outside Italy has been studied by F. HOSP, *Geschichte der Redemptoristenregel*, Vienna, 1939. The text quoted is on p. 123.

cramped quarters of St. Benno's.¹⁰ Before the community was summarily suppressed in 1808 this small beginning had grown to schools for boys and girls, an orphanage and an industrial school. The Vicar was a man who got things done. He organised the zealous group of Oblates to assist his ventures with the approval of the Holy See.¹¹ His companions in St. Benno's could not have failed to retain memories of untiring zeal.

It was no easy task for the man responsible for establishing the Redemptorists in northern Europe to find a base for the increasing number of his companions. Father Hofer has described St. Clement's travels in Germany and Switzerland and his repeated frustration at seeing promising foundations overthrown by hostile or timid authorities.¹² The shadow of Napoleon loomed over most of the Vicar's attempted foundations, and it was discouraging even for a man of Hofbauer's hardy spirit. Father Hofer was justified in his judgement that "his (St. Clement's) greatest adversary was Napoleon".¹³ He added that when Napoleon was finally defeated and exiled and Europe was again at peace, "the energies of our saint were spent." Even St. Clement had his limits; and long before Waterloo he had begun to look outside Europe, to Canada, as offering opportunities denied him closer to home. For this purpose he seems to have enlisted the aid of the Abbé Edgeworth with his wide range of powerful friends.¹⁴

Even the abrupt closure of St. Benno's and the exile of the Vicar to Vienna and the suspicious vigilance of the Josephist police did not restrict his zeal. In addition to his enduring contribution to the good of religion through what came to be called "the Hofbauer Circle" his principal concern was still his responsibility for his own Congregation. He continued to guide the homeless Redemptorists in Switzerland as they continued their vagrant existence under their heroically obedient superior, Father Passerat. He was at first cautious about the mission to Romania proposed by Propaganda, because it entailed uncertain collaboration with other religious

¹⁰ The educational and charitable works of the early Redemptorists in Warsaw have been studied by LÉONARD GROCHOWSKI, *L'œuvre d'éducation et de bienfaisance des Pères Rédemptoristes à Varsovie (1787 - 1808)* in *Spic. Hist.* 34 (1986) 297-317.

¹¹ The statutes of the Oblates are to be seen in MH, II, Torun, 1929, 54-60. The decree of the S. Cong. de Prop.Fide (now pro Gentium Evangelizatione) dated 29th July 1804 is in MH, VIII, Torun, 1936, 272-273.

¹² See HOFER - HAAS, 189-272.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 107.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 252.

Institutes.¹⁵ But when a small community was established in Bucharest, he was all enthusiasm, helping with advice and encouragement and pleading for relief for their extreme poverty. He even showed a wish to join them in their labours. One may be sure that the three pioneers, Fathers Forthuber, Libotzky and Haetscher, retained the memory of their dynamic superior when they passed to the authority of his successor.

But those who knew him well did not remember him as a man who was compulsively busy. They would have known that their Vicar was a man of prayer. Clement himself insisted on prayer in Redemptorist life, writing to the Nuncio Severoli in his rustic Latin style, "We join a contemplative life to the active ... because without the unction of the Holy Spirit the workmen's carts creak".¹⁶ He was a saint, after all, and his holiness of life certainly belongs to the "Hofbauer tradition."

2. - Spirituality

To many who study the life of Clement Hofbauer he must appear a very untypical saint. The picture that emerges is that of a battler. Even as a child he had to struggle to help support his family; and in pursuit of his goal of the priesthood he had to overcome his poverty and then the unorthodoxy his infallible "Catholic nose" detected in his teachers of theology. Ordained eventually as a Redemptorist, he was at once plunged into the task of transplanting the Neapolitan Congregation into the unfriendly northern lands. That work, in which "his greatest adversary was Napoleon," was left incomplete at his death. In this seemingly incessant activity special significance must be given to his attraction for the eremitical life.¹⁷ It is hints like this that give the clue to what made him the saint he is, since he had no leisure to be a writer, and too few of his letters have survived.

The spirituality of St. Clement, however, has been ably studied by Father Louis Vereecke.¹⁸ The unifying element was his

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 372-379.

¹⁶ *Activae contemplativam addimus vitam ... sine Spiritus Sancti unctione, enim, plaustra operariorum strident.* Letter of 6th October 1802 in MH, II, Torun, 1929, 48.

¹⁷ F. FERRERO, *La vida eremítica de San Clemente María Hofbauer* in *Spic. Hist.* 18 (1970) 330-370.

¹⁸ L. VEREECKE, *La spiritualité de Saint Clément Marie Hofbauer* in *Spic. Hist.* 31

faith, "the starting point of his spirituality".¹⁹ It was so very characteristic of the man. He confidently, and proudly one would have to say, declared: "I have no reason to expect from God a reward for my faith, for I have never experienced the slightest temptation against it".²⁰ Faith so clear and unwavering was altogether distinctive. It gave to the man a wonderful singleness of purpose in seeking the Will of God and carrying it out in the face of all odds. The "Hofbauer tradition" was of a life dominated by the thought of God in Whose cause one could never rest.

It is not surprising, as Otto Weiss justly remarks, that a man so clear-sighted should have been misunderstood by both his subjects and his superiors.²¹ That is what happened, of course, when Passerat and Vannelet complained to the Rector Major Blasucci about what they saw as the excessive activity in St. Benno's.²² Clement's policy was vindicated, as was to be expected; and nothing can be taken away from the picture presented by Father Hofer. "His whole life was one continual, restless, onward striving, a glowing, unquenchable ardour, to do great things for the glory of God and the salvation of men. 'The charity of Christ presses us' is the most comprehensive expression of his inner as well as of his external life".²³

3. - *St. Clement and St Alphonsus*

The first biographer of St. Alphonsus, Tannoia, thrilled at the news of the two Germans coming to the Redemptorists in Rome, declared that they had been influenced by the good example of the religious and "the great renown which the founder, Monsignor Liguori, enjoyed in Germany on account of his great sanctity and learning".²⁴ That was an immediate reaction to exciting news, but it was not without justification. One may possibly even be justified in claiming that "St. Clement is not conceivable without St.

(1983) 103-123.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 123. See also WEISS, art. cit., 164.

²⁰ HOFER - HAAS, 31.

²¹ WEISS, art. cit., 165.

²² See HOFER - HAAS, 169-176.

²³ *Ibid.*, XVI.

²⁴ Quoted by HOFER-HAAS, 44.

Alphonsus".²⁵ The connection has been investigated by enthusiastic admirers of both men.²⁶ It must be said, though, that the comparison for the most part remains on very broad lines. Certainly, Clement was eager to obtain information about the life and writings of the founder and repeatedly pestered Blasucci for books; but it is not possible to point to particular instances where there was a discernible influence.

There were, instead, similarities between the two men.²⁷ Perhaps they were most alike in their singlemindedness in God's cause founded on a sincere faith. While Alphonsus by his learning was able to share his knowledge through his vast literary output, Clement communicated his own serene convictions even with the Romantics among his friends, and they were intellectually by far his superiors. If it is right to compare the two men in that way, then it is so much the more possible to agree with Adam Müller in praising the man he admired so greatly.

"Posterity will reap the fruits of his active and truly apostolic life amongst us. The great and lowly, the learned and unlearned, mourn the irreplaceable loss of their father and guide, and even strangers, who knew him by name only, on hearing of his death, realised that a strong support of faith and of religion, and therefore of the Fatherland had passed away. Only the thought that he still lives in the good seed that he has sowed can temper our sorrow at his loss".²⁸

Clearly, it could not be easy to succeed to the "Hofbauer tradition."

II. «THE PASSERAT TRADITION»

The death of St. Clement threw his disciples into an alarm, which showed itself in almost frenzied activity. The young men, excited at the prospect of being able to embrace the life they had

²⁵ VEREECKE, art. cit., 103.

²⁶ E. HOSP, *Sankt Klemens und der heilige Stifter* in *Spic. Hist.* 2 (1954) 432-450; O. GREGORIO, *Lo spirito alfonsiano di San Clemente* in *Spic. Hist.* 18 (1970) 313-329.

²⁷ Cf. L. VEREECKE, art. cit., 123.

²⁸ Quoted by HOFER - HAAS, 542.

admired in him, no longer had his serene assurance that all would be well. It was young Father Martin Stark,²⁹ the companion of the saint's last days, who found himself responsible for seeing to the transition. After promptly communicating the sad news to Father Passerat, Superior in Valsainte, he wrote again just a week after Hofbauer's death.³⁰ Among other things he described how diligently Dornaut, the Court Chaplain, and other members of the "Hofbauer Circle" were espousing the cause of establishing the Congregation in the church of Maria am Gestade. He went on to say that "the usual meetings to discuss a successor to Father Hofbauer will be held in the house of this pious and zealous gentleman".³¹ It is probable that those discussions were concerned with satisfying the Josephists, still sensitive about religious.

Provision for the Congregation and for the candidates was the subject of a further letter from Stark to Passerat that soon followed.³² What the young men wanted, he said, was that some member of the Congregation should come to Vienna to take charge of their training. He made an interesting point. "Since Father Hofbauer had let it be known that it was his wish that Father Podgorski be summoned, I have been urged by many, among them the archbishop himself, to write to him".³³ It would seem that St. Clement really wished that Podgorski succeed to the office of Vicar General. That, at any rate, is how he was understood by the Nuncio Leardi, who wrote to Cardinal Consalvi, Papal Secretary of State: "Before his (Hofbauer's) death a Liguorian Father, at present in Poland, was designated to take his place".³⁴ Stark was more concerned with the immediate needs of the candidates, and wrote to Passerat: "I would prefer that your reverence come here and stay for a year or so in order to attend to the candidates and their profession".³⁵

Stark's letters after St. Clement's death show clearly his high regard for Passerat. In fact, Father Henri Girouille says that he urged the Fathers in Switzerland to organise a general petition to

²⁹ On Stark cf. BOLAND, *A Dictionary*, 573.

³⁰ Stark to Passerat, 27th March 1820 in MH, XIII, Cracow, 1939, 204-207.

³¹ *Ibid.*, 206.

³² Stark to Passerat, 22nd April 1820 in MH, XIII, Cracow, 1939, 212-214.

³³ On Podgorski see BOLAND, *A Dictionary*, 295; C. SZRANT, *Redemptoristae in Polonia dispersi in Spic. Hist.* 7 (1959) 118-151.

³⁴ SZRANT, art. cit., 133.

³⁵ MH, XIII, 213.

the Rector Major to have Passerat appointed Vicar General.³⁶ It is not possible to say whether such an appeal was made or whether it affected the decision. On 30th May, just two months after Hofbauer's death, the Rector Major Mansione named his successor, Father Joseph Passerat.³⁷ He arrived in Vienna in October, when he assumed also the office of novice master.

1. - Departures

After the death of the "second founder" of the Redemptorists an eager group of his admirers gathered under the leadership of Doctor Johann Madlener, the learned professor of mathematics in the University of Vienna.³⁸ With the encouragement and guidance of influential sympathisers they prepared a petition for the establishment of the Congregation in Vienna and presented it to the emperor over the signatures of no fewer than thirty-two prospective novices. That was on the 18th April, just a month after St. Clement's death; and the very next day the emperor issued the order that the Redemptorists be given charge of the church of Maria am Gestade with an adjoining residence. A month later Stark clothed eight candidates with the religious habit.³⁹ They had all been rather carried away by their eagerness, because there was as yet no Vicar General. Father Passerat entered on his office only on 25th July.⁴⁰

When the new superior reached Vienna in October, there were already a dozen novices with many more waiting to join them.⁴¹ He at once assumed the care of their training. One of them, Bartholomew Pajalich, declared that, like himself, practically all the novices "owed the beginning of their vocation, as well as their fervour, to their association with the apostle of Vienna".⁴² It was a meeting of the two "traditions." The experience was not new for Father Passerat, as in Switzerland he had already been responsi-

³⁶ H. GIROUILLE, *Life of venerable Father Joseph Passerat*, E.T. J. CARR, London, 239.

³⁷ *Spic. Hist.* 2 (1954) 44.

³⁸ HOFER - HAAS, 529. On Madlener cf. BOLAND, *A Dictionary*, 216.

³⁹ GIROUILLE - CARR, 248.

⁴⁰ *Spic. Hist.* 2 (1954) 44.

⁴¹ GIROUILLE - CARR, 252.

⁴² *Ibid.* On Pajalich cf. BOLAND, *A Dictionary*, 272.

ble for a number of men who had known St. Clement in the busy Warsaw days.

Naturally, there had to be some give and take; and it is hardly surprising that there should have been clashes. The most disturbing incident, and one it is safe to see as representative, was the departure of Father Veith.⁴³ Johann Emmanuel Veith was a renowned literary figure as well as a respected medical practitioner when, shortly after his conversion from the Jewish religion, he was drawn to the Hofbauer Circle in 1818. He became an intimate friend of St. Clement and was the doctor who attended him on his deathbed. Professed as a Redemptorist in 1822, he at once won fame as a preacher. He was probably the most distinguished of the talented group of candidates received by Passerat. He quickly won the esteem of the Vicar General, who as early as 1824 chose him as consultor, an office he held until his departure from the Congregation in 1830.

Veith's few years as a Redemptorist were not at all happy. He was a man of restless zeal and an independent spirit, who did not readily accept the restraints of a religious community. And in that short time he proved to be quite a thorn in the side of his superior. They were two different characters, and Veith's irascibility did nothing to ease relations between them. Passerat objected to his consultor's activities outside the community, to the neglect of prayer; but he did not find it easy to discuss the matter in the face of responses it would scarcely be unjust to call rude. When the Vicar General told his consultor that the Holy See had given him permission to continue his medical practice, Veith became irritated.⁴⁴ Then, when reproved for seeming to care little for Church law and censures, he burst out: "The whole world is wrapped up in censures. I hold with the holy Fathers: I don't think that they were so fussy about administering the Sacrament of Penance." When the shocked superior appealed to the practice of St. Charles Borromeo, St. Francis de Sales and St. Alphonsus, Veith was far from impressed. "All right, I'm a heretic," was his response.⁴⁵

Another stormy exchange between the two probably gives a clue to a more fundamental difference. Passerat protested: "I am

⁴³ The case of Veith has been treated by Father Sampers. A. SAMPERS, in *Spic. Hist.* 14 (1966) 155-162; Cf. BOLAND, *A Dictionary*, 404-405.

⁴⁴ Passerat to Cocle, 17th June 1830 in *Spic. Hist.* 14 (1966) 142.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*

not a founder: I neither want to be one nor am I able." Veith answered bluntly: "You ought to be one".⁴⁶ One suspects that what he was looking for was the openness and adaptability he had admired in Clement Hofbauer. Whether or not the incident is to be so interpreted, it is still not unreasonable to look for considerable yearning for the "Hofbauer tradition" among the many new Redemptorists who had been his disciples. However much at fault Veith may have been, it was ungenerous of Passerat to speak of him as another Muscari, as he did to the Rector Major.⁴⁷

Veith was a public figure, and his departure from the Redemptorists inevitably created a stir. Passerat protested that he did not share the fears of those who foretold harm to the Congregation;⁴⁸ but others were not so phlegmatic. A man who did take the rumours circulating seriously was Franz Xaver Schwoy, an Augustine Canon of Klosterneuburg, confessor of Maria Clementina, wife of Prince Leopold of Salerno. He voiced his misgivings to Kaspar Ringelstein S.J., a native of Alsace, who had joined the Jesuits in Naples.⁴⁹ Their forebodings, addressed to Father Cogle, Rector Major, stressed the renown Veith enjoyed and suggested that people were starting to question the competence of Passerat as superior, saintly man though he was. Father Cogle answered courteously, but apparently was not greatly disturbed. When writing to the Vicar General of his dealings with the two men, he mildly suggested that Passerat learn from the incident to be more cautious in choosing his consultors and local superiors.⁵⁰

Even though the Vicar General was not moved by the threat of dire consequences, he was certainly anxious about a growing distrust of the Redemptorists in Vienna. At the time when he was writing about his trouble with Veith he reported to Father Cogle: "In general we are totally isolated from the clergy. Some of them despise us, and the rest are afraid to take our part, lest they become included in our anathema".⁵¹ He went on to speak of a conver-

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*

⁴⁷ Passerat to Cogle, 21st May 1830, in *Spic. Hist.* 14 (1966) 134. The Basilian abbot, Giuseppe Muscari, joined the Redemptorists after assisting them to gain Papal approbation of their rule. He soon became critical of their life and created something of a revolution.

⁴⁸ Passerat to Cogle, 21st May 1820 in *Spic. Hist.* 14 (1966) 137.

⁴⁹ An exchange of letters between Schwoy and Ringelstein and Cogle concerning the Veith case is to be found in *Spic. Hist.* 14 (1966) 158-162.

⁵⁰ Cogle to Passerat, 24th August 1830 in *Spic. Hist.* 14 (1966) 145.

⁵¹ Passerat to Cogle, 5th August 1830 in *Spic. Hist.* 14 (1966) 141.

sation that had been brought to his notice.

A certain penitent of the Fathers of Maria am Gestade remarked to a friend: "I think I'll give up the faith of the Redemptorists."

"What's this"? said the friend, "Isn't the faith of the Viennese the same Catholic faith as that of the Redemptorists?"

"It's true" was the reply, "in Vienna people are Catholic, but not quite like the Redemptorists."

One would have to say that St. Clement, who prided himself on his "Catholic nose," would not have liked to hear of such sayings. It is fair to ask whether the departure of Veith is to be seen as indicating a change since the death of Hofbauer. The conversation was mentioned, after all, in connection with the case. It could be, perhaps, that the Veith affair was too clamorous to be really representative. There is possibly more to be learned from other departures.

Departures were numerous enough during the Passerat regime, and many, if not most, of them were of men who had been disciples of St. Clement or had at least known him. A considerable number of those dispensed from their vows had been for some time separated from their communities for the sake of pastoral or other works. This was the case with many Redemptorists in Poland and Switzerland.⁵² There is obviously little relevant to our purpose to be learned from these cases, for the most part casualties of their time. More significant are the men who were in closer contact with the Vicar General.

There does seem to be evidence of uncomfortable relations between Passerat and some of the more devoted disciples of St. Clement. Father Josef Forthuber, who was dispensed from his vows in 1829, had been the first superior of the foundation made in Bucharest in 1815.⁵³ After the community was recalled to Vienna in 1821 the new Vicar General found him too much inclined to melancholy and difficult to correct.⁵⁴ The two men clearly did not live happily together. Very much the same sort of thing was repor-

⁵² Information about some of those engaged in parochial work is to be found in A. SAMPERS, *Redemptoristen in Oberwalliser Pfarreien in der ersten Hälfte des 19. Jahrhunderts* in *Spic. Hist.* 24 (1976) 216-234; and by the same author, *Pater Johann Appenzeller 1766-1830. Einige Notizen über den ersten Schweizer Redemptoristen* in *Spic. Hist.* 29 (1981) 389-404.

⁵³ Cf. BOLAND, *A Dictionary*, 55.

⁵⁴ Passerat to Mansone, 18th November 1821 in *Spic. Hist.* 9 (1961) 146.

ted of Father Karl Josef von Welsersheimb, prominent in the Hofbauer Circle, who was professed as a Redemptorist in 1821. He had attended the general chapter in 1832 which elected Father Ripoli Rector Major, and in the following year he was back in Italy asking for dispensation from his vows.⁵⁵ Welsersheimb, a Count of the Empire, occasioned a great mass of documentation before the case was finalised in 1835.⁵⁶ Friedrich von Unkhrechtsberg was also close to St. Clement and he remained devoted to the Redemptorists in spite of unhappy memories he must have retained. At Passerat's request he was appointed consultor in 1826, remaining in that office until he was dispensed from his vows in 1831. At his earnest request he was allowed to live in the house of Leoben from 1868 and he died there after having been readmitted to profession two years later.⁵⁷ Father Martin Stark,⁵⁸ the link with the last days of St. Clement, became a consultor of the new Vicar General from the beginning; and occasioned frequent complaints to the Rector Major for his criticism of his superior. The same was to be the case with Father Franz Kosmacek, who was quite distinguished as a Redemptorist.⁵⁹ Even the genial Father Franz Springer did not meet his superior's standards. Writing to the Rector Major, Passerat expressed his disappointment with Springer as temporary superior in Vienna, describing him as uncontrollably gloomy, obstinate and ambitious.⁶⁰ It is hard to agree with that description of the man whose sympathetic and even humorous account of a mission in Nocera can still delight the reader.⁶¹ One is inclined to question the similar complaint of Father Forthuber. One certainly has reason to suspect some uneasiness in the relations of Father Passerat with the more intimate associates of St. Clement.

2. - *The Superior*

When Veith insisted in his disgruntled fashion that the Vicar General ought to see himself as a founder, he was speaking more

⁵⁵ Passerat to Mautone, Procurator General, 31st January 1833 in *Spic. Hist.* 28 (1980) 256-257.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*

⁵⁷ Cf. BOLAND, *A Dictionary*, 397.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 373.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 187-188.

⁶⁰ Passerat to Cocle, 14th December 1824 in *Spic. Hist.* 10 (1962) 360.

⁶¹ Springer's report on the mission is in *Spic. Hist.* 4 (1956) 25-43.

significantly than he probably intended. However much Passerat protested to the contrary, he was in a position very much like that of a founder. It was his task to reorganise St. Clement's work that had been so abruptly cut short. It was a task that called for exceptional gifts of initiative and of a good measure of prudence in dealing with so many candidates looking for the ways they had known in his charismatic predecessor. It could hardly have been a comfortable responsibility, and Father Passerat carried it for close on thirty years. It is no wonder he begged so repeatedly to be relieved.

In spite of Veith's grumbling it must be granted that Passerat showed quite considerable initiative. Among his earliest foundations in Austria outside Vienna two, Frohnleiten and Marburg, had parishes attached to the churches and residences.⁶² Similarly, he raised no difficulties about the parochial duties assumed in the United States.⁶³ In England, too, almost as a matter of course, the earliest foundations were parishes.⁶⁴ Under the next Vicar General these parishes were renounced, except in the United States, where zeal for the rule had to yield to the indignant objections of the bishops. Passerat even thought of accepting a school in Bavaria, quoting the practice of Hofbauer, recognised and approved by Tannoia in his life of Alphonsus;⁶⁵ but he left the final decision to the Rector Major. In these ventures there was certainly initiative, and the Vicar General showed the same in courageously attempting a foundation in Philippopolis in Bulgaria.⁶⁶

Under Father Passerat the Congregation beyond the Alps had a period of considerable expansion. The hardy endurance of Father Fortner and his companions in Bulgaria was amply repaid by the progress of the American foundations and the vigorous development of the Redemptorists in Belgium under Father von Held.⁶⁷ From Belgium the Congregation spread to Holland and England.⁶⁸

⁶² On the Frohnleiten foundation cf. *Spic. Hist.* 12 (1964) 145-184; E. HOSP, *Erbe des heiligen Klemens*, Vienna, 1953, 158-160. For Marburg cf. *Spic. Hist.* 13 (1965) 166-214; HOSP, 283-289.

⁶³ The introduction of the Redemptorists into the United States is treated by JOHN F. BYRNE, *The Redemptorist Centenaries*, Philadelphia, 1932, 41-79; M.J. CURLEY, *The Provincial Story*, New York, 1963, 1-57.

⁶⁴ Cf. J. SHARP, *The Redemptorists in the United Kingdom: the Early Years in The Clergy Review*, London, 67 (1982) 383-392.

⁶⁵ Passerat to Cogle, 26th July 1827 in *Spic. Hist.* 13 (1965) 55.

⁶⁶ HOSP, *Erbe*, 338-352; GIROULLE - CARR, 411-419.

⁶⁷ On the United States see note 63. The foundation in Belgium is treated in M. DE MEULEMEESTER, *Glans Alphonsiennes*, Louvain, 1941.

⁶⁸ A. SAMPERS, *Documenta de erectione Prov. Hollandicae et Anglicae C.SS.R. (1854,*

In 1835 the Redemptorists came to northern Italy, when a foundation was made from Vienna in the Duchy of Modena.⁶⁹

Father Passerat deserves credit for the remarkable achievements of his term of office; but his style of government is much more open to criticism. His biographers, commencing with Desurmont, who undoubtedly influenced those who followed, have given special attention to the theme; and their treatment is noticeably defensive.⁷⁰ In this context some questions presented themselves that needed to be answered.

One thing that surely demands comment is the surprising number of Passerat's consultors, no fewer than eighteen during his term of office.⁷¹ The only one who had to be replaced by reason of death was Father Josef Libotzky, one of the pioneers of Romania, who died in January 1841.⁷² Changes of other personnel were occasioned usually by the appointment of one or other to a community at too great a distance from Vienna. Alois Czech, for example, one of the first appointed at Passerat's request, was in Switzerland and seems never to have lived in Vienna.⁷³ With the frequent changes in his council it must have been extremely difficult for the Vicar General to offer leadership.

The instability among the consultors gives rise to a suspicion that there must have been some tension in the council; and there is evidence that such was the case. For example, writing to the Rector Major in September 1830, Passerat spoke of the discontent of Stark and Prigl, both associates of Hofbauer.⁷⁴ This is just one instance of a theme that frequently recurred in the Vicar General's correspondence. He shows himself to have been particularly uncomfortable with Stark, who remained in office until 1848, when revolution scattered the Redemptorists in Austria. Since the difficulties with the superior were so continuous, Stark is surely to be

1855, 1865) *cum quibusdam notis de fundatione domuum in Spic. Hist.* 3 (1955) 365-382.

⁶⁹ G. ORLANDI, *La Congregazione del SS. Redentore nel Ducato di Modena in Spic. Hist.* 18 (1970) 371-430.

⁷⁰ A. DESURMONT, *Le R.P. Joseph Passerat*, Montreuil, 1893, 382 ff; E. GAUTRON, *L'âme du vénérable P. Passerat*, Paris, 1929, 289 ff; GIROUILLE - CARR, 467 ff.

⁷¹ A. SAMPERS - J. LÖW, *Series Moderatorum generalium C.S.S.R. eorumque vicariorum et consultorum in Spic. Hist.* 2 (1954) 9-83; 225-279.

⁷² *ibid.*, 45.

⁷³ *ibid.*, 44.

⁷⁴ Passerat to Cocle, 22nd September 1830 in *Spic. Hist.* 14 (1966) 149-150: The same letter is quoted by GAUTRON, 293, but in such a condensed form as to give the impression that Welsersheimb was also a consultor.

given much credit for his endurance. It seem from the repeated reports of disagreement that the point at issue was the differing concepts of Redemptorist life of these two sincere religious. Passerat insisted, naggingly one fears, on strict fidelity to the prayers and other exercises prescribed by the rule; and Stark, with growing irritability in spite of periodic "conversions," argued for the demands of pastoral works.

It is really oversimplifying the tension to express it in terms of different attitudes, even though that is the way it usually appears in the correspondence. Desurmont has drawn attention to an underlying incompatibility - what he calls "the spirit of nationalism".⁷⁵ It is a suggestion that appears from time to time in Passerat's letters. The troublesome issues are more apparent when we find them formulated clearly by Father Kosmacek. He was consultor to the Vicar General from 1830 until the general chapter of 1832 elected him consultor to the new Rector Major Ripoli. He was clearly a man of upright and honest character and known as such to the Rector Major.⁷⁶ Shortly after his return to Vienna after his term as general consultor was cut short by regalist objections of the Neapolitan court, he wrote, describing the attitude of the Vicar General.⁷⁷ He had been somewhat aggrieved, he admitted, to discover that Father Passerat had made some accusation against him to Father Biagio Panzuti, who had governed the Congregation between the resignation of Father Cocle and the election of Father Ripoli. It is possible, therefore, that he was a little too vehement in his own complaints.

Father Passerat, Kosmacek wrote, insisted on blind obedience, even to the extent of agreeing with his own views, sometimes quite strange, on philosophical, theological and historical matters. Some of these opinions, which could not be contradicted, were quite startling, such as ideas about the inquisition and the burning of heretics. His views on the superiority of the contemplative over the active were expressed in extreme terms. A very distressing example was the Vicar General's forbidding *under pain of mortal sin* that anyone should leave the house without a companion, and that on the occasion of a serious epidemic of cholera, a circumstance that justified the italics. There was a problem of nationalism, too,

⁷⁵ DESURMONT, 380.

⁷⁶ *Spic. Hist.* 2 (1954) 47.

⁷⁷ Kosmacek to Ripoli, 6th September 1832 in *Spic. Hist.* 40 (1992) 298-301.

since Kosmacek complained that Passerat was in the habit of speaking slightly of Germans and their literature, and imprudently of their laws and even of their bishops.

Allowance must be made, of course, for the fact that Kosmacek was quite aggrieved, and understandably so, when he wrote. Just the same, he gives us definite indications of probable causes of differences between the superior and his subjects. In a later communication Kosmacek spoke of the discord that reigned in the community of Maria am Gestade.⁷⁸ The trouble came about, he said, through "a few zelators like Fathers Held and Pilate, who are always looking for faults in others and reporting them to Father Vicar".⁷⁹ It is an unhappy picture, and to make things worse, it had come to the knowledge of others outside the community.

Father Ripoli, elected in 1832, soon found himself obliged to pay closer attention to the unsatisfactory state of affairs in Vienna. The Apostolic Nuncio, Pietro Ostini, a sincere friend of the Redemptorists, in his concern urged the new Rector Major to take steps, even by way of a personal visit, to remedy a situation whose gravity had become known even to the imperial court.⁸⁰ The fears voiced by Schwoy and Ringelstein over the Veith case had not apparently been far-fetched. The Nuncio, a man of balanced judgment as his correspondence shows, was anxious about the effect the unfavourable rumours might have on the faithful.

While he was waiting for a reply, the Nuncio wrote again to the Rector Major.⁸¹ He spoke of some pages containing complaints about the Vicar General, which had been given to him by one of the Fathers. A lengthy (28 pages) document attached to the Nuncio's letter in the general archives of the Redemptorists may or may not be the one handed to him, but it does contain a statement of grievances.⁸² There is no indication of authorship, but the document might well have been compiled by Stark or Kosmacek or some other who thought like them.

⁷⁸ Kosmacek to Ripoli, 13th December 1832 in *Spic. Hist.* 40 (1992) 307.

⁷⁹ Friedrich von Held had a distinguished career as a Redemptorist in Belgium, England and the United States. Cf. BOLAND, *A Dictionary*, 158-159. Johann Baptist Pilat also became prominent in Redemptorist history, cf. *ibid.*, 292.

⁸⁰ Ostini to Ripoli, 26th March 1833 in *Spic. Hist.* 40 (1992) 325-326. The career of Ostini, later Cardinal Bishop of Albano, is described by O. WEISS, *La corrispondenza tra il Rettore Maggiore Ripoli e il Vicario Generale Passerat, aprile 1833 - gennaio 1834* in *Spic. Hist.* 40 (1992) 266-267.

⁸¹ Ostini to Ripoli, 12th May 1833 in *Spic. Hist.* 40 (1992) 327-328.

⁸² *Ibid.*, 328-331.

The complaints are not stated in the form of a tirade. The author even shows appreciation and admiration for Passerat, whose evident virtue is fully stated at the beginning. In speaking of his shortcomings what is particularly stressed is a certain timidity which made him too dependent on others. This weakness, it is said, has thrown him under the control of Held, whose rigorism is the principal cause of the discord in the community. The disciples of Hofbauer, the author declares, "were filled with zeal for souls and love of learning," which unhappily had been stifled "lest they harm piety and the religious life." A sharper note appears when there is talk about how the Vicar General chose his consultors: Madlener "for his heroic virtue," Libotzky "for his indifference" and Fortner "in desperation." The result was, the author went on, that Held imposed his will in everything. Consultations were altogether unsatisfactory in the circumstances. The long statement asked for a remedy in view of the loss of reputation of the Redemptorists already making itself felt. When it came to definite steps to be taken, "in the first place it was to be desired that Father Held be removed from among the consultors."

That statement of the situation is to be valued most of all because of its restraint. It described the task that, as it turned out, had to be faced by the Nuncio himself, as Father Ripoli's reply to his earlier letter suggested.⁸³ Ostini set himself to work without delay, and was able to report that there was soon some improvement.⁸⁴ This was due largely to a change among the consultors. A postscript noted that "the absence of Father Held in Belgium will contribute greatly to peace. This very good man is like a volcano, likely to disturb the peace of any community whatever." Particularly interesting is the way the Nuncio speaks about Stark, so often mentioned by Passerat as especially troublesome. "I know this subject well. He is well informed on the affairs of the Congregation and possessed of fine qualities."

In the meantime Ostini had written to Ripoli's predecessor, now confessor to the Neapolitan royal household and titular Archbishop of Patras; and he in turn communicated the message to the Rector Major.⁸⁵ The Nuncio spoke about his concern over the unhappy state of the Redemptorists in Vienna, too publicly known.

⁸³ Ripoli to Ostini, 18th April 1833 *ibid.*, 326-327.

⁸⁴ Ostini to Ripoli, undated, *ibid.*, 331-332.

⁸⁵ Cocle to Ripoli, 31st May 1833, *ibid.*, 333-334.

"I don't believe I am mistaken," he had declared, "if I dare to say that the main cause is in the head of this Vicar General, Father Passerat. I believe he is a saint, but a French saint." He went on to quote something he had heard from Sebastian Job, another light of the Hofbauer Circle. Job had remarked: "Just let us wait a while to see what happens to a community of lads guided by a French head."

It seems that the nuncio had in a very short time gained a clear and just understanding of the position in Maria am Gestade. He put his final suggestions to the Rector Major.⁸⁶ Lacking another superior suited by maturity in Redemptorist life, he recommended that Passerat be retained in office, but that care be taken that he be provided with consultors who would be helpful. This advice was followed as far as possible during the remaining years of Passerat's term of office. It did not, however, completely heal the discord. As late as 1847 the poor Vicar General was pleading yet again to be allowed to resign, asking now for a "German to preside over the Germans".⁸⁷ In making his plea, he spoke once more of difficulties with his consultors, "Father Martin Stark, Father Kosmacek and Father Petrak." That meant half of his consultors; and to them he added Father Anton Passy, another of the close associates of St. Clement.

In summing up Father Passerat's tenure of office, troubled as it was, it is necessary to emphasise that he was taking a direction different from that of his predecessor. That is clear enough in the names of the individuals mentioned repeatedly in his correspondence as differing from him. They were all disciples of St. Clement. The change of orientation is mentioned explicitly in the independent report of the Nuncio Ostini. The other matters mentioned by men like Kosmacek are of less importance, even though they may have been more irksome. Such pinpricks as the nagging insistence on blind obedience, the routine of prayer and even the French spirituality are no more than symptoms of the real malaise. They represent the personal convictions of the Vicar General, which through their being eagerly espoused by men like Held and Pilat became the pattern of Redemptorist life.

⁸⁶ Ostini to Ripoli, 9th July 1833, *ibid.*, 335-336.

⁸⁷ Passerat to Ripoli, 21st January 1847, quoted by GAUTRON, 294-295.

3. - The Spirituality of Father Passerat

In view of the problems that existed between Father Passerat and so many of his companions it is right that questions be asked about his spirituality. It would not be unreasonable to wonder if sufficient cognisance has been taken of the troubled condition of the community of Maria am Gestade. Perhaps we need to revise the picture commonly presented.

There is a certain traditional vision of Passerat, and that derives principally from that extraordinarily durable French provincial, Achille Desurmont.⁸⁸ Henri Girouille acknowledged his own indebtedness, declaring that "the only existing biography of any account is that of Père Desurmont".⁸⁹ The same influence can be seen in Gautron, and even in the Process of beatification the name of Desurmont recurs to a surprising extent.⁹⁰ The resulting picture is so laudatory that it ignores or explains away the very real problems that existed. It is not unfair to suggest that what has emerged is the description of the spirituality of Desurmont rather than of Passerat. Is it possible to find a better understanding of the man whose virtue has been formally declared heroic?⁹¹

A good starting point is the statement of grievances, whether or not it was given to Ostini.⁹² The writer is careful to avoid any suggestion of blame of the Vicar General, insisting rather on his genuine piety. The complaints have regard to his exercise of authority, which occasioned the distress of the community, the real theme of the document. There is no need to take the complaints in detail. It should be sufficient to look at a few matters especially stressed and recurring in the correspondence with the Rector Major:

There was some foundation for that remark, churlish as it was, of Veith, that Passerat was not the founder he should have

⁸⁸ Cf. note 70.

⁸⁹ GIROUILLE - CARR, 23.

⁹⁰ See, for example, *Responsa ad animadversiones R.P.D. Promotoris Fidei*, Roma, 1901, 44-45; 46-47; 48.

⁹¹ A. SAMPERS, *Father Joseph Passerat's Heroic Virtue Declared on April 29, 1980* in *Spic. Hist.* 28 (1980) 225-235.

⁹² It is not altogether clear that the document annexed to Ostini's letter in the Redemptorist general archives is the statement mentioned in his letter; but it is an expression of the troubles experienced at Maria am Gestade and as such serves our present purpose.

been. The Vicar General was not really a good leader.⁹³ His virtue, in truly heroic measure, was never more apparent than when he was harried from pillar to post as he led his band of exiles from Babenhausen through Switzerland to Valsainte. It was a nomadic existence that lasted a dozen years of remarkable fortitude. While it is true that Passerat was the leader of the community in the search for a home, he acted as guided by Hofbauer from his own exile in Vienna. It is his obedience we must admire rather than his leadership; but it is none the less heroic.

When, in obedience to his Rector Major, he came to Vienna, it was to assume the responsibility for the already large number of candidates offering themselves to a life they had admired in the person of his predecessor. It was a situation that called for quite exceptional qualities of leadership. As the statement of grievances put it, however, he showed himself too reliant on others and not prepared to take the necessary initiative himself.⁹⁴ That threw him into the hands of men like Held and Pilat. They were young men and quite unaccustomed to life in a religious community as were all their companions. Those who complained of the troubles experienced under Passerat generously and no doubt correctly attributed them to the harshness and rigorism of the men on whom he relied. Without picking through the many petty annoyances listed by those who aired their grievances, it is sufficient to say that he was not the best superior for the Transalpine Redemptorists in 1820. But that had already been well said by the Nuncio Ostini and even he could not suggest a man to take his place.

Father Passerat's sanctity is to be sought elsewhere, and the search need not lead one far afield. Everybody was ready to give him credit for being a man of prayer, from St. Clement even to those who chafed under his authority. There is no reason to quarrel with the praise given him in this regard by his biographers from Desurmont to Girouille. His strong emphasis on prayer was his greatest contribution to those Redemptorists who came after him.

The Vicar General's insistence on prayer was proposed in the context of what his critics saw as an exaggerated insistence on French ways. Even a much later generation of Redemptorists can scarcely find it hard to disagree with such an exhortation as "My dear brothers, let us always remain novices, novices though blind

⁹³ Passerat to Cocle, 17th June 1830 in *Spic. Hist.* 14 (1966) 142.

⁹⁴ *Spic. Hist.* 40 (1992) 330.

obedience, novices without judgement, novices entirely changed through love of prayer".⁹⁵ Love of prayer could well have been more convincingly advocated. Passerat's devotion to prayer, which is the principal characteristic of his spiritual life, cannot be illustrated adequately by his dealing with his subjects, which has been the way of his biographers. The justice due to his heroic sanctity would be better served by a study of the influences that formed him, the spiritual writers he studied and his teachers, Benedictines, ex-Jesuits and others, who guided him on his way towards the priesthood. His convictions were already deeply rooted when he came to the Redemptorists in Warsaw. That led him to find fault with the apostolate in St. Benno's under St. Clement's vigorous leadership.⁹⁶

When he came to Vienna in 1820, with his principles of the spiritual life firmly established, he found himself responsible for a large number of young candidates. Their leader, Stark, was only thirty-three years old and quite inexperienced in community living. Clashes occurred, as Sebastian Job had foretold; and it was probably as he had expected, "a community of lads under a French head." And that is the expression that recurs in the correspondence about the tensions, a difference between French and German principles. Even that, however, is to put things in too general terms.

The way those who complained of the troubles expressed themselves suggests that the problem was rather a difference in emphasis. The statement of grievances attached to the Nuncio's letter to the Rector Major speaks of the zeal of the disciples of Father Hofbauer as being in anger of becoming stifled by the Vicar General's fears that "piety and the religious life be harmed".⁹⁷ Kosmacek, who in spite of the resentment he felt at being denounced to the Roman superiors, shows admirable restraint, points to what was probably the fundamental issue. He says that Passerat "is always speaking about the superiority of the contemplative life over the active, values a pious person above one who might convert the entire world, and sees the end of the Institute as being only in ascetical exercises".⁹⁸ In other words it was a difference in emphasis, and that of a kind to cause a very deep division. St. Clement

⁹⁵ Quoted by O. WEISS in *Spic. Hist.* 35 (1987) 169.

⁹⁶ HOFER - HAAS, 169-175.

⁹⁷ *Spic. Hist.* 40 (1992) 330.

⁹⁸ Kosmacek to Ripoli, 6th September 1832 in *Spic. Hist.* 40 (1992) 330.

saw the contemplative life as an integral part of the active, giving that "unction of the Holy Spirit, without which the workmen's carts creak".⁹⁹ Then his successor was represented as though he made the contemplative life of the Redemptorist an end in itself.

4. - Redemptorists after Passerat

By 1820, when Passerat came to Vienna, Europe was in what historians call "the Age of Revolution".¹⁰⁰ The Cambridge scholar, A. R. Vidler, speaks of the Church, by which he means "the whole complex of Christian institutions," during this period of change and insecurity. The Church, he says, "has for the most part been conspicuous for its resistance to change and could plausibly be regarded as the chief rallying ground for all *laudatores temporis acti*".¹⁰¹ If that assessment is correct, then Passerat appears as very much a man of his times with all its diffidence. He was described by his trusted consulter, Father Madlener, as "through excessive kindness too changeable".¹⁰² Like most leaders in the Church, he was very much *laudator temporis acti*.

The mission of Father Springer to obtain an authentic copy of the constitutions of the general chapter of 1764 is typical of the time. It betrays a worried nostalgia for a past that was seen as reliable, since it was the time of the sainted founder.¹⁰³ Those constitutions were to remain the pattern of Redemptorist life until very recent years, and they were very long-standing evidence of uncertain leadership in the Age of Revolution and beyond.

Very much the same is to be said about the cult of St. Alphonsus. Passerat showed great eagerness to learn all he could of the life of the founder, as had St. Clement before him. But in both cases information was slow to come. What was received was avidly read and interpreted, not always in keeping with historical

⁹⁹ See note 16.

¹⁰⁰ Cf. A. R. VIDLER, *The Church in the Age of Revolution*, vol. 5 of *The Pelican History of the Church*, London, 1961; FRIEDRICH HEAR, *Europe, Mother of Revolutions*, London, 1971; CHARLES, LOUISE AND RICHARD TILLY, *The Rebellious Century*, Harvard, 1975; OWEN CHADWICK, *The Popes and European Revolution*, Oxford, 1981.

¹⁰¹ VIDLER, *op. cit.*, 9.

¹⁰² Madlener to Cogle, 22nd November 1830 in *Spic. Hist.* 14 (1966) 249.

¹⁰³ J. LÖW, *La pratica dell'Osservanza regolare nel collegio principale della Congr. del SS.mo Redentore in Nocera dei Pagani minutamente esposta dal P. Francesco Springer in Spic. Hist.* 2 (1954) 295-364.

reality. Passerat's comparison of Veith, for example, with Muscari is dreadfully far-fetched. Use of whatever was known of the foundation years and personalities interpreted in a fashion that was ill informed and even with a French bent became the pattern of the earliest biographies of St. Alphonsus outside Italy. That is the sort of thing Vidler had in mind when he spoke of the Churches and their reluctance to change with the times. It shows a lack of self-reliance in an ecclesiastical superior. Those who expressed their dissatisfaction with the Vicar General emphasised his dependance on others.¹⁰⁴ Even Madlener, humble and respectful towards authority as he was, admitted that Passerat was inclined to be too diffident of himself.¹⁰⁵

It could well be that Passerat insisted so strongly on an exact observance of the rule because he found there the support he needed. Whatever the reason, it led to certain emphases that proved very long lived. Particularly significant is one that Madlener singled out as a source of division in the community. "Our good Vicar," he wrote to the Rector Major, "wishes that we sanctify ourselves *first* and *then* others; many of us, on the other hand, wish to sanctify others first, or ourselves and others *together*."¹⁰⁶ This extraordinarily durable emphasis is also characteristic of the timid exercise of authority so typical in the Churches as they faced the Age of Revolution.

After Passerat's resignation was accepted in 1848, a pressure group manifested itself in the vigorous Belgian province. It was identified by Father Markus Andreas Hugues, procurator for the Transalpine Redemptorists in Rome.¹⁰⁷ The leaders, whose names he mentioned, were Fathers Held and Pilat, with whom was associated Father Victor Dechamps.¹⁰⁸ With regret, because he honestly esteemed the men concerned, the procurator declared that much of their activity was fired by hostility to Father Rudolph Smetana,

¹⁰⁴ *Spic. Hist.* 40 (1992) 330.

¹⁰⁵ See note 102.

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.* The emphasis is Madlener's.

¹⁰⁷ Father Hugues, a distinguished German convert, took his vows in 1833 and was ordained in 1838. Cf. O.A. ROSENTHAL, *Convertitenbilder aus dem neunzehnten Jahrhundert*, 1,2, Schaffhausen, 1871, 57-60. He is the author of an undated MS in the general archives of the Redemptorists in Rome, *Additamenta quae spectant ad historiam Congregationis Sanctissimi Redemptoris a primo schismate a. 1780 usque ad perfectam unionem sub Rectore Majore residente Romae, anno 1869*.

¹⁰⁸ On Dechamps, later Archbishop of Malines and cardinal cf. BOLAND, *A Dictionary*, 102-1034.

Vicar General after Passerat.¹⁰⁹ Significantly, those agitators, or at least two of them, Held and Pilat, had been mentioned to the Nuncio Ostini as exercising too much influence over the Passerat regime. It would not be at all unreasonable to suggest that it was due to them that the character of Passerat's government persisted. Certainly, it reappeared in the Superior General elected by the general chapter of 1855.

Father Nicholas Mauron, in office from 1855 to 1893, took his responsibilities very seriously to heart.¹¹⁰ He understood his obligations in so personal a fashion that his consultors had little to contribute in his decisions. One example can supply for many. In the year 1860 the Superior General was trying to satisfy two conflicting applications for foundations, one in the Dominican Republic and one in Australia.¹¹¹ Both seemed to him attractive, and he declared to the English provincial: "I wish only to know the Will of God and the good pleasure of St. Alphonsus".¹¹² It would not require any straining of the facts to suspect that it was just such ways that Veith found hard to accept from Father Passerat. Mauron also was very much a man of his time, and those times extended well beyond the end of the century. From Father Passerat, a typical churchman of the Age of Revolution, there was handed on a style of government of a kind found quite generally in Church leaders: a dependence on ways that had been successful in the past, especially the observance of the rules. In the case of the Redemptorists, that amounted to what had been decided in 1764, to which was joined a cult, not really well informed, of St. Alphonsus. This cult of the Redemptorist past was pursued with an earnest zeal, in which one might fairly glimpse an element of desperation. A particularly regrettable consequence of this prevailing spirit of nostalgia was that it made Redemptorists, and not by any means them alone, excessively introspective. It was the legacy of Passerat, mentioned by Madlener as well as by hostile witnesses, that the religious were taught to look first to their own sanctification and then work for the salvation of others.

However justified that description of the "Passerat tradition"

¹⁰⁹ HUGUES, *Additamenta*, 155-158. On Father Smetana cf. BOLAND, *A Dictionary*, 366-367.

¹¹⁰ On Father Mauron cf. BOLAND, *A Dictionary*, 230-231.

¹¹¹ S.J. BOLAND, *An Early Offer of an Australian Redemptorist Foundation in Spic. Hist.* 34 (1986) 141-159.

¹¹² *Ibid.*, 152.

may be, it must be stated at once that it is very far from being a picture of unrelieved gloom. More than one historian has remarked that the Age of Revolution was an age of contradictions for the Churches, of timid leadership in the face of advancing secularism and at the same time of very great achievement. A. R. Vidler, for example, declares that "it is a sociological rather than a theological paradox that for the Churches of the West the nineteenth century was a period of both formidable reverses and of prodigious expansion".¹¹³ Sociological or not, the paradox is undeniable. It is marvelously evident in the case of the Redemptorists. They expanded to the Americas, to Asia and to Africa, and they even established and maintained a foundation on Russian soil in the face of the harshest opposition. This quite phenomenal growth of the Institute produced many a case of splendid initiative and heroic achievement.

The "Passerat tradition" may also justly claim to be represented by men who would deservedly shine in any company. They are not only the ones who achieved the remarkable results we have mentioned, but their sanctity has in some instances been recognised by the Church. St. John Neumann is rightly regarded as the ornament of the American hierarchy.¹¹⁴ Blessed Peter Donders, the simple, amiable Redemptorist who laboured tirelessly for the lepers and outcasts of Surinam, can well hold his own with the great missionaries better known to the faithful.¹¹⁵ If it should be argued that the saintly Bishop of Philadelphia and the apostle of the lepers are not typical of Redemptorist community life and observance, so much a feature of the Passerat regime, the same could not be said of Blessed Kaspar Stangassinger, whose brief Redemptorist career was passed entirely in the monastery, where he imparted his own spirit to the young candidates of the Upper German province.¹¹⁶ Names like those are enough to show that the "Passerat tradition" was not barren of inspiration; but they do not exhaust the evidence. It is impossible to pass over the brilliant Dutch preacher, Father Bernard Hafkenschied.¹¹⁷ His eloquence was heard not only in Europe, but in the United States and in

¹¹³ VIDLER, *op. cit.*, 246.

¹¹⁴ See AA.VV., *Studia Neumanniana (Bibliotheca Historica C.SS.R. VI)*, Rome, 1977.

¹¹⁵ See AA.VV., *Studia Dondersiana (Bibliotheca Historica C.SS.R. XI)*, Rome, 1982.

¹¹⁶ O. WEISS, *Tun was der Tag verlangt. Das Leben von Pater Kaspar Stangassinger*, Freiburg - Basel - Wien, 1988.

¹¹⁷ Cf. BOLAND, *A Dictionary*, 150-151.

Ireland, and it never failed to move those who heard. Even Father Friedrich von Held, who appears almost as the *bête noire* of those who in the beginning chafed under the Passerat regime, was a man of zeal to whose energy in all justice must be attributed the spectacularly successful planting of the Redemptorist missions in Belgium, Holland and England.¹¹⁸

The emergence of the "Passerat tradition" after the dynamic Hofbauer regime was far from untroubled. It was not easy for those who had known the excitement that centred on the person of St. Clement to accept the lead of a man who seemed to shrink from the zealous activity they had loved. Inevitably there were casualties, and it would not be fair to find fault with those who left. Even Veith, for all his grumbling, was always a fine priest and had a most distinguished career when he was no longer a Redemptorist. The same should be said of Unkhrechtsberg and Welshersheimb. They and others like them were victims of a difficult transition. There was a marked change; and the new direction that ensued lasted long past the end of the century. It has been challenged only in the most recent years; but it has already produced its share of great and truly admirable achievement.

¹¹⁸ K. DILGSKRON, *P. Friedrich von Held*, Vienna, 1909.