

BROTHER SCUBILION ROUSSEAU, FSC



Portrait of Brother Scubilion by Mario Caffaro Rore prepared for the Lasallian Tercentary in 1981 and published in the Memorial Volume entitled "Holiness as a Sign of Life."

BROTHER SCUBILION ROUSSEAU, FSC
APOSTLE OF FREEDOM
AND
RECONCILIATION

by
Luke Salm, FSC

Christian Brothers Publications
Romeoville, Illinois

Library of Congress Card Catalog Number: 86-70062

**Published by Christian Brothers Publications
100 De La Salle Drive, Romeoville, Illinois 60441-1896**

**Copyright 1986 by Christian Brothers Conference
100 De La Salle Drive, Romeoville, Illinois 60441-1896**

Printed by Saint Mary's Press, Winona, Minnesota

Contents

Foreword

1. What's in a Name? 11
2. Jean-Bernard 21
3. Brother Scubilion 31
4. Bourbon 44
5. Mission Impossible 55
6. Emancipation 68
7. Possession 85
8. Holy Mary 99
9. Mission Accomplished 116
10. Beatitude 126
11. Sanctity 139

Foreword

Word from Rome has it that the case or “cause” for the beatification of yet another member of the Institute of the Brothers of the Christian Schools is moving forward rapidly. A French missionary with the strange name of Brother Scubilion may soon be among those whom the church officially proposes to the veneration of the faithful with the title of “Blessed.” Brother Scubilion, who died on the island of Reunion in 1867, is not exactly a household name in the English-speaking world. For that matter he is not particularly well known in his native France. To remedy this situation Bro. André Fermet has recently published a biography in French entitled *A l’île de la Réunion, un évangile de liberté. Frère Scubilion: Jean-Bernard Rousseau* (Desclée de Brouwer, 1985). It was suggested at first that Fermet’s work might be translated into English, but for a variety of reasons that project did not turn out to be feasible. It seemed preferable to start afresh, using the same sources, and so to produce a new biography geared to the taste and the background of those for whom the English language in one or another of its many forms is the mother tongue. In one sense, then, this present work derives its inspiration from Fermet, but it follows a different course and has a rather different emphasis. In no sense is it a direct translation or even an adaptation.

The source materials for any biography of Brother Scubilion are readily available in two distinctive works published eighty years apart: the biography by Chassagnon, *Le Frère Scubilion*, published by the Paris Procure of the Brothers in 1902; and the *Summarium documentorum*, published by the Congregation for the Causes of the Saints in Rome in 1982.

Fr. Hyacinthe Chassagnon, a former student of the Brothers, was chaplain of their boarding school in Saint-Etienne in France at the time he wrote his biography at the turn of the

century. A doctor of theology with a degree in canon law, he was also a skilled writer and historian. Among his many other published works is a biography of Brother Solomon, who was martyred during the French Revolution and has since been beatified. Father Chassagnon was eventually made Bishop of Autun, where he died in 1940.

For his biography of Brother Scubilion, Chassagnon had at his disposal a large number of letters written by those who had known the Brother either as a young man or in his later years. The superiors in France made available to him the writings of De La Salle and the publications of the Institute, as well as the relevant documents in the archives of the generalate, which was then in Paris. He was able to profit also by the published biographies of some of the important personages encountered by Brother Scubilion during the course of his long and active life in the apostolate. All of this material was put together in a lively narrative, interspersed with pious reflections but in an imaginative style that can still engage the contemporary reader. All of the shorter or longer biographies of Brother Scubilion that have since appeared, including this present one, rely heavily on the pioneering work of Chassagnon.

The *Summarium documentorum*, prepared for and published by the Vatican Congregation for the Causes of the Saints as part of the process leading to beatification, is largely the work of the staff of Bro. Leone Morelli, the Postulator General of the Brothers at the generalate in Rome. The task of gathering and editing the documents fell first to Bro. Polycarpe Frari, the Vice-postulator for the cause of Brother Scubilion on the island of Reunion, and then to the recently deceased Bro. Massimo Sborchia in the office of the Postulator in Rome. In addition to an abbreviated biography of Brother Scubilion and a critical analysis of the Chassagnon work, the *Summarium* contains the texts of almost all the relevant documents. These include the few letters and retreat notes that have come down to us written in Brother Scubilion's own hand, the biographies written by the Brothers on the island of Reunion shortly after his death, and the reports of the Brothers appointed later on to gather

oral testimony and reminiscences with a view to opening the cause for beatification. The originals of all of these documents are presently in the archives of the generalate in Rome, and the author of this English language biography was fortunate enough to have access to them during the course of its preparation. Since these documents speak so eloquently for themselves, they have been cited extensively in English translation in the text that follows.

Thanks are due to the many persons who helped with this project in its various stages: to Bro. John Johnston, Vicar General of the Brothers in Rome for first suggesting the idea; to Bro. Jean-Marie Thouard, Regional Superior of the Brothers in France, and to Bro. André Fermet, for making his work available in manuscript; to the Brothers in the generalate in Rome, especially to Bros. John Hazell and Edwin Bannon in the archives, and Bros. Leone Morelli and Michelangelo Ceparri in the office of the Postulator, all of whom gave generous access to the source materials; and finally to Bros. Brendan Hayden, Joseph Schmidt and the staff at Christian Brothers Regional Office in Romeoville, IL, and to Bro. Damian Steger and the staff at Saint Mary's Press in Winona, MN for their professional expertise in producing the book in its final form.

There has been no attempt here to produce a scholarly or definitive biography. For that reason, footnotes have been eliminated altogether and the references to the sources have been incorporated into the text. For those who may wish to pursue the subject in greater depth the source material can be easily found either in Chassagnon or the *Summarium documentorum*. Except for Saint John Baptist de La Salle, the Founder of the Brothers' Institute, no attempt has been made to anglicize the French names of persons and places. To avoid confusion, however, titles such as *Abbé*, *Frère*, *Père*, and *Monseigneur* have been rendered according to English usage, often rather different from the literal French. Thus, for example, an *abbé* is not an abbot but a parish priest, a *monseigneur* is not a monsignor but a bishop.

It may well be one of the minor miracles attributable to Brother Scubilion that a Brother from the United States writing in Rome should have the assistance of so many Brothers of different nationalities in preparing this account of his life and work. It is hoped that the pages which follow will serve as an inspiration for those associated with the Institute that Brother Scubilion loved so much and served so faithfully, in his zeal to procure the glory of God as God required of him.

Luke Salm, FSC

Rome

15 May 1985

1.

What's in a Name?

Before entering into an account of the life story and the significance of Brother Scubilion, it might be well from the start to come to terms with that most unusual name. Brother who? Scubilion? The name, of course, is French. It should be kept in mind that, from the time of its origins in Reims in 1680 up until well into the twentieth century, the dominant influence in the Institute of the Brothers of the Christian Schools was French. This was so despite a massive missionary movement in the nineteenth century with all of its concurrent adaptations to a variety of cultural and educational systems. It was not until after Vatican Council II that the structure of government, the language of communication, and the nomenclature of the Institute began to lose its distinctively French character. That is why it has always been something of a challenge in English-speaking countries for those who come to know the Brothers, a challenge indeed for the Brothers themselves sometimes, to deal with the problem of the names that used to be given to the Brothers.

There is already a series of problems with the French name of the saint who founded the Institute, Jean-Baptiste de La Salle. That translates into English easily enough as John Baptist de La Salle. Yet generations of English-speaking lads, with only the precursor of the Lord as their reference, fell naturally into the trap of addressing the Founder in their prayers as Saint John "the" Baptist de La Salle, as if somehow there were two of them. In addition, a cursory glance at the literature dealing with the Founder, or the Brothers' institutions named after him, will reveal confusion as to what to do with the preposition "de" that comes after his Christian name. Should it be capitalized

or not? Without the Christian name should it be dropped altogether? Thus we have La Salle University in Philadelphia but De La Salle University in Manila, La Salle Institute in Troy, but De La Salle Institute in Chicago. Then there were other La Salles. Some people think that the Brothers' schools are named after the famous explorer of the Mississippi River, who wasn't even related to the Founder (though Père Marquette was); others confuse the De La Salle Brothers with the followers of Our Lady of La Salette.

Very early in the foundation period of the Institute, once a distinctive habit was adopted, so also was the practice of giving the Brothers a new "religious" name, as a kind of second baptism. This practice was rather general up until recently in religious institutes of both women and men, though not so common in clerical institutes of religious priests. It was part of the monastic tradition of *fuga mundi*, or flight from the world, leaving all to follow Christ, abandoning family and friends, assuming a new lifestyle, a new manner of dress, a new identity under a new name. But there are names and *names*. In the beginning most of the names assumed by the companions of the Founder were recognizable enough. His immediate successors as Superior General were Brothers Bartholomew and Timothy. Familiar too were the names of the majority of those who succeeded to that office: Claude, William, Philip, John, Gabriel, Joseph, Charles, Adrian, and Victor, for example. But in between we do find Florence and Frumence, Gerbaud, Agatho and Anaclet, Irlide and Imier.

Once the Institute, still exclusively French, was reestablished after the Revolution and the numbers began to grow—roughly from one thousand Brothers just before the Revolution up to fifteen thousand by the year 1900—it became imperative to find new names. When Brother Scubilion took the habit in 1822, the numbers were already increasing rapidly and the custom still prevailed of giving each Brother only one religious name by which he alone would be known. The nine Brothers who received the religious habit on that memorable Christmas eve of 1822 were given the following names: Dativ, Vésien, Veule, Scubilion, Vetur, Dange, Symphrone, Quint, and Usize. We presume that they all had a *Joyeux Noël!* Yet

stranger names than those will appear in the course of the narrative to follow.

Where did these strange sounding names come from, all of them presumably saints? For the most part they were the names of ancient martyrs or medieval monks, many of them associated with a particular local cult in one or another corner of France. Thus the original Saint Scubilion was a sixth-century monk, a companion of Saint Paternus, the Bishop of Avranches in Normandy. That particular Scubilion died in the year 575 and his feast day is celebrated on 16 April at Mont Saint-Michel. As one commentator has suggested, the emergence in the nineteenth century of a saintly Brother with the name of Scubilion is a sign of vitality in the church: a forgotten saint from the church's past takes on a new life in the person of someone to venerate and perhaps imitate in the church of the present day.

When the missionary impetus in the nineteenth century brought the French Brothers to the United States in 1848 and to England in 1855, the traditional lists of names came with them. As part of the reorganization of the districts or provinces in mid-century, it was decided to give each Brother two religious names at the taking of the habit, thus increasing the number of possible combinations. In addition, each province was assigned a list of first names beginning with specific letters of the alphabet. Thus in any given country you could tell what province a Brother came from if you knew the first of his two religious names. In the United States, for example, the district of New York was assigned names beginning with A, B, and C; Baltimore got D, E, F, and G; St. Louis H, I, J, K, L; with San Francisco assigned the end of the alphabet from S through Z. Since these lists were prepared by the French superiors in the motherhouse, they continued to recycle the strange names of those ancient and unknown heroes of the faith who might otherwise have been forgotten.

The English-speaking Brothers accepted this system and learned to live with it, especially since the second of the two names in the combination was usually familiar and pronounceable enough to use in the schools without embarrassment. The students and lay colleagues of the Brothers were generally unaware of that "other" name. Thus the graduates

remember only Brothers named John or Joseph, Peter or Patrick, David or Dennis, Leo or Lawrence. At best, in schools where there was more than one Brother with the same name, there might be an A. Joseph, a B. Joseph, and a C. Joseph in New York, for example; or a D. John, an E. John, and an F. John in Baltimore. What the students didn't know (and the families of the Brothers tried to forget) was that the initial might stand for Anthimian or Aquilinus, Berthulian or Benezet, Corbinian or Cerealis, Disthal or Dositheus, Ephebus or Edelwald, Frontasian or Fridolinian, and so on. With names like that current in England, Ireland, and the United States, a name like Scubilion should not come as a great surprise, not among the Brothers at least.

The winds of change that blew through the church during and after Vatican Council II put an end to all of that, but not without struggle and pain. There were those who argued that because Jesus changed the name of Simon to Peter, and because the popes since the tenth century have taken a new name upon their election, so should the Brothers therefore continue to do the same. Others argued even more strongly in terms of the monastic ideal of "flight from the world," warning that the use of secular names would be just one more step in secularizing the Institute. The clinching argument on the other side, apart from the embarrassment of those strange names of foreign and forgotten origin, was the fact that the so-called secular names are not that in reality: the one derives from the sacramental baptism of the Brother, the other from the sacramental marriage of his parents. Accordingly, the General Chapter of 1967 decided that the official listing of the Brothers would maintain these two sacramental names, leaving the option to the Brother to continue to use all or part of his former religious name, or to the provinces to give new ones at the taking of the habit. Since that time the use of the family name has become increasingly common among the Brothers in conjunction with either the baptismal name or the more recognizable of the two religious names with which some Brothers had become so closely identified. In Europe it is the custom to put the family name in full capitals so one can tell which is which. Thus we get Brother

Miguel FEBRES CORDERO, recently canonized, and Brother Scubilion ROUSSEAU in the title of this biography.

All of this only serves to complicate the problem of what to call Brother Scubilion now that he may soon be beatified and proposed to the veneration of the church at large. Some Brothers want to suppress the Scubilion altogether and refer to him as Bro. (Blessed or Saint?) Jean-Bernard ROUSSEAU, following the present-day usage. But that would be anachronistic; no one ever called him by that name in all his years as a Brother. Others suggest Bro. Scubilion ROUSSEAU, the compromise combination used in the title of this work. But that, too, is anachronistic, and it doesn't eliminate the problems associated with the bizarre name *Scubilion*. For better or worse, then, it seems best to call him simply Brother Scubilion. Throughout the forty-five years of his life as a Brother, that is how he was known. It is by that name that he is still honored and revered on the island of Reunion, where he labored so tirelessly and was so beloved, especially among the newly enfranchised blacks in whose service he spent most of his life. For the English-speaking reader who may be coming to know about Brother Scubilion for the first time, once the strangeness of the name is overcome, it may be possible for the reality of the man to emerge in an even brighter light.

For some readers a word of explanation may be necessary for the initials, FSC, placed after each Brother's name. The letters stand for *Fratres Scholarum Christianarum*, the official Latin title of the Institute translating the original French, *Frères des Ecoles Chrétiennes*, and in English, Brothers of the Christian Schools. The title indicates that all the members of the Institute are Brothers devoted exclusively to the work of Christian education. As such, these men are not priests and do not engage in the ministries proper to the ordained clergy. The Brothers do take vows, however, and try in every way to keep alive the spirit of brotherhood among themselves and in relation to their students. Originally the teaching ministry of the Brothers was strictly limited to their own schools, the "Christian schools," but in recent years the Brothers have begun to expand their efforts to other forms of the educational aposto-

late. This movement was already foreshadowed to some extent in the very creative missionary activity of Brother Scubilion more than a century ago. It should be noted also that in the French context the term *Christian* in the title of the Institute is synonymous with Roman Catholic, the other Christian religious traditions being largely invisible and barely tolerated in a culture that was at least nominally Catholic.

Despite their official character, neither the initials, FSC, nor the title Brothers of the Christian Schools is universally applied to the Brothers. In France, to avoid confusion with the *Frères du Sacré Coeur*, the sons of De La Salle prefer to use FEC rather than FSC. In nineteenth-century documents from the island of Reunion, Brother Scubilion and his confreres are sometimes referred to as *Les Frères de la doctrine chrétienne* (but never FDC). From the earliest days in the United States, the Brothers were called simply the Christian Brothers and that is how they often named their institutions. Christian Brothers College in St. Louis, Missouri, was chartered in 1855; Christian Brothers Academy in Albany, New York, in 1859; and there have been many others since. Nor can we forget the fine Christian Brothers' wines produced by the Brothers in California since 1882. This shorter version of the title probably originated with the Irish immigrants to the United States, who had known the "Irish" Christian Brothers founded by Edmund Rice in 1802. To avoid confusion, in England, Ireland, and the Commonwealth countries, the FSC have been known as the De La Salle Brothers, an expression for which there is some evidence in the Founder's lifetime and one that is beginning to reappear in France and to some extent in the United States. In the long run, any of these names makes sense. The best way to summarize it is to say that the De La Salle Brothers are Christian Brothers teaching Christian doctrine in Christian Schools.

There is yet another choice to be made in the matter of names and that concerns the island of Reunion, in French, *La Réunion*. Located in the Indian Ocean off the east coast of Africa, this tiny island, only forty miles long and thirty miles wide, was originally called Saint Apollonia. It was later named Mascarin after the Portuguese explorer who discovered it early in the sixteenth century. When Roger du Bourg took posses-

sion of it in 1649 in the name of King Louis XIV, he renamed it the Ile de Bourbon in honor of the royal family (and not the Kentucky whiskey, obviously). During the French Revolution the name was again changed and the island was called Reunion for the first time. It is not clear whether this was intended to honor the reunions of the revolutionaries in the mother country or whether it derived from the revolutionary emphasis on *fraternité* in terms of union and reunion. Under Napoleon the island was called Bonaparte for as long as that imperial personage remained in power. After a brief period of British occupation, the restoration of the Bourbon monarchy in 1815 served also to restore the Bourbon name to the island. That is what the island was called in 1833 when Brother Scubilion arrived there. In 1848, midway through the active career of Brother Scubilion, the Bourbon monarchy fell and the name of the island reverted to Reunion. That is what it has been called ever since.

The first purpose, therefore, of this extensive commentary on names and what they signify has been to remind the reader that the names Brother Scubilion, FSC, and Frère Jean-Bernard ROUSSEAU, FEC, refer to one and the same person; that the De La Salle Brothers and the Christian Brothers (in this context) are one and the same religious Institute; that Bourbon and Reunion designate one and the same island.

That, however, is not the only purpose of this introduction. The strangeness and the complexity of the names suggest another kind of strangeness and complexity that has to be dealt with. The reader also needs some preparation to enter into a wholly different and quite outdated thought-world. In the narrative that follows, for example, no one in that period questions the presupposition that colonialization is a good thing both for the colonizer and the colonized. This is even more the case when the colonizing agent is Christian and Catholic, the bearer of a culture that is European and French. In the period dealt with here, the concepts of acculturation and enculturation in the sense in which we understand them today were not only unknown but unthinkable. Thus the process of civilizing the colonies, which served as well to gloss over their exploitation, necessarily involved indoctrination into the French language

and culture, together with the doctrines and observances of the Catholic religion.

A second presupposition operative in the period under study is theological. For the church in nineteenth-century France, earlier, too, and elsewhere as well, the colonial adventure was justified, perhaps even mandated, by the concept of the Catholic Christian State. This doctrine, pretty much transcended by Vatican Council II, affirmed the close union of church and state; the supremacy of the spiritual power over the temporal; the duty of the state to support the spiritual mission of "the one, true church," Roman Catholic, that is; and the duty of the state to suppress other religious expressions on the basis that error has no rights. As late as the 1950's, theologians such as John Courtney Murray, who argued for religious liberty and the separation of church and state on the US model, were severely censured by church authority. The traditional theory did not, however, always work in practice, not at all in the United States and not always very well in some countries nominally Catholic such as France. In fact, the anticlerical movements in such countries can often be traced to attempts on the part of the church to apply the theory in practical and political matters. Nonetheless, during the time Brother Scubilion was on the island of Reunion, the mutual interdependence of church and state seemed to work fairly well for the Brothers: the government profited from their efforts by having an educated and disciplined citizenry well-versed in the French language and culture; the Brothers profited from the protection and the financial support of the government.

A third presupposition, likewise theological, that explains to a great extent the zeal of missionaries like Brother Scubilion is the doctrine that there is no eternal salvation outside the one true church, Roman and Catholic. This conviction, forcefully enunciated by popes from the thirteenth through the nineteenth centuries, has been considerably modified by Vatican II and the theology developed from it. But for the missionaries of the colonial period, it was taken for granted that entire indigenous populations were doomed to eternal damnation unless they accepted the Christian gospel and were received into the Catholic church. The primitive native religions were seen, not as genuine

forms of religious expression, but rather as the incarnation of the demonic. For the missionaries, then, this was the powerful source of motivation that led them to make unbelievable sacrifices in order to bring the good news of salvation to those who would otherwise be lost. For a Christian Brother like Scubilion, true to the spirit of the Institute inherited from the Founder, it was a spirit of faith that enabled him to hear the call of God in the needs of the poor who were "far from salvation"; this faith ignited his zeal to work for their evangelization. In purest charity he gave of himself tirelessly and unselfishly to bring to the unloved and unlovable neighbor the "one thing necessary," God's saving grace made available in the church through word and sacrament.

There is one final mental adjustment that has to be made before the reader can fully understand Brother Scubilion and his confreres. It must be remembered that the Institute of the Brothers and the Brothers themselves were in some ways very different in the first half of the nineteenth century from what they are today. When Brother Scubilion entered the novitiate in 1822, the Institute was still in the process of reorganization after the French Revolution. It was still exclusively French and had only barely begun to extend its efforts to the French colonies beyond the sea, *outré mer*. The educational activities of the Brothers were generally limited to the elementary parish schools in urban centers. The education of the Brothers themselves was very rudimentary; much of it was obtained by "on-the-job" training, to use the modern expression, in the subject matter and the methods traditional in the Brothers' schools. The expansion of the Institute beyond the borders of France and the French colonies, the entry into the fields of secondary and higher education, the programs to educate better the Brothers themselves, were developments that would come only in the decades that lay ahead. And none of them would have had any influence on the work of Brother Scubilion or his contemporaries on the island of Reunion.

When the Brothers came to missionary outposts like Reunion, they brought with them the Rule and the religious habit they had inherited from their Founder. The daily schedule was strictly adhered to: rising at 4:30 a.m., a full hour of vocal and

mental prayer before daily Mass, the rosary recited after a meager breakfast or while walking in the streets, classes all morning and during most of the afternoon, another hour of spiritual reading and prayer before supper, a brief period of recreation limited to pious conversation, then study of catechism and preparation for the next day's lessons before going to bed. Dependence on superiors was absolute, and permission had to be sought for the slightest deviation. On the occasion of the beatification of Brother Benilde, Pope Pius XII used the term *terribile quotidianum* to describe the deadly character of this day-in and day-out routine. The same was true of educational policies. Not even the most urgent requests or enticing opportunities would persuade the superiors to assign less than three Brothers to any given school or community house. The religious habit, too, remained the customary dress all day long, inside and outside the house. It included not only the familiar black soutane and white rabat, but also the black skullcap known as the calotte and a broad-brimmed hat for street-wear, as well as the long mantle with the flowing sleeves that later became a ceremonial garment before being abandoned altogether. No concessions were made in any of these matters either to the tropical heat or to the special circumstances on a tropical island. Thus a Brother like Scubilion who wanted to respond to the very urgent needs of the slave population, impossible in the confines of the regular routine of the school and community, had to undertake these projects during time stolen from leisure or sleep.

All in all, then, the life story of Brother Scubilion demands that the reader enter into a world that is strange and remote: the names will be unfamiliar and confusing, the places faraway, the time remote enough to be scarcely comprehensible only a century and a half later, the habits of thought and patterns of action rooted in a society and culture that no longer exist. With the reader thus forewarned and forearmed, it is time to begin the story.

2.

Jean-Bernard

Jean-Bernard Rousseau, the future Brother Scubilion, was born on 21 March 1797 in the Burgundy country of France, a region renowned for its excellent and distinctive wines. He was the oldest child of Bernard Rousseau and Reine Pelletier who had been married on 6 April of the previous year. The family made its home in Tharoiseau, a small village about three miles from Vézalay, the site of a famous Romanesque monastic church belonging to the Benedictine order. Jean-Bernard came into the world, not at Tharoiseau, but at Annay-la-Côte, the home of his maternal grandmother. It was the custom at the time for an expectant mother to go to the home of her parents for the birth of her first child, so as to be assured of the best possible care.

At this period, the French Revolution was still in full swing. The pastor of the parish at Annay-la-Côte, Fr. Etienne Velin, was in hiding, but he would emerge from time to time when the spiritual needs of his parishioners required it. No parish records were kept, but an account of the baptism of Jean-Bernard, apparently dictated by Father Velin, has survived. It had been given to the family to keep with the family records. The crude text with its variant spellings reads:

Baptism was administered to Jean-Bernard Rousseau, son of Bernard Rousseau, a stonecutter, at Annay-la-Côte. He was baptized by Etienne Vilan, parish priest at Annay. The godfather was Jean Pelthier, age 70, his grandfather; the godmother was Madeleine Rousseau, age 58, his aunt, living in Taroixau. He was baptized on the 1st germinal of the year V, in the old style, 22 March 1797.

The bare facts of this almost clandestine event were to be greatly embellished by the romantic imagination of Brother

Scubilion writing years later from faraway Reunion. More importantly, this letter shows how the mature man came to understand the significance of what had been done for him sacramentally as a child. Dated 8 December 1855, the letter is addressed to the Brother Director of Avallon, where the Brothers had since opened a school not far from the Rousseau home. It reads in part:

My dear Brother Director, I seem to see you going out for a walk along the road that leads to Annay-la-Côte. As you walk past those beautiful wheat fields, if you look toward the middle of the beautiful vineyards, you will see on one side the beautiful village of Annay-la-Côte where they make such good wine. And if you go up to this little village you will find there a pretty little church. You will be happy to hear the beautiful bells of the carillon. Oh yes, it was the sound of those bells that announced to the angels of heaven the day on which I received the grace of holy baptism, the day on which the good God received me among the number of his children. And so you ought to understand how happy I am that the Lord has sent some Brothers so close to the place of my birth. Who would ever have said that the poor little infant whose birth those bells announced would one day be writing to you from 10,000 miles away? Oh, how great are the designs of God!

Evidently, then, neither age nor distance were able to efface the memories of a happy childhood.

The Rousseau family lived in very modest circumstances. Their house, built at the base of the village wall, had only one room on the ground floor with a loft above. The furniture was sparse and plain. The father worked as a stonecutter in the nearby quarry, while the mother looked after the children and did the housework. Altogether four children were born to the union. Jean-Bernard was the oldest. Madeleine was born a year later in 1798, Claude in 1802 and Françoise in 1808. All but Jean-Bernard were baptized in Tharoiseau, as the parish records, resumed after the Revolution, indicate. Though quite poor, the family was well thought of in the village where they

were admired for their industry and for the faithful practice of their religion.

In July 1797, only four months after the birth of Jean-Bernard, the parishes in France began to function again in a movement back to religion that has been described as general, constant and spontaneous. Pastors returned from hiding to take care of their flocks. Among these were Fr. Etienne Velin to Annay-la-Côte, and the aging Fr. Dominique Petitier to Tharoiseau. Father Dominique had already been pastor at Tharoiseau for more than forty years and was to continue at that post for another thirteen years. He had taken the oath demanded by the Civil Constitution of the Clergy in 1793 in the hope of being able to continue his ministry to the model parish he had worked so hard to develop. But eventually he, too, had to go into hiding and was able openly to resume his pastoral duties only after the practice of religion was officially reinstated.

Not very much more is known of the childhood of Jean-Bernard. Like all the young country lads of his day, he would have had to spend a good deal of his time watching over the flocks of sheep. In the absence of a functioning local school, his early education would have been provided at home by his parents. As he grew older, he came increasingly under the tutelage of the pastor of the parish, Father Petitier, who prepared him for his first holy communion. Although there is no formal record of the event, nor of his confirmation, the piety of the boy and his parents, as well as the zeal of the parish priest, has led the biographers to assume that Jean-Bernard would have received his first communion, as was customary, when he was eleven or twelve years old.

Father Petitier seems to have taken a special interest in the young lad and may have thought of preparing him to study for the priesthood. Adept as Jean-Bernard was at learning the catechism, however, and devout as he was in the practices of Christian piety, he showed little aptitude for study beyond the most elementary rudiments of reading, writing, and arithmetic. With the death of Father Petitier in 1811, even this rather informal schooling came to an abrupt end. Jean-Bernard was only

fourteen at the time. It was not until seven years later that he would have the opportunity under a new tutor to try to pick up his studies where he had left off. The few samples that survive of some things he wrote in his later years reflect this long neglect: his expression was typically inelegant (see the repetition of *beau* and *belle*, in English “beautiful,” in the excerpt from the letter quoted above), and his handwriting was pretty much of a scrawl.

The death of Father Petitier left the parish at Tharoiseau without a full-time pastor. The needs of the parishioners were served only occasionally by the pastor of the neighboring parish, Father Blandin. Consequently Jean-Bernard had to grow in wisdom and grace through his teenage years mostly on his own. Years later, those who remembered him at this period testified to his love for study and his unusual piety. As one such witness remarked, “He was always in church. All he ever thought of was praying to God. People used to say he was a saint.”

Apparently his unusual piety came to the attention of Father Blandin of the neighboring parish, who selected Jean-Bernard to lead the parish of Tharoiseau in the procession of the cross. Brother Scubilion himself was later to describe the occasion in the letter of 8 December 1855 to the Brother Director at Avallon:

In my imagination, I cross the vast ocean which separates me from that little village of Avallon which brings back so many precious memories, especially the implanting of the mission cross there in 1816 after it had been carried in triumphal procession accompanied by a great number of people from the neighboring parishes. Each pastor led his own little flock with a cross at the head of the procession. Each parish had its own cross and I myself had the good fortune to carry the cross for Tharoiseau, my home parish.

In 1816, when this took place, Jean-Bernard was nineteen years old. It will become evident later in the narrative what great significance this “implanting of the cross” would have for Brother Scubilion. In both the symbolic and the literal sense it was to become a driving force and a dominant theme in his missionary apostolate.

Edme Gerbeau, an instructor at Tharoiseau. June 27, Eighteen twenty-five. Gerbeau. 1825." The book is now preserved in the archives of the generalate of the Brothers in Rome.

This book, which nourished the piety of the maturing young man, contains, among other things, suggestions on how to sanctify each day of the week and each month of the year. The greater part of the text is devoted to a series of meditations, most of them centering on the passion of Our Lord, from the agony in the garden to the death on the cross. The author puts great emphasis on the cross: (1) as a holy book open to everyone; (2) as a rule of life; (3) as the sacred sign of the children of God. "If you would be a learned savant," says the author, "then learn well the lessons of the cross."

Some idea of the pious practices recommended in the book can be gained from the following excerpt:

Not content with carefully avoiding anything that would renew the pain of Our Lord's passion, honor him with all the practices that a tender devotion can inspire you to undertake: the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass offered for this intention, fervent communions, frequent meditation on the sufferings of the Savior, some voluntary penances such as fasting on Friday or getting up in the middle of the night on Thursday or Friday to meditate for an hour on your knees on the passion of Jesus Christ.

Each of the meditations in the book concludes with a short prayer. Here is one:

*Is it possible, my Savior, that they compared you to Barab-
bas? Is it true that they preferred this wicked man, this
murderer, to you? Alas, it is only too true that your enemies
did you this injustice. But it is also true that I have done
worse, hundreds of times preferring the devil to you. What
sacrilege! What was I thinking of at such times? Was I in
my right mind? What a misfortune for me, O Lord, to have
so forgotten myself! What can I do to repair such a wrong
and to expiate my sin? I want to place myself beneath all
creatures; I humble myself and think of myself as the worst
trash in the world and I'm perfectly happy when others*

think that way about me, for they are right and have good reason to do so.

These sentiments may seem rather exaggerated to a contemporary ear. Modern psychology would certainly consider suspect this manner of inducing feelings of guilt in an impressionable late adolescent, especially one as devout as Jean-Bernard evidently was. On the other hand, Jesus does remind us in the gospel that even the just man sins seven times a day. As has been the case with so many saintly persons, for Jean-Bernard this sense of sin, his own and those of others, this identification with Jesus suffering for the sins of the world, became a distinctive characteristic of his spirituality throughout the rest of his life.

A new influence was brought to bear on Jean-Bernard with the appointment, after a seven-year lapse, of a new pastor of the parish at Tharoiseau. On 4 October 1818, Fr. Pierre Darcy arrived there to assume his pastoral duties. He was himself only twenty-five years old, having been ordained at Troyes only two weeks before his appointment as pastor. He was a zealous young priest and soon had the parish humming with a renewed liturgical and devotional life. Years later he was able to recall that the first person to come to confession to him was none other than Jean-Bernard Rousseau. A close bond rapidly developed between the two men that was to become decisive for the vocation of the younger one.

Although the parish at Tharoiseau was small, it had always had a good reputation for its fidelity to Catholic observances and the fervor of its devotional life. The new pastor discovered, however, that there were traces of Jansenism among his people, especially in their reluctance to receive the sacrament of the Holy Eucharist. It was a typical Jansenist teaching, based on a false sense of unworthiness, to discourage Catholics, especially lay persons, from receiving communion very often. The pastor took steps to counteract this idea, insisting that the sacrament was intended for the regular spiritual nourishment of all the faithful. This was a great source of happiness to Jean-Bernard. However Jansenistic some other aspects of his book of meditations may seem, on this point the author was well

ahead of his time. In the *Moyens de salut*, Jean-Bernard had often been struck by this passage:

Do not be surprised at what we are here recommending to you, in particular, that you receive the Eucharist every Sunday. . . . Don't say to yourself that frequent communion is incompatible with your state in life, or that it is appropriate only for those who have withdrawn from the world. That is a false idea and it is one that the devil favors.

One means that Father Darcy used to encourage the frequent reception of holy communion was to introduce to his parishioners the devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus. There is no better remedy for Jansenist rigor, he felt, than concentration on the love and forgiveness of Jesus as symbolized by his holy heart. The pastor himself, on the day of his ordination, had been enrolled among the "slaves" of the Sacred Heart, assuming the obligation of offering Mass on the first Friday of every month without accepting any stipend. The parish records at Tharoiseau indicate that on Christmas day of 1819 the Confraternity of the Sacred Heart of Jesus was established there according to a decree issued by the Archbishop of Troyes.

Among those who were enrolled in the Confraternity on that very same day was Jean-Bernard Rousseau. His certificate of enrollment was found among his effects after his death. It reads:

I, Jean-Bernard, have been received at Tharoiseau on 25 December 1819. I have taken for my hour of perpetual adoration of the Sacred Heart of Our Lord Jesus Christ, every Holy Thursday from 5 to 6 in the morning.

O True Adorer, you who alone love God with an immense love, have mercy on me.

All the evidence indicates that he remained faithful to this practice throughout his life as a Brother.

Shortly before this time, the elementary school in the parish, which had remained closed ever since the Revolution, was reopened and a layman named Edme Gerbeau was placed in charge. So many youngsters flocked to the school that it soon became apparent that the instructor, as he was called, would need an assistant. Father Darcy naturally thought of his young

protégé. And so it was that Jean-Bernard had his first experience teaching catechism, and probably some other elementary subjects as well, to the very youngest pupils in the school. Apparently he was successful in this work and happy to share some of his enthusiasm for the Christian message with these little ones. Years afterward the villagers and Edme Gerbeau himself retained vivid memories of the dynamic young catechist. It was to this Edme Gerbeau, whose assistant he was, that Jean-Bernard passed on his book of meditations, the *Moyens de salut*.

The seeds of Jean-Bernard's religious vocation had already been sown in the devotional atmosphere of the Rousseau family and the tutelage of Father Petitier. Things religious held a special attraction for him, especially evident in his love for the cross of Christ, for the Eucharist, and for meditative prayer. The arrival of Father Darcy on the scene when Jean-Bernard was just twenty-one years old helped to give direction and focus to his spiritual development. Father Darcy also encouraged him to resume the studies that had been interrupted seven years before, assuming himself the additional role of tutor. Jean-Bernard never forgot the part that this priest played in his religious formation. In 1855, at the very end of his letter from Reunion to the Brother Director at Avallon, Brother Scubilion was to write: "I have heard it said that Father Darcy, the former pastor at Tharoiseau, has been made pastor of the church of Saint-Lazare in Avallon. If he is still there, please give him my very best regards."

Behind that simple greeting there is doubtless the recollection of long and earnest conversations between the two men on the subject of religious vocation. It is likely that at first Father Darcy thought of preparing Jean-Bernard for the priesthood, as had Father Petitier at an earlier time. But now Jean-Bernard was well past the usual age for entering the seminary. Besides he showed little aptitude for the complicated studies he would have to make up before he could consider such a step. It became increasingly clear to both men that God might be calling him to some other form of religious life.

There was one thing that Jean-Bernard could certainly do fairly well, and that was to teach catechism to young children.

This led Father Darcy to think of suggesting the Brothers of the Christian Schools. He had come to know the Brothers and admire their work when he was still in Troyes. More recently he had heard good things about the newly opened Brothers' school at Auxerre, only fifty miles away. He suggested that Jean-Bernard make the short trip to Auxerre to find out for himself what the Brothers were like. When he arrived there, the young man was cordially received by Brother Felix, the Director, who showed him around the school and the community house. He explained the nature of the Brothers' Institute, the sort of life the Brothers led, and the obligations they assumed. The Director was impressed with this new candidate and urged him to reflect, to pray, and to seek further counsel before making his decision.

From that moment on, Jean-Bernard thought of nothing else. With each passing day he became more and more convinced that God was calling him to the Institute of De La Salle. Encouraged by Father Darcy, he made his decision and set out for the Brothers' novitiate in Paris early in November 1822. He was twenty-five years old. Even so, it must have cost him a great deal to leave behind his mother and his aging father, who was already blind. His sister Madeleine, now age twenty-four, was still at home, as was his younger brother Claude, who at twenty was already working as a barrel maker. Later on, a cousin of Edme Gerbeau was to testify that, upon the departure of Jean-Bernard from Tharoiseau, the townspeople said among themselves, "See there, Jean-Bernard is going away to become a saint."

3.

Brother Scubilion

On Saturday, 9 November 1822, Jean-Bernard Rousseau arrived in Paris and went directly to the motherhouse of the Institute of the Brothers, which was then in the suburb of Saint-Martin. The central administration of the Institute had recently been moved to this new location from Lyons, which had served as a base for the reorganization that followed after the French Revolution. Brother Gerbaud, elected Superior General at the General Chapter of 1810, felt that it was an important part of the restoration to bring the center of the Institute back to the capital and the center of national life. He negotiated with the authorities in Paris, who not only approved the move but provided the property and the buildings as well. The transfer took place toward the end of January 1821.

This was a period of great fervor and enthusiasm in the Institute. In the motherhouse, in the schools in Paris and the provinces, there were many Brothers who had been in the Institute before the Revolution and suffered in the dispersion that followed. Not a few of them had been imprisoned or in hiding and all were now determined to revive the heritage of De La Salle and invest it with new life and vigor.

The novitiate in Paris was put under the patronage of the Infant Jesus, a devotion dear to the Founder and traditional in the Institute. When Jean-Bernard arrived there he came under the guidance of Brother Marie, the Director of Novices. A native of Belgium and thirty-eight years old at the time, Brother Marie had been Director of Novices at Reims for five years before coming to Paris. He was later to serve in the same capacity at Lyons, eventually being appointed as a special Visitor to supervise all the novitiates in France. He had a

reputation for solid piety and a firm hand in enforcing the Rules of the Institute. From the very beginning the prospective novices, or postulants as they were called, were given the Rules to read, and Brother Marie was there to see that all the details were understood and followed to the letter.

Concerning the postulancy, the Book of Government then in force read as follows:

All the postulants who are admitted to the novitiate will remain for a month or six weeks still wearing secular clothes. They will be tested to see if they can conform to the Rules and Constitutions of the Institute. For this purpose they will be given the Rules to read right from the very first day. During the postulancy they will also be given whatever instructions they may need to make a good general confession.

None of this would have presented any problem for Jean-Bernard who had, for a long time, been accustomed to regular confession and communion and was already fairly experienced in practices of prayer and mortification.

For Christmas of 1822, Brother Marie had a well-prepared group of nine postulants ready to receive the religious habit, as was customary, on the eve of the feast. The novices and postulants in this period of reorganization were often considerably older than would be the case later on. Jean-Bernard was himself twenty-five. Two of the group were older: Jean-Baptiste Jacob was twenty-nine and Nicolas Herpin was twenty-six. The latter had already risen to the rank of captain in the merchant marine before deciding to enter the Institute. One of the group was twenty-two years old, three were nineteen, and the two youngest were not quite sixteen years old.

The ceremony of the taking of the habit is simple. It has not changed much over the three-hundred-year history of the Institute, except that after Vatican II the relatives and friends of the Brothers were allowed to be present for the first time. The ceremony usually begins with a short exhortation to the postulants on the significance of the step they are taking. They are then asked to reply aloud to a series of questions: whether they are entering the Institute freely and of their own accord;

whether they are convinced that they have been called by God; whether they understand the Rules and are prepared to obey them; whether they will be willing to put forth all their efforts for the Christian education of the young. After replying affirmatively to these questions, the postulants go apart, put off their secular clothes, and don the black soutane and the white rabat that constitute the distinctive habit of the De La Salle Brother. Each of the new novices is then given a crucifix, a rosary, and a New Testament. The ceremony concludes with the announcement of the names by which they will be known as Brothers.

In this way, on Christmas Eve of 1822, Jean-Bernard Rousseau became Brother Scubilion. The oldest in the group was given the name Brother Veule; the sea captain became Brother Dange; the two fifteen-year olds became Brothers Symphrone and Vésien respectively; the other four were to be called Brothers Dativ, Vetur, Quint and Usize. With names such as these, perhaps it is just as well that the relatives were not admitted to the ceremonies. Although the new habit and the new name were intended to signify a definitive break with the world from which they had come, the novices were allowed to write home on rare occasions. It is known that Brother Scubilion wrote to his mother and that she showed his letters, filled with enthusiasm for the spiritual experience of the novitiate, to his friends and associates at Tharoiseau. All trace of the letters themselves has, not surprisingly, been lost.

Once invested with the religious habit, the new novices would join with the others who had already begun the prescribed year of novitiate somewhat earlier. At that moment in the Institute's history it was customary to have the investiture ceremony several times during the year. The records show that there were six such occasions in the Paris novitiate between Christmas of 1822 and the time that Brother Scubilion finished his novitiate. One of the most notable of these occurred on 28 June 1823 when no fewer than fourteen young men took the habit. The ceremonies on that day were presided over by Bishop Forbin-Joseph, who was then Bishop of Nancy. Brother Scubilion was present to hear the bishop say, among other things, "I believe that all who die in this holy habit will be saved." In

an age preoccupied with the obstacles to eternal salvation, that would provide powerful motivation indeed.

The practice of receiving several groups successively into the novitiate meant that Brother Scubilion would have been a fellow novice of many who later became important figures in the Institute. Among them was Brother Secundien, who died in Reims in 1855 and whose reputation for holiness was such that he rates a dossier in the archives of the generalate next to that of Brother Scubilion. Others held important offices in the Institute: Brother Amos, who became an Assistant Superior General and functioned in that capacity for twenty-seven years; Brother Agathange, who became the Brother Provincial of Metz; and Brother Sancien, who became a long-time Provincial of Belgium. Brother Dange, the former sea captain, was Director of the community in Montauban in southern France when he died in 1865.

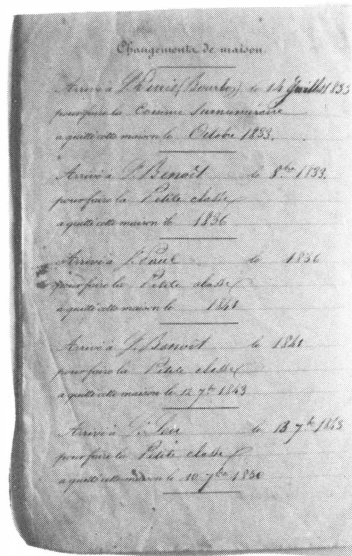
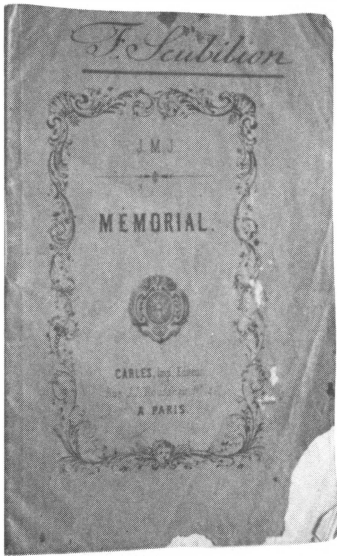
These distinguished Brothers, and many others less well known but no less dedicated, together with Brother Scubilion, found the source of their religious fervor and apostolic zeal in the year they spent together in the novitiate. Once familiar with the *Rules and Constitutions* of the Institute, the novices would be introduced to the distinctive spirituality inherited from the Founder. His was an apostolic spirituality motivated by a spirit of faith that overflowed into an ardent zeal for the Christian education of young people, especially the most disadvantaged. The novices were given the opportunity to do extensive and prayerful reading in the texts dating back to the time of De La Salle, many of them composed in whole or in part by the Founder himself. There would be periods of meditation, both morning and evening, to help the novices master this art—difficult for many, but already familiar to Brother Scubilion. On the other hand, the meditations that De La Salle wrote for Sundays and feasts would provide him with a wider range of subject matter than what had been offered in the *Moyens de salut* that he had left behind. De La Salle wrote his meditations with the teaching Brother very much in mind. Reflections on the gospel passage of the day, the mysteries of the faith, or the life of a saint were joined with concrete lessons to be drawn for the teaching ministry. In this way the meditation which

nourished the life of faith served at the same time to enhance and motivate the apostolic zeal of the Brother. For the same reason, the novices were introduced to the *Conduct of Schools*, a practical manual of school management and classroom procedures, originating in the earliest days of the Institute and regularly revised thereafter to adjust to new developments in educational theory and practice.

This integration of religious faith with apostolic zeal was reinforced by the Institute policy of assigning the novices, after a year spent in the novitiate house, to a school community for a second year of novitiate, "on the job" so to speak, before they would be allowed to take vows. In the days before the codification of the church's canon law, the requirement of a full year in the novitiate house was not always strictly observed. Thus it happened that on 4 November 1823, some six weeks before the expiration of the novitiate year, Brother Scubilion was sent from the novitiate to begin his apostolic career.

For the next ten years, from 1823 to 1833, Brother Scubilion would grow in faith and zeal in his assignments to the communities and elementary schools of the Brothers in France: first at Alençon, then at Poitiers, and finally at Chinon. Written documents from this period are almost nonexistent, but the essential facts can be gathered from the *Memorial* as it was called, a record kept by every Brother of his successive assignments. The *Memorial* belonging to Brother Scubilion was found after his death and corrected in some details by his Brother Provincial to conform with the official records of the Institute. At that time, also, the Brothers in France gathered oral testimony from those who knew Brother Scubilion during the ten years he spent in the schools there. Many remembered him for his sensitivity to things spiritual, for his regular observance of the Rule, and for his effectiveness with young children, especially as a catechist.

The first assignment at Alençon from 1823 to 1826 must have been something of a disappointment, since Brother Scubilion was assigned to what were called "temporalities." This involved looking after the kitchen and the laundry, doing the marketing, keeping the house clean, as well as being responsible for the distribution of the textbooks and writing materials



The "Memorial" or Booklet in which Brother Scubilion kept a record of his assignments

in the school. The reason for this assignment was due no doubt to Brother's lack of formal training and his little aptitude for any kind of advanced study. The Director of the community at the time was Brother Génereux, who had preceded Brother Marie as Director of Novices in Paris. Like many a Director of Novices before and since, this Brother was insistent on a strict and literal observance of the Rule. The reminiscences of those who knew the Brothers at Alençon during this period all remark on the fervor of the community and the evident saintliness of Brother Scubilion as he went about his errands in the town.

The person in Alençon who knew Brother Scubilion best of all was no doubt his confessor, Father Chorin, the vicar of the parish of Notre Dame. He must have been tremendously impressed by the deep spirituality of his Brother penitent and the special devotion he had to the passion and the cross of Christ. There is evidence for this in the gift he made to Brother Scubilion of a crucifix containing a relic of the true cross,

something very highly prized in those days. It was found among his effects after the Brother's death with a note attached:

This small crucifix contains a very precious treasure. It is a piece taken from the true cross of the Monarch of the Heavens; whoever after my death shall wear this relic will receive abundant graces from Jesus Christ. Let such a one say a De profundis for me and my soul will be comforted. This relic of the cross was given to me by my confessor, Father Chorin, Vicar of Alençon, in 1823. He himself had received the precious wood from his Excellency the Bishop of Séez.

Brother Scubilion

Before leaving Alençon, Brother Scubilion asked to make his first vows. In those days the Brothers were not allowed to make final vows until they were at least twenty-five years old and had previously made temporary vows of three years. These triennial vows could not be made until after at least two years in the Institute, including the year of novitiate. Many Brothers delayed making vows for years, remaining "novices employed," some of them for their entire lifetime. It is not surprising, however, that Brother Scubilion would not want to delay this step. Accordingly, at the end of the annual retreat held at Caen in Normandy on 15 September 1825 Brother Scubilion was admitted to pronounce for the first time vows of chastity, poverty, obedience, teaching the poor gratuitously, and stability in the Institute. These vows were made for a three-year period. Among those who took the same vows on that day we find Brothers with names such as Audifax, Eutrope, Mercure, Silian, Yvore, and even a Brother named simply Simple.

In 1826, after three years in Alençon, Brother Scubilion was transferred to the school in Poitiers. To his great joy he was assigned to teach the very small children in the elementary class. By reason of an agreement that had been reached between the government of France and the Institute in 1819, his teacher's certificate was granted simply on the basis of his assignment. In the perspective of history the text of the letter from the government to Brother Gerbaud, then Superior General, makes interesting reading. It says in part:

Every Brother who is presently teaching, or who will be assigned to teach, should present himself to the rector of the Academy to obtain his certificate and the written authorization that he needs. Once the rector has seen the assignment, he will grant him the certificate and the authorization, without requiring any examination or any recommendation from the local school board. The letter of authorization will be given to the Brother; the certificate will be sent to the Superior General who will retain it. If the Brother should leave the congregation, the certificate is null.

Happy to be back in the classroom, Brother Scubilion had the opportunity for the first time to incorporate his earlier experience at Tharoiseau into the program and the methods followed in the Brothers' schools. It was a special joy for him once again to be teaching young children their prayers, the catechism, and the life of Our Lord.

Whatever Brother Scubilion himself lacked in formal schooling was more than compensated for by his determination to bring the gospel message to his pupils in simple language that they could understand. In so doing, he no doubt had in mind these words that Saint John Baptist de La Salle wrote in the first of his meditations for the time of retreat:

According to the expression of St. Paul, God has made you his ministers in order to reconcile others to him. He has entrusted to you the message of reconciliation for these children. Appeal to them as if God were appealing through you, for you have been destined to cultivate these young plants by announcing to them the truths of the gospel.

Provide them with the means of salvation appropriate to their development. Teach them without using learned words, lest the cross of Christ, source of our sanctification, become void of meaning. Then nothing you say would produce any fruit in their minds or hearts. For these children are simple and for the most part not very well brought up. Those who help them to salvation must speak simply, so that every word will be clear and easy to understand.

Be faithful to this in order to do as much as you are able and as God requires of you for the salvation of those whom he has entrusted to you.

The final thought in that meditation is a reference to the formula by which the Brothers pronounce their vows.



Cities in France associated with Brother Scubilion

After two years at Poitiers, Brother Scubilion formally requested to make his perpetual vows. Even though his triennial vows had still a year to go before expiration, he was authorized to make his final vows during the annual retreat held at Nantes in September 1827. This time he could say definitively and forever the words inherited from the Founder and pronounced by so many Brothers before and since: "Most Holy Trinity, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, prostrate before your infinite and adorable majesty, I consecrate myself entirely to you to procure your glory as far as I am able and you will require of me. . . ." It would soon become apparent how that formula would be translated into action. Seven other Brothers made perpetual profession on that occasion. The others were Brothers Hispace, Jacques-le-Majeur, Mènes, Mérule, Quiriace and Yvore. The last named had been part of the group that made triennial vows two years before.

Very little else is recorded of Brother Scubilion's remaining years in France. In 1828 he was sent back to Alençon, this time to teach the elementary class. Presumably someone else by that time had been given charge of the kitchen and the laundry. After two years in Alençon, Brother Scubilion was transferred back to Poitiers for one more year. Then, in 1831, he was sent to Chinon. This was to be his last assignment in his native France. The only documented fact that emerges from the Chinon period, but one that gives some idea of what it was like in the Brothers' schools in those days, is the statistic that in the elementary class in Chinon that year there were eighty pupils.

Content as he was to be a minister of the gospel to his young charges in Chinon, or Poitiers, or wherever, there yet burned in Brother Scubilion a consuming desire to bring the Christian message to distant places where it had not been heard, to bring the good news of salvation in Christ to souls that might otherwise be lost. He pondered the formula of vows: ". . . to procure your glory as far as I am able and you will require of me." Surely he was able to do more, surely more was required of him. Father Chassagnon, his first biographer, describes his state of mind in these rather poetic terms:

A more distant horizon opened up to his soul's vision. In his apostolic longings he dreamed of doing glorious things. The wellspring of generosity that flowed through his veins did not find outlets enough in France. He needed to find some other fields in which to labor. Night and day he was tormented by the thought that he might better procure the glory of God in faraway missions. It was the same way with St. Paul who heard the voice of the young Macedonian who appeared to him at night in a vision and spoke with this entreaty: "Cross the sea and come to us." And so, while Brother Scubilion remained physically confined within the narrow limits of his classroom, his heart's desire carried him faraway to the souls who were calling for him.

A better glimpse into the mind of Brother Scubilion, and one that could have directly influenced him, can be found in another of the Founder's meditations, the seventh that he wrote for the Brothers to consider during the time of their retreat:

The reason that St. Paul gives why his ministry was so esteemed is that God's secret plan was revealed to him, and he had received the grace of unveiling to the Gentiles the unfathomable riches of Christ, so that those who had no part in Jesus Christ and were excluded from God's covenant without his hope and promises now belong to Jesus Christ and are strangers no longer but fellow citizens of the saints and members of God's household . . . Thank God for the grace he has given you in your work of sharing in the ministry of the holy apostles . . . Take pride in your ministry by making yourselves, as St. Paul says, qualified ministers of the new covenant.

So minded, and so motivated, Brother Scubilion made his decision. He wrote to Brother Anaclet, the Superior General. With limited eloquence but with earnest simplicity he asked that he be assigned to work in the missions.

At that moment in Institute history there were very few communities outside of France and only a small number of Brothers working in mission lands. However, by coincidence, or more possibly by divine Providence, at the time Brother

Scubilion made his request, the Superior General had just received a letter from the minister of the French government for marine and colonial affairs. Dated 26 February 1833, the letter asks the Superior to make available three Brothers for the island of Bourbon. The minister indicates that the government would be willing to arrange for their passage and to pay their expenses. The reply of the Superior was sent from Paris on 9 March 1833:

I received the letter which you did me the honor to write on 26 February last, asking me to make available to you three of our Brothers for the island of Bourbon in order to open a second establishment there.

I agree perfectly with the thinking behind your request, honorable Minister, as well as with the authorities in Bourbon who are convinced that the multiplication of our establishments in that colony is the only way to settle our Brothers there permanently and to keep them satisfied. This will also make it easier to remedy the petty divisiveness that personality conflicts cannot help but create among them from time to time. With this in mind, I had already authorized the Director of our house in Saint-Denis to receive a few young men who might have a vocation to our Institute. This could lead to the foundation of more of our establishments in different parts of the island where it seems they would be well received by the civil authorities. I do not know whether he has been able to profit by this permission.

However that may be, the arrival of three new Brothers cannot help but animate the Director's zeal, strengthen his courage and, at the same time, get him to put into action more promptly and with greater hope of success the plan we envision for the good of the colony.

I therefore will be pleased, honorable Minister, to put at your disposal Brother Jean-de-Matha resident at Montereau, Brother Vétérins resident at Bordeaux, and Brother Scubilion resident at Chinon. As soon as you let me know the time and place of the embarkation, I will act

at once to replace them in the work in which they are presently engaged.

I am with the most profound respect, honorable Minister,

Yours,

Brother Anaclet

Events moved swiftly thereafter. The departure date was set for 20 April 1833. Brother Scubilion must have received his new assignment with great joy, grateful that his offer to sacrifice himself for the glory of God had been accepted. Whether through lack of time or authorization, or through a voluntary spirit of self-sacrifice, he left directly for the ship without the consolation of saying good-bye to his younger brother and sister or to his mother, who was then sixty-four years old. This is the more remarkable, since in that era it was considered most unlikely that departing missionaries would ever see their native land again. And so it turned out for Brother Scubilion.

4.

Bourbon

The three missionaries bound for the island of Bourbon, later to be renamed Reunion, met together for the first time in Bordeaux just before 19 April 1833. Brother Jean-de-Matha was to be the leader of the group. At the time of his assignment to the Bourbon mission he was the Director of the school at Montereau. With a great talent for organization, he would eventually become the provincial superior of the Brothers in Bourbon and the one most responsible for the expansion of the Brothers' schools throughout the island. The second was Brother Vétérins. From the moment he entered the Institute he had always wanted to be assigned to the missions. He was thirty-one years old when he set sail for Bourbon, full of zeal and enthusiasm, expecting never to return. However his health was poor and he finally succumbed to the demands that the work on a tropical isle made on his frail constitution. He was forced to return to France, where he died in 1838 at the age of thirty-six. The third in the group was Brother Scubilion.

In those days the sea voyage from France to the east coast of Africa was long and tedious, through the South Atlantic and around the Cape of Good Hope into the Indian Ocean. It took the three Brothers eighty-four days to make the journey. Fortunately, Brother Jean-de-Matha kept a sort of diary, which he turned into a continuous narrative shortly after arriving at Saint-Denis, the capital of the island. The story of the voyage can best be told by the Brother himself:

On 19 April 1833 we left Bordeaux for Blaye where we spent the night. On the 20th we met the Captain on the steamboat that would take us to Pauillac where the ship was. We passed the night on shore since we wanted to at-

tend Holy Mass before departing on the next day which was a Sunday, the 21st. We had the good fortune to be able to do this thanks to the kindness of an obliging priest who said Mass for us at 3:00 a.m. and at which we all received communion. At 5:00 a.m. we boarded the ship, the Commerce, and very soon the sails were set. Towards noon we anchored near Royant since the sea was calm and there was no wind.

On the next day, thanks to an easterly breeze and helped by the tide, we passed by the tower of Cordouant. A half-hour later we gained the open sea and by 10:00 or 11:00 a.m. we lost sight of land. As the wind grew stronger and the waves notably higher we began to feel seasick. Brother Vétérins was the first to get sick and soon after I myself had to throw up. Finally Brother Scubilion threw up before going to bed. Brother Vétérins suffered a great deal, especially during the first three or four days. He was throwing up frequently and could take very little food. Afterwards he had terrible headaches which bothered him almost continually. Then whenever the weather would get real bad he would start to throw up again. Brother Scubilion was also pretty much worn out for four days or so; he too threw up several times when the waves were at their strongest. As for myself, I threw up three or four times but without pain. Afterwards I still felt a bit queasy but I had no headache. And I never once missed going to table for meals. The other passengers and three or four of the apprentices among the crew also had to pay their tribute to the sea to a greater or lesser degree. There was only one woman passenger who didn't get sick. It was especially on 24 April when those who were sick suffered the most. The wind was strong and the sea very agitated, but the Captain said he thought the weather was beautiful.

After leaving the gulf of Gascogne, on the 29th of April the Commerce passed close by the island of Madeira. On May 1 the passengers could see the Canary Islands with the Peak of Teneriffe over 12,000 feet high. Once we had crossed the Tropic of Cancer you could begin to feel the heat. Favorable winds carried the ship forward rapidly and

on the 18th of May the Commerce crossed the Equator. Soon contrary winds arose and this forced the ship to travel in an oblique line until we found ourselves not far from the coast of Brazil. Happily the wind again changed direction and on the 30th of May the Commerce was again heading straight for the Cape of Good Hope, much to the joy of the passengers.

During the Sunday on which you were celebrating the feast of Corpus Christi we were deprived of that happiness but at least we had the pleasure of going out on deck for a breath of air. The sky was clear and the sea fairly calm, although there was a brisk breeze. All during the octave of Corpus Christi we had a very good wind with the sea rising and falling according to the wind. At the end of this week we had to put back on our winter clothing due to the blasts of polar air that lay ahead.

On the Sunday within the octave of Corpus Christi we had a discussion on religion with the Captain who is a Protestant. I don't quite know how we managed to get onto the subject but we spent at least two hours discussing controversial topics: the Holy Eucharist, the interpretation of Scripture, Catholicism in general etc., etc. I replied as best I could according to what I had read and studied on these subjects, especially in the Catechism of Montpelier and in another book entitled An Easy Method to Discover the True Christian Religion. From time to time I put questions to the Captain that he found difficult to answer; but he kept saying that he still thought his religion was the best and, besides, that all the Christian religions were good and that they differed only in matters that were of human origin. Finally he told me that one day we would all be together in heaven. In reply I said that I hoped so, and I promised him to say some prayers for that intention and to ask the Lord to teach him what he would have to do to get there. In all justice we had to admit that the Captain was better informed about religion than most of our Catholics. Unlike many of them, he was not indifferent to the question of salvation. On two other occasions we had similar conversations with him but these were very friendly and we

avoided controversy. No harm came from these meetings. The Captain always treated us with great kindness even though we had to let him know that we would regard him as a heretic.

Continuing on towards Bourbon, the Commerce sailed around the Cape of Good Hope in very fine weather and then headed straight for the island. It was winter in the southern hemisphere but it got just about as cold as it does in Paris during the month of March. Brother Vétérins suffered from chilblain in his hands as he did in France. Very favorable winds enabled the ship to cover more than 150 miles per day.

On the 10th of July we were told that by afternoon we ought to be able to see the island of Mauritius. It was already two months since we had seen land. At about 3:00 p.m. we actually saw the mountains for the first time. At first they looked like clouds but then they began to loom larger and larger as they emerged from the mist. That evening and all during the night we skirted the shore of several small islands. On 11 July at about 9:00 a.m. we anchored in the outer harbor of Port-Louis where we were to remain for three-and-a-half days. We were anchored about two miles outside the port itself. We didn't go ashore that day. By the time all the formalities were taken care of it was already growing late and we had no idea of where to go. However, on Friday the 12th we disembarked to go to attend Holy Mass. We were very well received by the local clergy who invited us to eat with them. In the evening we had to return to the ship to sleep. The next day we returned to the church where we went to confession to a priest from Bordeaux whom Brother Alphonse had recommended to us. Then we received communion from the hand of the Bishop of Mauritius. After we made our thanksgiving we went to greet him since he had not been present the day before. He received us cordially and invited us to take meals with him during the time the ship would be in port. That evening we again went back to the ship to sleep.

On Sunday the 14th we came back one more time to attend Holy Mass and we stayed for the pontifical Mass

that followed. By then it was time again to resume our voyage so we returned to the ship about 2:00 p.m. for dinner. Then about 6:00 p.m. we weighed anchor. The next day at ten in the morning we finally arrived at our long awaited destination after a journey of 85 days without any serious storms or accidents.



The manner of disembarking at St. Denis in 1833

We have nothing but praise for the conduct of our good Captain who did everything possible to take care of us. We were left free to perform all our exercises of piety: morning and evening prayer, the rosary, the litanies etc. which we said in common, as well as the little Office of the Blessed Virgin which we said every Sunday and on feast days. Not a single member of the crew ever disturbed us or said a word to make fun of what we were doing. We made mental prayer and spiritual reading privately in our cabins, or anywhere else convenient. The Captain was good enough to provide abstinence food for us on the required days. We observed the fasts and abstinence as best we could, although we had received a dispensation from the Archbishop of Bordeaux, whom we had the honor to visit before our departure.

When we finally arrived at the port of Saint-Denis we saluted with five volleys from the ship's cannon and the port responded. We were then conveyed to shore in a small boat

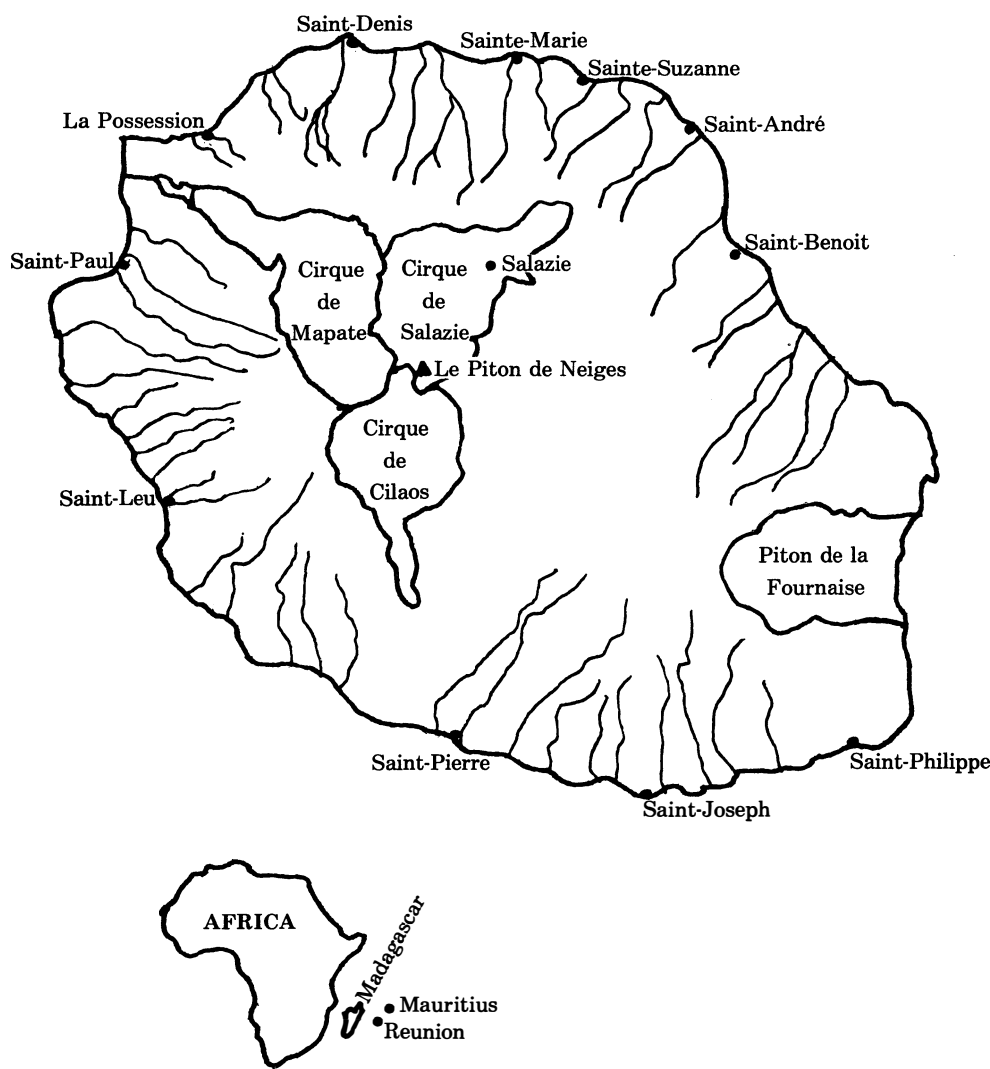
oared by ten or so blacks who rowed, chanted, and beat out the rhythm in perfect cadence. Once on shore we were led by five or six half-naked blacks who carried our luggage.

We arrived at our community house on the Rue Saint-Denis where we found our four beloved Brothers all at their posts. They welcomed us with evident joy and fellowship. Everything here was new to us: new faces (in a variety of colors), new foliage, new fruits, and a very different kind of weather. Here it was mid-winter and still not much colder than it gets in France in the month of August.

When it came time to meet the civil authorities they received us with much pleasure but seemed a bit put out that there were not at least a dozen of us to open schools in the principal sections of the colony. News of our arrival was published in the gazette. Once the word was out, there was pressure exerted by all the various communes asking us to open a school in their respective districts. This very positive reception was due no doubt to the zeal of our Brothers who for many years now had worked so successfully for the good of the colony. As for ourselves, if they really knew us well, they wouldn't have had such high expectations. May the good Lord shower his abundant blessings on our work so that we may more than satisfy the expectations of these good people. Rather than the temporal advantages that they seek for these poor children, may we have the joy of procuring for them blessings that are eternal. We shall decide privately among ourselves where to open the first new establishment once the vacation period is over.

So ends the account of Brother Jean-de-Matha. If the island of Bourbon was a new and strange experience for himself and Brothers Scubilion and Vétérins, it is probably no less strange for most of those who will read their story a century and a half later in Great Britain, the United States, or other places where English is the native tongue. For that reason some further words of explanation about the island of Bourbon seem to be in order before the narrative continues.

The island of Bourbon, since renamed Reunion and often



The Island of Reunion with cities associated with Brother Scubilion

described as the "pearl of the Indian Ocean," lies four hundred miles west of the Malagasy Republic (formerly Madagascar) and one hundred ten miles southwest of Mauritius. It is a very small island, forty miles long and thirty miles wide, with an area of 2,500 square miles. Volcanic in origin, the island is dominated by two large peaks, the *Piton des Neiges*, ten thousand feet high, and the *Piton de la Fournaise*, an active volcano reaching to sixty-six hundred feet. Surrounding these peaks are three large *cirques*, as they are called, formed from the collapsed craters of ancient volcanoes. These areas are wild and almost impenetrable, inhabited only by small groups of families huddled within the ravines that have been formed by erosion of the steep embankments. The central volcanic range divides the island into a windward eastern half, rainy and damp; and a leeward western half, dry and needing irrigation, where most of the population of the island lives. Tropical hurricanes are frequent with a very destructive one about every two years. The hurricane in 1948, for example, with winds of over two hundred miles per hour left 165 persons dead in its wake.

The capital of the island is called Saint-Denis. The list of the names of most of the rest of the towns reads like a litany of the saints: clockwise from the capital on the north shore, we find Sainte-Marie, Saint-André and Saint-Benoît on the eastern side; Saint-Philippe, Saint-Joseph and Saint-Pierre on the southern shore; Saint-Louis, Saint-Leu and Saint-Paul on the west. Place names, such as La Possession, Salazie, and Entre-deux, occasionally intrude into this litany.

In 1982 the population of the island was 516,000. During the lifetime of Brother Scubilion it was much smaller: in 1848 at the time of the emancipation there were only 110,000 inhabitants of whom 62,000 were slaves. At that time the free population consisted mostly of Creoles, that is, descendants of the mixed marriages between the original colonists and the natives. There were a small number of white Frenchmen, mostly magistrates, businessmen, and missionaries; as well as a few blacks who had managed to obtain their freedom. It is easy to understand why Brother Jean-de-Matha was struck by the "new faces in a variety of colors." The island abounds in tropical flowers and fruits of every kind. The temperature hovers around

ninety degrees year round with intense humidity from November through April. Bourbon was originally famous for its coffee and vanilla, but increasingly all the arable land was given over to the cultivation of sugar cane. Sugar and sugar products, rum and molasses, account for most of the island's exports.

The first Brothers had come to the island of Bourbon sixteen years before the arrival of Brother Scubilion, in response to a stirring appeal issued in the year 1816 by Brother Gerbaud, then Superior General. Rigault, in Volume IV of his history of the Institute, quotes from it at length:

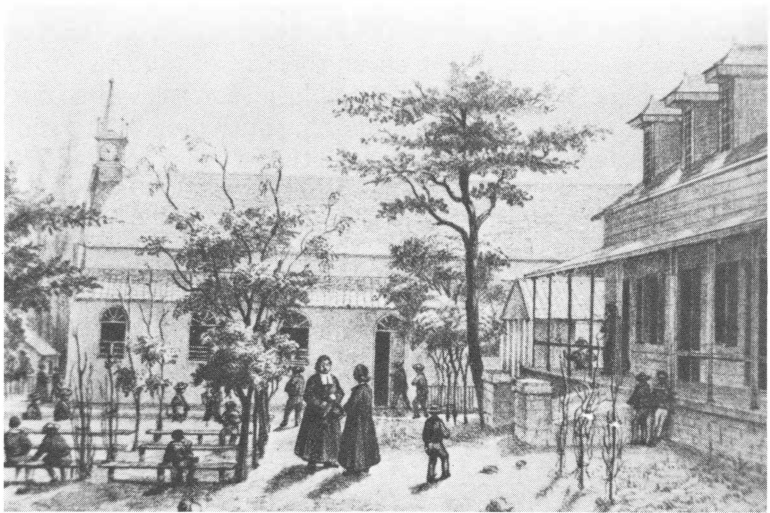
Renew your zeal, my very dear Brothers, you who desire to cross the seas to announce the gospel of Jesus Christ. Yes, reawaken that zeal of yours, a zeal that is pure, disinterested, humble and generous. For "if the salt loses its savor, what good is it?" We want no part of those hearts that are backward or afraid, that lack courage and generosity. . . .

The point is this: we want to select six fervent religious, or at least six who are willing to become so, six Francis Xaviers, six Apostles. Although we lack the awesome dignity and title of Apostle, we are yet called upon to do the same work as they. Oh, my very dear Brothers, who will give us hearts like that of Augustine, hearts burning with divine love to set on fire the island of Bourbon and ready for all that awaits us there in the long project ahead? It is hearts such as these that the mission needs, hearts generously resolved to die if it be necessary, either in the waves or in any other way that Providence may decree. . . . Let us begin by being martyrs in resolution . . . let us make ourselves worthy of God, let us defend ourselves against inertia. . . . Let us put on the armor of faith. . . . Let the New Testament, the Following of Christ, the Collection and the rosary be our dear and only companions.

The glorious vision of Brother Gerbaud and the enthusiasm of the six Brothers who landed at Saint-Denis on Pentecost Sunday in 1817 soon had to give way to the harsh realities. They found that, for all practical purposes, primary schools were not only nonexistent but that the Creole population, jealously pro-

tective of their children, considered the very idea suspect. The pioneer Brothers, impatient and inexperienced, decided to depart from a long-standing tradition in the Institute that required at least three Brothers in each house. Instead they split up by two's to open schools in Saint-Paul and Saint-Pierre as well as in Saint-Denis. This was a mistake. Four of the original group of six, worn out with the oppressive climate, the hostility of much of the population, and the rigors of the daily routine, soon returned to France where they eventually left the Institute.

By 1821, four years after their arrival, only two Brothers, Adrien and Bénézet, and one school, that at Saint-Denis, remained. In 1824 Brother Adrien went to France to plead for more Brothers for the work but never himself returned. The last to survive was Brother Bénézet. Determined to carry on alone, he went to Saint-Benoît where he taught class in a lean-to made of straw until another contingent of Brothers arrived in 1826.



The school and courtyard of the Brothers of the Christian Schools at St. Denis

The second group of Brothers to arrive in Bourbon landed on 20 October 1826, where they joined the doughty Brother Bénézet, who shortly thereafter felt free to return to France.

There were five Brothers in the new group; three of them had been directors of schools and communities in France. They were housed together in Saint-Denis in an old building that had once been used by the East India Company. They had to live in extreme poverty but the building was adequate and, unlike their predecessors, they stayed together for mutual support. The Director was Brother Sébastien, a vigorous leader, who little by little enabled his small community of missionaries to establish the school on a permanent basis.

On the very first day the new school was opened, fifty pupils presented themselves, on the second day there were two hundred. This initial success provided the incentive and the hope that the Brothers needed. At first the Creoles and the free blacks were taught in segregated classes. But the revolution of 1830 in France was the occasion for a proclamation that henceforth all the various races that made up the free population were to enjoy full equality as citizens. Much to the dismay of the Creoles, deeply entrenched in their prejudices, Brother Sébastien, well ahead of the social thought of the time, took the bold step of integrating the free blacks and the whites into the same class. This caused the enrollment to drop briefly, but very soon it began to rise again until the school numbered 250 pupils, all that it could accommodate.

This was the situation when Brothers Jean-de-Matha, Scubilion and Vétérins arrived in 1833. By then Brother Sébastien had decided that the time was ripe for the Brothers to expand their mission to other parts of the island. The people, delighted with the improvement they saw in their children, were increasingly impressed both by the evident religious fervor of the Brothers and their effectiveness as educators. This led the civil authorities to take a more positive view. Two of the towns in particular, Saint-Benoît on the windward side of the island and Saint-Paul on the leeward side, still had memories of the pioneer Brothers. It was in that direction that Brother Sébastien began to think of extending the work that had already been stabilized in the capital. For Brother Scubilion especially it would mean new opportunities to translate into action the formula of his vows, a new field in which to procure the glory of God as far as he was able, a new horizon to search for what it was that God would require of him.

5.

Mission Impossible

As the opening of the school year of 1833 approached, the decision was made to keep three Brothers at Saint-Denis, to send two to Saint-Benoît on the eastern shore and two to Saint-Paul on the west. Brother Scubilion and Brother Zébin-de-Marie, who was to be the Director, were assigned to Saint-Benoît. Arrangements there were not quite complete so that it was not until 18 November 1833 that they were able to open school. The memory of Brother Bénézet carrying on all alone in his straw hut was still lively among the townfolk of Saint-Benoît, and this assured the new arrivals of a cordial welcome. Twenty-five pupils appeared on the first day, many more came soon after, so that by the end of the school year the enrollment had reached 125, divided into two classes.

Brother Scubilion once again was given charge of the primary class and had the care of the temporalities as well. It was a joy for him to be surrounded in this pioneer outpost by his little Creoles, some terrified and some restless, some white, many various shades of brown, and a few "black as ebony," as one of the official reports described them. Ten years of elementary teaching in France had given Brother Scubilion a certain expertise in dealing with small children. But here in Bourbon conditions were very different. The people generally did not have a high regard for education at any level. Parents were reluctant to surrender control over their children. In the heat of the tropical sun there was little motivation to expend energy unnecessarily even among the adults, much less their children. Apathy, ignorance, and moral laxity were the inevitable results.

Some idea of what the Brothers had to face in trying to educate the mostly Creole population of the schools can be

derived from a report sent in 1819 to the governor of the island by a certain Monsieur Galet after twelve years of teaching there:

The Creoles for the most part are more precocious than their European counterparts but you have to take them in hand very early on. If you begin with them when they are from seven to nine years of age, you can expect that they will become good students, but rather more brilliant than profound. They succeed perfectly in anything requiring dexterity, such as writing and design, or in anything that appeals to the eye and the imagination. But in the abstract sciences or in anything that requires thought or sustained effort, they are in general inferior to the Europeans. I doubt that you could find one in ten among them capable of following a complete course in mathematics. Their memory is prompt but short lived. They understand and learn quickly, but then they forget. You have continually to repeat everything over and over if you expect them to keep anything in their heads.

Anything involving work is painful to them. The least difficulty turns them off and if the teacher isn't careful to smooth away even the smallest obstacles, they quit. There have been very few that I have been able to persuade that wrestling with difficulties is the best way to avoid being overcome by them later on. They are very much inclined to fall into routine patterns since routine fits into their natural indifference and helps to rationalize it. This is the only recourse possible for those who reach the age of fifteen without having had the basic principles of an education. Unfortunately there are many such in the country areas.

Punishment has no effect on them; on the contrary, it disgusts them and only leads to discouragement. You have to appeal to their pride and self-esteem, something to which they are very sensitive. In order to appeal to them, you have continually to provide some new form of emulation. In a word, the teacher's greatest job is to guard constantly against their laziness, which is in a way quite natural to them. I think it derives somewhat from the climate.

Such are the Creoles up to the age of fifteen. Once they have reached that age, experience tells me that if their minds have been trained from their earliest years, they are in no way inferior to Europeans, provided they have been fortunate enough to learn the value of work and the importance of learning. But you are lucky if you can find three out of six with this kind of an attitude.

Contemporary anthropologists might bristle a bit at this stereotyping, but the experience of the Brothers seems to have borne out the principal implications of the report for the day-to-day life of the classroom. It should also be remembered that Galet was talking about a rather select group that he was preparing for higher studies, whereas the Brothers had to contend with children from all social classes, especially the more disadvantaged, where indifference to educational values was even more ingrained.

For all of that, the first year of the new Brothers' school in Saint-Benoît seems to have been something of a success. At the end of the year Brother Scubilion and Brother Zébin went to join Brothers Jean-de-Matha and Sébastien at Saint-Denis for some days of rest and spiritual retreat. They took the occasion to write to Brother Anaclet, the Superior General. The letter, written evidently by Brother Sébastien but signed by all four, says in part:

My very venerable Brother Superior . . . We have just finished the regular school year and it has been an extremely difficult one in view of the small numbers. We are too few to do everything that needs to be done in what we have undertaken. However, thanks be to God and to the government of Bourbon, everything so far has exceeded all my hopes. I think, too, that we have satisfied the expectations of the government. The governor, who has just returned from a tour of the colony, visited our school at Saint-Paul and presided over the distribution of prizes at Saint-Benoît. He did not hesitate, in the presence of all the other officials who came to our distribution of prizes at Saint-Denis, to praise in eloquent terms all three of our

schools, especially that of Saint-Benoît . . . Now we are going to rest a bit and try thereafter to take up again our usual work while we await the arrival of more Brothers to fill out our three communities. . . . We are here together, Brothers Jean-de-Matha, Zébin-de-Marie, Scubilion and myself, for about 20 days to stir up our zeal, our courage and our hope, to make our retreat, and also to prepare for the classes we will have to teach. We send you all our respect and submission and beg of you to think of us always as your humble inferiors.

[The four signatures follow]

It is interesting that the school at Saint-Benoît was singled out by the governor for special praise, and it must be presumed that the presence and the zeal of Brother Scubilion were contributing factors. But the relative success of the first year did not mean that all the problems had been solved. A special difficulty that Brothers Zébin and Scubilion had to face when they returned to start the new school year was the fact that so many of the students at Saint-Benoît lived far away from the school. This meant that a large number of them had to take the noon meal at the school. In addition provision was made to have a small group of fifteen reside there. Two Brothers were hardly adequate to handle such a responsibility, in addition to their teaching duties and the demands of regular religious observance. It had become customary, for example, to meet the requirements of the Rule for recreation together and for the study of catechism during the noon recess. Midway through the second year at Saint-Benoît, in a letter dated 10 January 1835, Brother Zébin describes the situation to the Superior General in these terms:

My most venerable Brother: I am writing to you today simply to give you an account of the state of affairs here at the school which I believe have already been explained to you in various other communications. Besides, I myself wrote to you as long ago as September of 1834 about everything concerning the students who reside in the building. Now I want to say something about the others.

As I already mentioned to you, the commune as well as the parish of Saint-Benoît is ten miles long and four miles wide. Thus we have children who, morning and evening, have to travel a mile or more to get to school. These children bring their lunch with them which they eat out in the courtyard after class. Others who live a bit closer have their lunch brought to them. Those who live fairly near to the school either have their lunch brought to them or they go home to eat. Only one-quarter of our students live close enough to go home for the noon meal and even among them some of the youngest have to take their meal at school because of the extreme heat.

Now it is up to you to judge whether I should refuse to accept in the school children who cannot make it home and back at noontime. You say that we should look for a house where these children could go between classes to take their meal. But a number of those who live farthest away have already looked for a place where they could stay but they haven't been able to find one. Besides they are so poor that they couldn't afford to pay. In addition, these children would be exposed through bad example to all sorts of disorders. At least when they stay with us they are all together seated on benches behind the school. When their meal arrives, they go off to a corner to eat it but always in full view of the others.

Brother Scubilion and I make our recreation of Rule and our study of catechism while we are walking up and down among them. The love of the good to be accomplished leads us to sacrifice something of the required vigilance when we cannot do it ourselves. We usually employ some inspectors during our own meal: two or three of them come one after the other to do the reading and these are always the same. That is what necessity both obliges and allows us to do. Nor should we forget the fact that before we came here, Brother Bénézet, whom everyone regards as a saint, did the same thing since he too had some of the children sleeping here and others brought their food for the noon meal.

The problem of the fifteen resident students was more acute. The care and supervision, day and night, of even such

a small number put an additional strain on the two Brothers, willing as they were to endure it. Brother Zébin explained to the Superior the reasons for this departure from the Rule: the poverty of the students, their distance from the school, and the willingness of the commune to provide for their support. At the same time he indicated that he and Brother Scubilion were willing to do whatever the Superior thought best, even to shut down the school if necessary. In the long run, the Superior finally decided that the boarders could no longer be lodged in the house, although the practice of having many of the students take their meals there was allowed to continue.

In the same letter, Brother Zébin raises another issue that hampered the efforts of the two Brothers to do their work effectively and to expand it. Thus he writes:

We are housed in a very small building. I have asked the town council to have it enlarged because it is in a convenient location very near to the church. But one faction among the gentlemen who make up the council is trying to block the owner of the house who would like to sell it. So they refuse to buy it for the town to use as a school, alleging as a reason that the property is too small and in any case it is just as well for the children to have their lessons in the open air and seated on the ground. But the proof that this is not the real reason is that they are willing to buy other properties for our use that are just as small and not in such a good location. One of the councilors even proposed that they buy one of his buildings that is smaller than the one we are now in. So I refused to consider any of them. I must tell you also that there is one man on the council who is at the head of a small college here and he doesn't like us. Yet he was named along with some of his cronies to form a committee of six to find us a new place.

The building we are in could easily be enlarged. All that would have to be done would be to put in an outside staircase, enclose it with a partition and then open up two rooms above. This would provide a large classroom twenty-four feet long and well-ventilated. The council could not possibly buy another property for us that would be cheaper and that

would be as suitable for our purposes. Besides, the house is very new and as close as possible to the center of town. That is why I want to hold on to it. Because the council couldn't agree at their last session, they put the matter off until April. Meanwhile I suffer a great deal in my small classroom and so do the children because the heat is so intense and that makes them restless.

We are still awaiting the arrival of the items that we sent for over a year ago. As a result we are lacking in practically everything that we need: we have no prizes to give out and none of the standard books that serve on such occasions; we have no spelling books, no copy books, no grammars, no arithmetics, and no copies of the New Testament. We have one clock that is forever stopping, the bell doesn't work and so we often lose track of the time. Finally, in the community we lack many things that every community should have.

*I am with the most profound respect, my most venerable Brother, your very humble and obedient inferior,
Brother Zébin*

These excerpts from such a pointed and detailed letter give some idea of what the situation was at Saint-Benoît during the first two years of the mission there. Brother Zébin and Brother Scubilion carried on against enormous odds: only two of them to live a community life, a building much too small to house the Brothers and the school, rival factions in the town council, supervision during the noon break and after hours for the residents, lack of textbooks and school supplies, and all to be endured in the relentless heat.

Meanwhile, back at the headquarters in Saint-Denis, Brother Sébastien was trying desperately to keep all three schools going. His 1834 letter to the Superior General gives some idea of how precarious the situation was:

We are still waiting for the Brothers we need at the very least to fill out our three communities . . . We need five or six Brothers to staff all three of our schools: two for Saint-Paul because Vétérins is working there all alone. The doctors do not give him much longer to live because of the con-

dition in his lungs and the growths on his legs. We need one more Brother for Saint-Benoît because there are only two of them there now, and we need two for Saint-Denis since Brother Cartère should not be kept here much longer for the sake of both his soul and his body.

The situation was the most serious at Saint-Paul. Two Brothers had been sent there in 1833, Brother Valerien as the Director and Brother Vétérins, who had arrived in Bourbon with Brothers Jean-de-Matha and Scubilion. It turned out that the Director's health was so bad that the doctor forbade him to try to teach class. The school might have had to close if a young lay assistant had not been brought in to teach the primary class. The Director died in the spring of 1834 before the school year was out, by which time there were two hundred pupils enrolled. This left Brother Vétérins, himself seriously ill, to keep the school going with the help of his young assistant. Relief came in 1835 when a new group of Brothers finally arrived from France and two of them were sent to Saint-Paul. Brother Vétérins, worn out with illness and fatigue, returned to France the next year where he died shortly thereafter. Brother Scubilion was sent from Saint-Benoît to Saint-Paul to replace him.

Brother Scubilion remained at Saint-Paul for five years between 1836 and 1841. He was then reassigned to Saint-Benoît from 1841 to 1843, by which time a new Director, Brother Démètre, had replaced Brother Zébin who was sent to take charge of a new school at Saint-Leu. During this period things were becoming a bit more settled. The group of six Brothers who arrived in 1835 helped considerably. In that year also, Brother Jean-de-Matha, a vigorous leader, had succeeded Brother Sébastien as provincial superior of the Brothers on the island. He initiated a program that would eventually see twenty-one Brothers' schools in the colony by the time of his death in 1870. Part of his program included the reception of candidates for the novitiate, which at first was made in one or another of the communities. Soon a number of native Creole Brothers swelled the ranks; the numbers grew from seven in 1833 to twenty just ten years later. The morale was high, and the will-

ingness to sacrifice everything to meet the educational and religious needs of the islanders was intense.

It is remarkable that in such a tightly knit group, all following the same rules, sharing the same problems and the same apostolic work, one of them, Brother Scubilion, should emerge as so distinguishable from the rest. Testimony gathered years later suggests that there was about him a certain innate spiritual aura, an otherworldliness, which, far from alienating him from other people, attracted them to him. His deep and personal experience of the presence of the Lord seemed somehow to transform his whole appearance. This was especially the case when he would be teaching catechism to his young charges, a responsibility that he approached with almost passionate zeal. As he spoke to his little ones about God or the things of God, his voice would take on a characteristic vibrancy, and his face would glow with a personal awareness of the divine reality he was striving to communicate.

It is not surprising, then, that Brother Scubilion was quite successful in attracting and discerning vocations to the Brothers' Institute. He would notice "something special" in one of the lads, speak to him about the matter of a vocation, make visits to the parents to overcome their opposition, and then follow the Brother through his training and early years in community. There were at least ten such candidates that he sent to the novitiate, including the first black postulant ever to be admitted to the Institute. This was Alfred Ducap, who entered the novitiate at Saint-Denis in 1851 and was given the name Brother Ladolien. He was in the first group of Brothers to go to Madagascar where he died at the age of forty-five in 1880.

Fortunately, there exists in Brother Scubilion's own hand an account of four such lads that he influenced during those first ten years at Saint-Benoît and Saint-Paul. He was writing some years afterward to Brother Hieronimo, then Director at Saint-Denis, in response to a request for information about some former students who had since died. The two letters, dated respectively 27 November and 4 December 1854, are preserved in the archives of the generalate of the Brothers in Rome. The first reads as follows:

My dear Brother Director. I am replying to your letter of the 22d of this month. It is always a new pleasure for me, my very dear Brother Director, to give you any information you might ask for. I am always ready to let you know everything that my poor memory can recall so that God may be glorified and the neighbor edified.

Ernest Boyer was a pupil in the lower class at Saint-Denis while I was in charge of that class for a short time. The young man was one of the monitors. He was quite sensible and I noticed that there was something special about this young scholar that I did not find in the other children. I do believe that I spoke to him about his vocation.

Eventually he asked to be admitted to the Institute. Since at that time there was no separate novitiate house, he was sent to Saint-Paul where he used to assist me with my class. Shortly afterwards he was given charge of it on his own. The children were devoted to him, they liked him very much.

This Brother had to endure some cruel suffering at Saint-Paul from two maladies that eventually brought him to his grave. He had an illness of the lungs and a high fever so the doctor prescribed cold baths for him. The baths were intended to alleviate his condition. Very often he would come out of class in a high fever that eventually proved fatal. The doctor who treated him was Dr. Noire. Once it was clear that the Brother could no longer continue at Saint-Paul, I was asked to take him to Saint-Denis. It was very painful for him to have to leave Saint-Paul. The good Brother had tears in his eyes all during the trip. And how painful it was for him to climb up the rope ladder at the barricades of Saint-Denis.

Once I had brought him to Saint-Denis, I returned to Saint-Paul. Shortly afterwards we learned of the death of this good Brother. He had edified our Brothers at Saint-Denis during his last illness and at his death; I have heard that on his deathbed he asked to have the candles lighted and so he died as a good Brother of the Christian Schools.

This dear Brother had a great many struggles and temptations to endure: from the devil, from his parents, and

because of his youth since this young man was handsome and well-built. I often saw him break into tears, even in the dining room, and sometimes he would talk to me about his troubles. At one point the temptation was so strong that he returned to his parents. But finally God called to him once again, we took him back, and he returned with me to Saint-Paul. He began teaching again and all his pupils were delighted to see him once more.

There, my very dear Brother Director, is all that I have been able to recall. I will be able to give you some further information shortly about two of my other former students who have died, the one at Saint-Benoît, Brother Joseph, and the other at Saint-Paul, Brother Nilorian, as well as something about that young Emile at Saint-Benoît, whose penitential cincture I still have. I would like to re-read his life and have it read to my students here. If you could send it and let me have it for a while, you would oblige your servant . . . I am with the most profound respect, my very dear Brother Director, your most humble servant

Brother Scubilion

The second letter containing the promised information followed a week later:

I have again the honor to greet you and to offer my most humble respects and my friendship. I begin this time with Brother Joseph, called in the world Nicolas Monier. He was from a good family of Saint-Leu. He entered our school when he was about seven or eight years old. When I had him in the primary class at Saint-Paul he knew nothing at all. Nevertheless he was a sensible child with good dispositions. I recognized in him something special, I don't know what exactly, that was not present in the other children. I used to speak with him fairly often and asked if he might not be pleased someday to be a Brother of the Christian Schools. He replied, "Yes, dear Brother." When he eventually moved up to the superior class he still had the same idea.

He spoke of this to his parents who were not of a like mind. Eventually, I had to go several times to speak to his

father. Although that man was not at all happy with the vocational choice of his son, he finally gave his consent to what the lad wanted to do. But there still remained the problem of the mother's consent and she did not seem willing even to talk about it. What a trouble it was to get them to consent. I had to go several times to visit the mother and to speak to her. But she kept saying that she could not let go of her young child. Eventually she did make up her mind to give her consent and so the boy went happily to Saint-Denis.

Shortly thereafter he was sent to Saint-Pierre and from Saint-Pierre to Saint-Benoît where he died as a true disciple of the venerable De La Salle. His mother came into the room of her son at the very moment he was dying, his soul ready to be transported back to God. The Brother Visitor was present and saw him die, or so I believe.

Castin Boyer entered very young into the school of the Brothers at Saint-Benoît. There was nothing very remarkable about him before his conversion. He was often sulky, even while he was being reprovved for his failing; one day he came into class completely out of control. But as soon as God's grace touched his heart he became a true believer. Then nothing could stop him from his determination to enter the Institute.

His mother was completely opposed to his vocation. I went several times to visit this woman to speak to her about her son's vocation. The poor woman gave me as a reason that she could not do without her son and that, besides, he was in poor health and needed lots of care. I said to her in reply everything that the Holy Spirit inspired me to say and in the end, to her credit, she gave her consent.

It is important that you should know that I had recommended this intention to our good heavenly Mother. We had recited together a Pater and an Ave Maria, Brother Démètre and I, to ask this of God through the intercession of her whom we never invoke in vain. Thus you see that it was Mary who made this conquest and it was she who obtained for him the happiness of entering religious life and the grace to die in the holy state which he had embraced.

A brief word about the life of Emile Pauline. This young man before he came to our school was like most of the young people. He liked to go about in the world. But what a change once he attended the Christian School at Saint-Benoît where he heard the lessons of Brother Zébin of happy memory! For it was he who, helped by the grace of God, formed this young man to virtue and who first inspired him with a great devotion to the Most Blessed Virgin. I had given the lad a small statue of the Most Blessed Virgin which he placed in a little niche near his bed. His room was decorated all over with pictures and holy cards and a small bell alongside the statue of Mary. It was at the foot of this good Mother that he spent his happiest moments for he had read the life of Saint Aloysius Gonzaga, a great devotee of Mary, and he tried as much as possible to imitate him. It was from this book that he nurtured his great devotion to the Most Blessed Virgin.

The precocious sanctity of this young man, who evidently died very young, went so far as to embrace practices of corporal penance. It will be recalled that in the previous letter, Brother Scubilion mentions the penitential cincture which he still kept after the lad's death.

In 1841 Brother Scubilion was sent back to Saint-Benoît for a period of two years, thus rounding out his first ten years on the mission. One exceptional development took place at this time that would foreshadow events to come. In his insatiable desire "to procure the glory of God as far as he was able and as God would require of him," Brother Scubilion had become increasingly concerned about the spiritual welfare of the black slave population. It was impossible, of course, for the slaves to come to the school during the working day. Brother Démètre, the new Director at Saint-Benoît and himself a zealous apostle, agreed to allow Brother Scubilion to open an evening catechism class for the black slaves. Of the sixty or so who came at the beginning, only fifteen remained at the end of the school year and the program had to be terminated. But as it turned out, this was not the end but the beginning.

6.

Emancipation

In 1843 Brother Scubilion was transferred from Saint-Benoît on the eastern shore of the island to Saint-Leu, a prosperous town of some eight thousand inhabitants situated about mid-way down the western coast. For years the area had boasted the richest coffee and vanilla plantations in all Bourbon, but more recently the cultivation of sugar cane had claimed most of the arable land. The vast fields and the many sugar refineries required a large working force, which was provided for the most part by slave labor. When Brother Scubilion arrived at Saint-Leu in 1843, the issue of slavery was very much in the air. It was this situation that opened up for him what was to become his distinctive and most significant apostolic work.

The Brothers' school at Saint-Leu had been opened only two years before the arrival of Brother Scubilion, with Brother Zébin as the Director. In order to provide the finances for this school for boys, and another for girls, the town had been forced to sell all its municipal slaves. As usual, the Brothers' community had three members and Brother Scubilion was assigned to the primary class. In addition he was given charge of the special classes for the slaves who came to the school for religious instruction in the evening hours after the working day was over.

The long experience Brother Scubilion had in dealing with small children in France, at Saint-Benoît and at Saint-Paul was an ideal preparation for the specialized task of dealing with these simple and childlike people of all ages. The plantation owners were not particularly happy over this arrangement, despite recent ordinances that required that catechetical instruction be made available to the slaves. In addition to losing a certain amount of control over them, the owners might have



A typical sugar factory on the Island of Reunion

feared that religious instruction would plant dangerous ideas of freedom and dignity into the heads of their slaves. In the face of such opposition, Brother Scubilion frequently found it necessary to visit the owners over and over again to plead with them, in the name of Christianity, to allow their slaves to come to school for the evening catechism.

It is well in this connection to recall what the institution of slavery involved and how it was experienced concretely by those who were its victims. The slaves were under the total control of their masters. Their whole lives were spent living in subhuman conditions, working long hours in the fields or in the factories. The level of morality as well as of morale was low. What few laws there were concerning the rights of the slaves remained, for the most part, a dead letter. Regular marriages were discouraged and even forbidden; parents were often separated from one another and their children. Although some were allowed to be baptized, regular church attendance was impractical and rare. Punishments included whipping, branding, mutilation, and for offenses considered serious, even death. The slaves that had been imported from Africa would sometimes

escape to the jungle forests or the wild *cirques* in the interior of the island where they would live as savages. Those that had been brought over from the neighboring island of Madagascar, miscalculating the enormous distance to be covered, would set out in frail boats for the open sea, only to meet certain death in the waves or from starvation. For those planning to escape, there was always the awareness of the dreadful punishments that awaited them if they should be recaptured.

To the credit of the native clergy and the French missionary priests, mostly Lazarist Fathers who had arrived in Bourbon as early as 1714, the church through its ministers tried to do what it could for the slave population. They recognized that the blacks were the most abandoned of their flock and for that reason the ones most deserving of their concern and ministry. But the odds were stacked against any genuine conversion for a people reduced to barbarism, overworked, and living in almost bestial promiscuity in the slave camps that were, in any case, faraway from the parish centers. The priests did what they could to baptize as many as possible, to regularize their marriages, to elevate their moral sense, and to try to bring pressure to bear on the owners for more humane treatment and better living conditions. But in the eighteenth century there could be no thought of abolishing the institution of slavery itself; that was a fact of life, and any movement toward abolition on the part of the clergy would have resulted in devastating reprisals.

Organized revolt on the part of the slaves themselves was relatively rare and quickly put down. Yet it always remained a possibility. At Saint-Leu there had been just such an uprising in 1811. A wild gang of slaves broke loose and went on a rampage, burning and pillaging the houses, raping the women, and killing the men who got in their way. The repression was swift and terrible. In 1835, when Brother Scubilion was still at Saint-Benoît, a bill of emancipation was passed on the neighboring island of Mauritius. The slave population on Bourbon once again became restless: if on Mauritius, why not here? Some of the bolder ones organized a plan for a general insurrection. The plot was discovered at the last minute and the citizenry armed. Some twenty or so of the ringleaders were captured and ex-

ecuted, and calm returned for the moment. But there was always the fear of a new uprising.

The jungles and the wild regions of the mountainous interior were a constant seedbed of revolt. There the *marrons*, as the escaped slaves were called, reigned supreme. They not only received those who managed to escape from their masters, but also organized occasional forays at night against the nearest villages or sugar refineries. More and more the black population was developing a sense of its power, even as the abolition movement was gaining momentum elsewhere. England had already outlawed the slave trade in 1811; the government of France knew that it was only a matter of time before it would have to do the same. Meanwhile on Bourbon more and more ordinances were passed to regulate the arbitrary domination that the masters held over their slaves.

In this developing situation, the missionaries on the island envisioned their mission as twofold: to provide sufficient instruction for the slaves so that they could begin to understand their dignity as human beings and children of God and, at the same time, to instill in them the principles and the practice of Christian morality. Because of the resistance and fear on the part of the whites and the Creoles who looked rather to the past than to the future, the priests still had to be careful not to seem to espouse any movement that would lead to civil disturbance and unrest. The Brothers followed much the same pattern in the evening catechism classes for the slaves, which, by the time Brother Scubilion opened his at Saint-Leu in 1843, had already become a feature of most of the Brothers' schools on the island. In entering into this work, the Brothers found that the ground had been well prepared by the pioneering efforts of two zealous priests.

The first was Father Alexandre Monnet, a priest of the Diocese of Cambrai in France. An unusually tall man of athletic build and an iron determination, he vowed to devote himself to the welfare of the blacks from the moment he arrived in the colony in 1840. He mingled among them, learned to speak their crude dialect, and won their trust by becoming one with them and one of them. At the end of three months, he had organized regular catechisms for the slaves at Saint-Denis in the evenings

and on Sundays. But because the sugar refineries were so far from the church in the town, he finally decided to go where his people were, in order to save them the long walk in both directions. At the Rivière-des-Pluies, some five miles outside the capital, he would assemble large groups of them in the open air where, towering tall above them and with his stentorian voice, he taught them the fundamentals of the Christian religion, celebrated the Eucharist, administered baptism to the blacks of all ages, and sacramentalized their marital unions.

At one point he wrote back to France as follows:

I have never felt so much devotional fervor as when, on Sundays at the mission, surrounded by an immense multitude of these poor blacks, I set up my altar under a huge tree and celebrate the sacred mysteries under a clear blue sky. The songs of the birds joined to those of the blacks, the cool shade of the trees under which we gather as under the vault of a cathedral built by nature herself, all this seems to say to us: the whole earth is the Lord's and no matter where it is that you address your prayers to him, they ascend to God on high.

It has been estimated that as many as three thousand slaves would assemble on these occasions. No wonder that this impressive and zealous priest earned the title of *Le père des noirs*, the Father of the Blacks.

Father Monnet found a great friend and collaborator in the person of another apostolic priest with a similar concern for the plight of the slaves, Father Frédéric Levavasseur. A Creole himself and a native of the island, this priest was the son of a landed proprietor who owned a large number of slaves. He had seen firsthand how total was their ignorance, especially of religion, and the brutal conditions under which they lived. To prepare himself to do something to remedy the situation, he went to France to study for the priesthood. There he met Father Jacob Libermann, a convert from Judaism, and together they founded the Congregation of the Sacred Heart of Mary. On his return to Bourbon, he began his mission by addressing the slaves on his own plantation, embracing them affectionately in a gesture they had never before experienced from a white man.

Won over by his affability, blacks from all the neighboring plantations soon began arriving in large numbers to benefit from his instruction and his ministry. The example of these two priests stimulated others to imitate their example. It was not long before priests in towns all over the island joined actively in the apostolate to the slaves.

These priests found zealous collaborators in the Brothers of the Christian Schools. The role of the Brothers was different and secondary, limited to what they could do in the context of the schools, less exposed to the public view, and consequently less subject to public criticism. But their work, especially in the evening catechisms for the slaves, was effective and much appreciated.

All of this was not accomplished without a great deal of opposition, rivalry, and infighting. Active priests such as Father Monnet and Father Levasseur were opposed not only by the proprietors, but also by the more conservative members of the clergy who were concerned to maintain the status quo. The Brothers, on the other hand, were criticized by the activist priests for not being willing to leave the schools to go to the blacks on the plantations, or otherwise follow up on the instruction given in the evening classes. A letter, dated 18 May 1843, from the Procurator General of Bourbon to the governor of the island gives some idea of these conflicts. The section dealing with the Brothers reads as follows:

It is hard to know how to give enough praise to the zeal that is shown by the Brothers of the Christian Schools. Everywhere they have opened up a daily series of catechism lessons for the blacks. Because their regular teaching takes up the entire day, and since the service demanded of the blacks by their masters does not allow them to leave the plantations until they have put in a full day's work, it is impossible for these catechism lessons to be given during the daytime. Accordingly, they are held always between 7 and 9 in the evening. The Brothers accept only the male children and some adults. Under the direction of these respected religious men, success has come in a very short time. They apply to this teaching their characteristic and

consistent gentleness; their simple and direct methods keep the pupils awake and attentive, thus stimulating them to want to learn.

Unfortunately it is already 9 o'clock in the evening when the blacks leave the school. By then it is very dark and it is impossible to provide adequate supervision due to the lack of personnel. This has sometimes led to disorders. Even the appearance of disorder is enough to arouse the opposition of the owners. Besides they are little disposed to cooperate in this matter with the authorities and it is only with the greatest reluctance that they allow their charges to go to these lessons in the first place.

From another point of view, the success of the Brothers has not always been looked upon with very much charity by the missionary priests who specialize in this work. As a result the Brothers have not always had sufficient and effective support and some of the catechumens have ceased to follow their lessons. That is the more regrettable since the Brothers are, beyond all comparison, the most suited of all our missionaries for teaching the blacks. But the fact that they are obliged to teach in the school itself, and that there can never be less than three of them together, or at least two by way of exception, make it impossible for them to extend their teaching to the outlying areas.

Finally, it should be remarked that while in some parts of the colony there have been open conflicts between the priests and the colonists on the subject of this kind of teaching, nothing at all of this kind has been seen between the Brothers and the proprietors. These religious men are self-effacing and they do not have the opportunity to give way to the inflammatory rhetoric that sometimes comes from the pulpit. Their position is secondary and stationary. Because they take no part in arousing agitation, great confidence is placed in them and their well-known devotedness does not go unnoticed.

These matters of policy and controversy were of little immediate concern to Brother Scubilion. His was a single-minded view. He had vowed himself to a life of obedience, "teaching the

poor gratuitously," and in this way procuring the glory of God as far as he was able and as God would require of him. Every day was a new opportunity for him to do just that in favor of the most desperate of God's little ones. After a full day teaching in the primary class at Saint-Leu, he would welcome to the school as many as two or three hundred blacks of all ages for their lessons in catechism. Assisted by the other two Brothers and several monitors, he would divide them into groups according to their ability and level of advancement. Some would be taught only their prayers, others would start on the catechism, while the more advanced would be given a somewhat more developed explanation of Christian doctrine. Brother Scubilion would go from one group to the other, asking questions, explaining difficult terms, congratulating those who did well, encouraging those who needed more help. He was always smiling and pleasant. Well used to talking to children, he knew how to stimulate the good will of these simple folk, children at heart, even though some of them were fathers of families. They had no previous schooling and so could not read. Following the example of Father Monnet, Brother Scubilion learned to formulate the deepest mysteries of the Christian faith into their crude but colorful dialect.

Capitalizing on the natural fondness of the blacks for song and rhythm, Brother Scubilion arranged the text of the catechisms for oral recitation in rhythmic chant. Some examples follows:

Do you know how many things are ONE?

- *There is only ONE God who reigns in heaven.*

Do you know how many heavens there are?

- *There is only ONE heaven and ONE God who reigns in heaven.*

Do you know how many hells there are?

- *There is only ONE hell which we must avoid as there is only ONE God who reigns in heaven.*

Do you know how many true churches there are?

- *There is only ONE true church to which we must belong to become holy as there is only ONE God who reigns in heaven.*

Do you know how many states there are that are good for Christians?

- *There is only ONE state that is good and that is the state of grace as there is only ONE God who reigns in heaven.*

Do you know how many things are TWO?

- *There are TWO Testaments, the Old and the New, as there is only ONE God who reigns in heaven.*

Do you know how many places will exist after the Judgment?

- *There will be only TWO, heaven and hell, as there is only ONE God who reigns in heaven.*

Do you know how many ways there are for a Christian?

- *There are only TWO ways, the one leads to heaven and the other leads to hell, as there is only ONE God who reigns in heaven.*

Do you know how many things are THREE?

- *There are THREE persons in God, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, as there is only ONE God who reigns in heaven.*

Do you know how many principal mysteries there are?

- *There are THREE principal mysteries, the Holy Trinity, the Incarnation, and the Redemption, as there is only ONE God who reigns in heaven.*

Do you know how many theological virtues there are?

- *There are THREE theological virtues, faith, hope, and charity, as there is only ONE God who reigns in heaven.*

As a follow-up to this catechism, Brother Scubilion constructed an entire creed of twelve articles with a cumulative refrain similar in style to the "Twelve Days of Christmas." It would be sung to a simple chant:

1. *Do you know how many things are ONE? (Repeat)*
 - *There is only ONE God who reigns in heaven.*
2. *Do you know how many things are TWO? (Repeat)*
 - *There are TWO Testaments, Old and New.*
 - *There is only ONE God who reigns in heaven.*

3. *Do you know how many things are THREE? (Repeat)*
- *There are THREE persons in God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.*
 - *There are TWO Testaments, Old and New.*
 - *There is only ONE God who reigns in heaven.*

This would be continued through the FOUR evangelists, the FIVE wounds on the cross, the SIX days of work, the SEVEN sacraments, the EIGHT beatitudes, the NINE choirs of angels, the TEN commandments, and the TWELVE Apostles. Apparently not even Brother Scubilion in all his ingenuity could find anything corresponding to number eleven.

In order to introduce his catechumens into the fundamental demands of Christian morality, Brother Scubilion put together a series of couplets, each beginning with the word "Whoever . . ." (in French, *Quiconque*). These also could lay no claim to poetical elegance or even grammatical accuracy. But they were effective for their purpose. The samples below are given in translation that approximates the naive style of the French originals.

*Whoever loves God here on earth
Will find in heavenly bliss a berth.*

*Whoever is not a friend of God at heart
Will never with him have any part.*

*Whoever God on earth does serve
A great reward will then deserve.*

*Whoever prays God day and night
Will end his days in heavenly light.*

*Whoever the church's laws does spurn
Him God will send to hell to burn.*

*Whoever heaven's reward would win
Must then avoid all mortal sin.*

*Whoever on Sunday does Mass attend
Will have God's blessings without end.*

*Whoever takes God's name in vain
Will one day have to take the blame.*

Such were the methods used by Brother Scubilion to drill into the minds of his hearers the basic doctrines and moral maxims of the Christian religion. Set to simple tunes, with marked rhythm and repeated refrains, they could be chanted in the fields or in the refineries as the slaves would go about their daily work.

To appreciate both the method and the content of this type of catechism, it must be remembered that catechism was the standard approach to religious education all over the Catholic world from the Council of Trent in the sixteenth century up until Vatican Council II. It was based on the theological presupposition that the explicit knowledge of certain basic doctrines, especially the Trinity, the Incarnation, and the Redemption, was absolutely necessary for the salvation of those who had reached the use of reason. In addition it was also necessary to observe the moral precepts that were embodied in "the commandments of God and of the church" and made specific in the catechisms. With the Catechism of the Council of Trent as a model, catechisms multiplied during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Most dioceses had their own as did many teaching orders, including one composed by the Founder for the Brothers' schools. From the time of De La Salle the Brothers were encouraged to look upon teaching the catechism as a genuine ministry, a means of bringing the truths of salvation to poor youngsters who might otherwise be lost.

This does not mean that the Brothers were content with the verbal formulas and memory alone. The Founder had always insisted that the purpose of the catechism was to make of the children "true disciples of Jesus Christ." Brother Scubilion was well aware of this. In the tradition of the Brothers, he would elucidate the meaning of the words by posing a series of sub-questions which would be well prepared beforehand. Then he would illustrate the doctrine with stories and examples taken from daily life. The catechism would be supplemented by a daily "reflection," as it was called, a brief exhortation in simple language to apply the doctrine to some concrete practice. The catechist was expected to show in his entire exterior deportment that the truths contained in the catechism were an animating force in his own life. Brother Scubilion was particularly

noted for this aspect of the catechist's ministry. The fervor in his voice and the gleam in his eyes communicated more than anything he said how intense was his own faith and his sense of the reality of the presence of God. One Brother said of him, "His appearance alone was enough to lead the blacks to prayer. His influence over them was such that they would follow him anywhere like sheep."

One of the great joys for Brother Scubilion during his years at Saint-Leu would be those solemn occasions when a sufficient number of the blacks would be ready to be presented for baptism. His biographer, Father Chassagnon, describes the scene:

All of the candidates, both adults and children, were clothed in white and this contrast of white and black served to heighten their appearance in a special way. Next to each one would stand the godfather and the godmother who would ordinarily be the wealthy proprietors who on that day would give the blacks an admirable example of Christian affection. Through Christ in the waters of baptism, the slave would become the brother of his master. How happy the catechumens were! You could read it written in ebony all over their faces. They sang their chants with full voice, they prayed with an ardent faith, and they affirmed resolutely their fidelity to Jesus Christ. They listened rapturously as the zealous pastor, Father Taroux, painted for them a charming picture of the happiness enjoyed by Christians in the service of the true God.

The ceremony of first communion was equally impressive. As Chassagnon remarks, never did the words of the *Panis Angelicus* have such meaning: *Manducat Dominum pauper servus et humilis* (A poor and humble servant takes his Lord for food). This was all reward enough for Brother Scubilion for all the extra work and fatigue. He found in days such as these the means to recharge his physical and spiritual energy, and so to begin again with the next group to come for instruction.

While Brother Scubilion was thus occupied at Saint-Leu, preparing the slaves for their liberation through baptism to the freedom of the children of God, movements both in mainland France and on Bourbon itself were hastening the day of their

total liberation as citizens and human beings. There was considerable resistance on the island to any such move. During the five-year period prior to 1848, the tension between those who saw the abolition of slavery as inevitable, and those who were determined to oppose it at all costs, became increasingly intense. The clergy were in a particularly sensitive position, trying to provide for the spiritual needs of the blacks without being accused of using the pulpit to arouse revolutionary feelings. Even as forceful a leader as Father Monnet felt it necessary to keep his abolitionist views secret, lest he compromise the good he could otherwise accomplish. As early as 1840 he wrote to the Lazarist superior in France:

I hope to be able to prove that those are completely wrong who argue that the blacks will never amount to anything, that they will always be robbers, liars and libertines . . . that the reason this is said is out of fear that they will have to be given religious instruction as a preparation for emancipation. That is what these people question, they don't want it and they will oppose it to the very end. . . . In the six months that I have spent seriously and attentively trying to study and get to know the blacks, I can assure you that it is possible for them to become excellent citizens.

If they have bad qualities, it is the whites who are to blame through their negligence and indifference. But if emancipation should come, there is no more danger of an uprising or a revolution than there was in my village in France in 1830.

We have worked hard to catechize and preach, but without emancipation we can do nothing. We build with one hand, but the owners destroy with the other. There are some good owners who try to help but they are so few as to be the exception rather than the rule. There are so many horrible things that happen. If they only knew back in the Chamber of Deputies half of what is going on here, they wouldn't wait a fortnight to grant emancipation, provided of course that the owners would be indemnified as they were on Mauritius.

Above all, Father Superior, keep my name out of this.

If it becomes known that a single word of what I have said here came from my pen, I might just as well pack my baggage and go home. Here you have to be as wise as serpents, in fact, even more so.

As time went on, however, both priests and Brothers began to realize that they had a role to play in preparing the slaves for emancipation. A whole new kind of education would be needed if they were to learn to live as free and responsible human beings. All over the island the priests became more and more outspoken in favor of abolition, and many of them suffered physical and verbal attacks from the owners as a result. Among the victims was Father Monnet himself. On his return from a trip to France in 1847, where he had received the Legion of Honor from the French government and been ordained a bishop by Pope Pius IX, a public outcry was raised against him. After several days of rioting on the part of the free population, the governor of Bourbon had him deported back to France. A year later, en route to a new assignment in Madagascar, this valiant fighter for freedom died of a fever at the age of thirty-eight.

In the process of educating the slaves for their eventual freedom, the Institute of the Brothers was called upon to play an important, if "secondary and stationary" role, to quote the report cited earlier. In 1845 Brother Philippe, then the Superior General of the Brothers, sent a group of ten Brothers to help in this cause. Their names are known: Brothers Genevé, Hortensius, Joscion, Yonicus, Heladius, Bernardus, Prudentius, Vinoch, Germanus and Méning. In such company the name Scubilion must have sounded positively euphonic. But there were deeper problems. With the new resources in personnel and a sense of mission to the blacks, the Brothers now proposed that the blacks be given the fundamental elements of a primary education in addition to the regular catechism. An outcry went up from the owners that the Brothers were overstepping their bounds. Complaints were forwarded by the governor of Bourbon to the minister for colonial affairs in Paris.

The reply of Brother Philippe, dated 10 August 1847, is incisive:

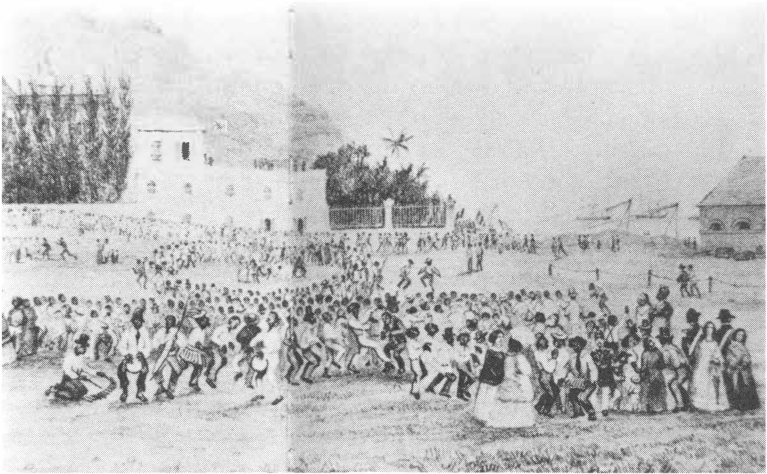
When I sent a new group of Brothers to Bourbon, I tried very hard to arouse their courage and to give them an exalted idea of their mission. I tried to make them see how glorious it would be for them to be of service to the children of the black race by teaching them that they are human beings just like anyone else. Furthermore, I told the Brothers that the governor would be very much concerned for their welfare. Since their arrival, however, these Brothers have had no other occupation except to give some catechism lessons to a few blacks who come to them almost without the knowledge of their owners.

While these exchanges were taking place, events in mainland France were moving rapidly toward the inevitable. February of 1848 brought the revolution that toppled Emperor Louis-Philippe from his throne. The provisional government of the new republic almost immediately decreed the general enfranchisement of the slaves in all the French colonies. At the same time the name of the island of Bourbon was changed to Reunion, a name it has retained ever since. The decree of emancipation was published there on 20 October 1848 and was to go into effect the following December. For seven years the clergy and the Brothers had been working earnestly to prepare the sixty thousand slaves—and the forty thousand free citizens—for this eventuality. That the transition from slavery to freedom took place smoothly and without incident is due in no small measure to the influence of these missionaries and the impact they had on the entire population.

Bishop Poncelot, the Prefect Apostolic of Reunion, encouraged the blacks to celebrate the first day of their freedom in a religious manner. It turned out that the churches were not big enough to hold the crowds that flocked to them. *Grand merci, le bon "Die"* they chanted over and over in their native dialect. Every parish had a solemn mass of thanksgiving with benediction of the Blessed Sacrament in the evening. At Saint-Leu Brother Scubilion stood among the crowd of newly franchised blacks in the parish church, sharing their joy and joining with them in their songs of thanksgiving. In his own way he had helped them to grow in this spirit of devotion. After five years

of looking forward to this day, he had the great satisfaction of seeing so many of his black protégés coming to thank God for their liberation.

The entire population was caught up in the celebration. The religious services were followed by parades, dancing in the public square to the beat of the drums and the chant of the native songs. There were no untoward incidents, no violence, and no display of bitterness against the former owners or officials. It was enough for the blacks to savor the pure joy of being free at last.



Celebration of the Day of Emancipation on Reunion
December 20, 1848

Brother Scubilion remained for two more years at Saint-Leu. One important consequence of the emancipation was that the Brothers were now free to accept into their regular classes the children of the enfranchised blacks. This opened up for Brother Scubilion a new set of challenges that he would face in his eagerness to procure the glory of God as far as he was able and as God would require of him.

Bishop Poncelet, the Prefect Apostolic of Reunion, encouraged the blacks to celebrate the first day of their freedom in a religious manner. It turned out that the churches were not

big enough to hold the crowds that flocked to them. *Grand merci, le bon "Die"* they chanted over and over in their native dialect. Every parish had a solemn mass of thanksgiving with benediction of the Blessed Sacrament in the evening. At Saint-Leu Brother Scubilion stood among the crowd of newly enfranchised blacks in the parish church, sharing their joy and joining with them in their songs of thanksgiving. In his own way he had helped them to grow in this spirit of devotion. After five years of looking forward to this day, he had the great satisfaction of seeing so many of his black protégés coming to thank God for their liberation.

The entire population was caught up in the celebration. The religious services were followed by parades, dancing in the public square to the beat of the drums and the chant of the native songs. There were no untoward incidents, no violence, and no display of bitterness against the former owners or officials. It was enough for the blacks to savor the pure joy of being free at last.

Brother Scubilion remained for two more years at Saint-Leu. One important consequence of the emancipation was that the Brothers were now free to accept into their regular classes the children of the enfranchised blacks. This opened up for Brother Scubilion a new set of challenges that he would face in his eagerness to procure the glory of God as far as he was able and as God would require of him.

7.

Possession

With the act of emancipation of 1848, the blacks on the island of Reunion, who up until then had been kept in slavery, began to enjoy the rights of free citizens. But more was needed by way of education if they were to be assimilated into the mainstream of society. The Brothers had already been devoting themselves energetically to this task when, in 1850, ten more of their confreres arrived from France. Brother Jean-de-Matha, the provincial superior, began at once to make plans to expand the work of the Institute to every part of the island, with special emphasis on educational opportunities for the children of the enfranchised blacks. Among the first of the new establishments to be opened was the school at La Possession. It is ironic in a colony where possession, even of human beings, had determined social status and been regarded as nine-tenths of the law, that one of the settlements should bear such a name. Yet it was there that Brother Scubilion would find a new outlet for his zeal, giving himself totally to the service of the enfranchised blacks in the apostolate of their human and Christian education.

At the time, La Possession was a small but busy village of about four thousand inhabitants located on the northwestern coast of Reunion about halfway between Saint-Paul and Saint-Denis. Its name derived from the formal ceremony that took place in 1644 when Captain DuBourg took possession of the island in the name of the French King Louis XIV. Over the years, by reason of its proximity to the sea and its situation at the crossroads of the main routes across the island, La Possession became a gathering place for all sorts of transient types: Creoles, Kafirs from India, and finally many of the enfranchised blacks. There was little sense of stability and much

less of morality. Since there was neither church nor priestly ministry for long periods, religious practice became almost nonexistent. Father Carrier, the priest who had been assigned to pastoral responsibility for the place, realizing how desperately a Christian school was needed, appealed to the Brothers.

Years later, in his memoir on Brother Scubilion, Brother Jean-de-Matha described the circumstances:

In 1850 it became possible to establish the Brothers in La Possession where there was no parish church but only a chapel. Father Carrier, the priest in charge, thought that we ought to be warned that this place was perhaps the most dissolute in the whole colony by reason of the going and coming of all sorts of people, day and night, crossing from the windward to the leeward side of the island or vice versa. He said, therefore, that it would be important to select Brothers for this assignment who were unusually virtuous and reserved. We thought that we couldn't do better than to assign Brother Scubilion to be part of this community which was organized with Brother Vincelas as the Director.

Brother Scubilion himself, in the record he kept of his assignments, made this entry: "September 10, 1850, sent to La Possession to teach the evening classes and to fulfill the functions of Sub-Director." This, incidentally, is the closest Brother Scubilion ever came to exercising a position of authority in the Institute, not a great responsibility considering that there were only three Brothers in the community.

There was more to this assignment than meets the eye. It is evident that the Brothers chose La Possession for their newest establishment because the need there was so acute. What is more remarkable is that the Brother Provincial recognized the talent that Brother Scubilion had for a very specialized apostolate and assigned him to it full-time. He had no other teaching responsibility than the evening classes for the adult blacks. Up until then it was most unusual, if not unprecedented, for Brothers to be assigned to any other teaching ministry than the education of the young in the elementary schools. Hitherto, whatever Brother Scubilion or the other Brothers in Reunion

were able to do for the adult blacks had to be added on to the work of the school day. It was considered something additional to the essential mission of teaching the young. By assigning Brother Scubilion full-time to his specialized apostolate, the Provincial gave formal recognition and the sanction of obedience to a creative adaptation to a special educational need.

This movement into the area of adult education and special education was one example of adaptation to local needs in the educational apostolate that were being made all over the world, as the Institute expanded beyond the boundaries of mainland France. At this same time, for example, in English-speaking countries, the Brothers were beginning to extend their teaching to secondary schools and colleges. More recently, this creativity in adjusting to new opportunities in the field of education, and the recognition of the talent that certain Brothers have for specialized apostolates, have become increasingly characteristic of the Institute. But in 1850 at La Possession on the island of Reunion it was a decided innovation.

In this way Brother Scubilion was finally in a position to give his full attention to the moral education of the enfranchised blacks. Most of them were illiterate, possessing neither the knowledge nor the experience of how to handle the responsibilities that freedom entails. Relieved of the burden of slave labor, many of them expected to be freed from the necessity of working at all. They left the plantations and the sugar refineries in droves, almost two-thirds of them in the course of the first year, despite efforts of the authorities to get them to enter freely into contracts with the owners for periods of one or two years. Some got jobs at menial tasks or developed skills such as carpentry and stonemasonry, others fled to the rugged terrain of the mountainous interior where they squeezed a barren living out of the hostile environment. Too many fell into idleness and the vagabond lifestyle with all of its attendant vices, among them alcoholism, induced by the readily available rum. The whites and the Creoles also had their problems. They had to overcome long habits of domination and ingrained attitudes of superiority, learning to treat the blacks as equals and helping them to be assimilated into the social and economic life of the colony. In such a situation education, in every sense of

the term, was a crying need. It was the conviction of the Brothers, and of Brother Scubilion in particular, that a solid religious formation was the best guarantee that the other elements would follow.

The new school of the Brothers in La Possession was ready for opening day on 12 October 1850. Within a short time the two classes in the day session were completely filled. It was another two months before the evening program for adults, the special concern of Brother Scubilion, could get underway. No longer was it possible to presume, as it had been at Saint-Leu, that large numbers of blacks would come spontaneously to the evening catechism. For one thing, the Brothers and the Christian school were a new experience for the village. Brother Scubilion's special gift for attracting people to him was as yet untried and unknown in the new location. Apart from that, very few of the blacks had settled in the village, most of them being dispersed into the surrounding areas of the interior. Thus Brother Scubilion had to seek them out, the good shepherd going after the lost sheep into the highways and byways. In this case it was mostly byways.

At Saint-Leu he had been forced to go often to the mansions of the owners to persuade them to allow their slaves to come to the evening catechism. Now that the blacks were their own masters, he had to find them where they were. During the day, while the other Brothers were at school, Brother Scubilion would undertake long journeys on foot in the broiling sun over rough roads, when there were any at all, scrambling up the steep slopes or penetrating the cavernous ravines where the former slaves made their homes. Always smiling, he would win their confidence, then argue with them, plead with them, and by the sheer persuasive power of his personal charm convince them to come to the evening sessions at the school. After two months of strenuous recruiting, he had assembled a group of some fifty blacks to make a beginning.

It wasn't long before the numbers doubled and tripled as the reputation of the saintly Brother spread among the black population, all resistance overcome by his kindly manner, his zeal for their souls, and his respect for them as persons. He used the same methods and the same chants as before, especially the

twelve-part creed, which rapidly became a real favorite; and these techniques were as successful at La Possession as they had been at Saint-Leu. Sunday was always a special day. Chassagnon gives this poetic description:

Every Sunday was like a day of some important public event. The enfranchised blacks, profiting by the Sunday rest, came in large numbers from their remote dwellings to follow the lead of their holy catechist. . . . During most of the morning Brother Scubilion would be there in the midst of his neophytes as they assisted at Mass and listened with serious attention to the fatherly instructions of the parish priest. The whole afternoon was given over to the catechism on the Creed, the recitation of prayers, and practicing the liturgical chants for the Vespers and Benediction of the Blessed Sacrament that brought the day to a close. At the hour when the stars began to illuminate the firmament, the church too was illuminated for the evening service, so beautiful and so moving to behold because of the devotion of the enfranchised and the admirable way in which they sang the psalms, the hymns, and the gospel canticles. Even the whites themselves were edified at the sight and they rejoiced at the wonderful results that grace had produced in these souls so recently enchained in the darkness of error and passion.

It seems that neither the whites in Reunion, nor Chassagnon in his description of them, gave a thought to the chains by which the owners had kept the blacks enslaved or to the extent to which they themselves were enchained in the darkness of paternalism and prejudice.

Such thoughts were far from the minds of those caught up in the pure joy of these Sunday celebrations. It was always a very special Sunday when the bishop would come on his annual pastoral visitation. On that occasion, the adult catechumens prepared by Brother Scubilion would be presented for baptism, a function that the bishop reserved for himself. In his recollections of Brother Scubilion, written at the end of the century, Brother Gonzalvien, then Provincial of the Brothers on Reunion, wrote the following:

During the course of his first pastoral visit to La Possession, His Excellency Bishop Desprez, the first titular Bishop of the Diocese, was simply flabbergasted (epatée) at the success obtained by Brother Scubilion in the teaching of catechism. More than six hundred blacks chanted together and with great enthusiasm the principal mysteries of our holy religion. His Excellency was lost in admiration and he later referred to this episode as the most moving experience of his pastoral tour of the island. For a long time afterwards, the bishop would still speak of it and he was always happy to hear news of Brother Scubilion.

Preparation for baptism and first communion was not the only sacramental dimension to the catechism of Brother Scubilion. One of the major obstacles to the development of a moral sense among the slaves prior to emancipation in 1848 was the impossibility for most of them to enter into a permanent and valid marriage. Father Levavas seur often complained about the systematic opposition of the owners on this point. He wrote: "Experience proves, however, that for the black person marriage is the most effective means of inculcating moral values. They respect the sanctity of the marriage union more than the whites do; they raise their children with greater care and with greater vigilance." This became an important element in the catechetical instructions given by Brother Scubilion. He was able to persuade many parents of families to have their unions legitimized and sanctified in the sacrament of matrimony. He was equally successful in persuading couples contemplating marriage to do the same. This was an effective way to stabilize family life, to raise the moral tone generally, and to assure the religious and moral education of the children.

Another major adaptation in the catechesis of Brother Scubilion for the newly enfranchised was the emphasis on the importance and dignity of work, freely undertaken. As one author expressed it, many a black felt that he ought to be freed from tilling the soil at the same time that France freed him from his master. The Brothers, on the other hand, traditionally devoted to the education of the children of the working people and the poor, had always placed a high value on manual labor.

In dealing with his adult blacks, Brother Scubilion insistently chided them for their tendency to idleness, which rendered them good for nothing and condemned them to a life of misery. He urged them to become good at their work, to prove by their honest labor that they could be valuable members of society with their own dignity as free human beings.

In characteristic fashion, Brother Scubilion incorporated this emphasis on the necessity for work and the avoidance of idleness into easily memorized sentences that could be set to rhythmic chants. It was at this time that he added the six days of labor to the famous twelve-part creed. That number, along with the number eleven that was never added, had been missing from the original version. In addition, there were some new couplets to be added to the *Quiconque*:

*Whoever would idle remain
Will never to riches attain.*

*Whoever makes robbery his vocation
After death will suffer damnation.*

*Whoever is not temperate with food and with rum
Will body and soul to much evil succumb.*

*Whoever is sober in sleep and at table
Will have very good health and to work will be able.*

Brother Scubilion was not beyond borrowing from his predecessors. Here is one of the songs, attributed to Father Monnet, that became another favorite, rivaling the twelve-part creed with its vigorous appeal and message of hope:

Refrain:

*Courage, Courage!
Let's go to work with courage.
Courage, Courage!
In heaven rest and joy.*

*1. Everyman upon the earth
Has to work and suffer pain.
But one day it will be worth
The great reward that he will gain.*

Refrain: *Courage . . . etc.*

2. *If the things we must endure
Cause us now to shed these tears,
Hope alone can reassure,
Console our grief, allay our fears.*

Refrain: *Courage . . . etc.*

3. *God sees us all and loves us too.
He knows our sorrows and our grief.
One day he'll come himself in view
To bring us comfort and relief.*

Refrain: *Courage . . . etc.*

CHANT des TRAVAILLEURS

à la fin Bourbon

Refrain *Vol. II. n. 10*

Cou-ra-ge cou-ra-ge allons de bon cœur à l'en-ra-ge Cou-ra-ge
Du ciel le re-pos le bon-heur Quel bon-ne sur-tout la re
Dont ha-vail-leur, souff-leur Mais ce bon-heur mis-sein-re tout à l'heure
à la fin Cou-ra-ge au

The music and the French text of the song used by Brother Scubillon to encourage the enfranchised blacks to devote themselves to their work: the original is in the archives of the Brothers' generalate in Rome.

As before, these verses could easily be committed to memory and chanted by these gentle folk back in their homes and in the workplace. From the point of view of late twentieth-century social thought, this approach might be criticized as a religious legitimization of an oppressive situation: suffer here and be rewarded hereafter, there will be "pie in the sky bye-and-bye."

In the context of a transitional situation, however, this effort to lead the blacks gradually, through religious motivation, to make the best use of their newly won freedom was an effective way to save them from idleness and aimlessness, to motivate them to become productive citizens, and to invest their labor, hard as it usually was, with meaning and dignity.

There was yet another contribution that the Brothers in Reunion were able to make to the education and well-being of the enfranchised blacks. Under the leadership of Bishop Desprez, the Brothers joined with the local clergy in forming the Society of Saint Francis Xavier. The purpose of this organization was twofold: first of all, to help the newly baptized blacks to persevere in an exemplary Christian life; secondly, to provide a source of mutual aid for the personal and financial emergencies inevitable among a people unused to managing their own family affairs. The society was presided over by the Bishop of Saint-Denis and administered in each parish by a council composed of the parish priest, the Brother Director of the school, and ten councillors. Meetings were held on Sunday afternoons and presided over either by the priest or one of the Brothers, more often than not the latter, since the priest would usually be otherwise engaged on Sunday. Dues were one franc per month. For this modest sum the members were assured of the attentions of a doctor and the necessary medicines in case of serious illness, financial aid in times of unemployment, and funeral expenses when they died.

In the village of La Possession, it was Brother Scubilion who was principally involved with the work of this society. He was instrumental in getting it organized there and usually presided over the Sunday meetings. After a short time devoted to business matters, he would exhort the members with his usual eloquence to continue to lead good Christian lives. He likewise encouraged them to develop a sense of sound financial planning and economy, giving example himself in the efficient way he managed the society's finances. Then he would lead them in their favorite old chants from the evening catechisms and finally bring them to the church for Vespers, together with the catechumens he was preparing for baptism. The members of the society would enter the church in solemn procession, car-

rying proudly aloft the banner of the Apostle of the Indies. Many years later one of the Brothers wrote this: "A striking proof of the influence of Brother Scubilion is the thriving condition of the Society of Saint Francis Xavier in La Possession which he established there and directed for the mutual aid of the working class poor. When I arrived there in 1867, I found that this Society was still in a flourishing state."

*Pardonnez moi, mon très cher B. Directeur
si je vous importune, et excusez mon gribouillage;
ma main s'en va, mon main tremble; la mémoire
me échappe; mes idées sont confuses;
ma vie s'en va, ma mort approche; l'éternité
s'avance; le temps n'est rien; l'éternité
est tout; ...*

*Je suis avec un très profond
respect. Mon très cher B. Directeur
votre très humble serviteur
Fr. Scubilion.*

The conclusion of the letter of November 27, 1854 in Brother Scubilion's own hand. The text reads (in translation):

Pardon me, my dear Brother Director, if I am bothering you and please excuse my rough scribbling. My eyesight is failing; my hand is not steady; my memory is slipping; my thoughts are all confused; my life is passing away; my death is approaching; eternity goes forward; time is nothing; eternity is everything.

I am with very profound respect, my very dear B. Director, your very humble servant,

Br. Scubilion

Toward the end of his five-year stay in La Possession, Brother Scubilion was approaching sixty and had already spent more than twenty years in the mission, most of them spent in working with his beloved blacks. But there were some signs that this endless expenditure of physical, spiritual, and emotional energy was beginning to take its toll. At one moment he himself admitted as much. In the letter to Brother Hieronimo dated 27 November 1854, which has already been quoted at length in connection with his effectiveness in encouraging vocations to the Institute, he concludes as follows: "Pardon me, my dear Brother Director, if I am bothering you and please excuse my rough scribbling. My eyesight is failing, my hand is not steady, my memory is slipping, my thoughts are all confused, my life is passing away, my death is approaching, eternity goes forward, time is nothing, eternity is everything." There is internal evidence in the manuscript letters that there may have been some truth to his remarks. However, the presentiment of death—a sort of spiritual wishful thinking, perhaps—proved to be unfounded. He still had thirteen years to live.

Something of his condition must have come to the attention of the superiors. Or perhaps they were becoming concerned that so much of his time was being given over to work for the enfranchised that had less and less direct connection with the school. In any case, in March 1855, in the middle of the school year, he was transferred from La Possession to Saint-Denis where the provincial superior, Brother Jean-de-Matha, had his headquarters. Once again Brother Scubilion was put in charge of the temporal concerns of the community—kitchen, laundry, maintenance, and the like. His great consolation was that he was allowed to organize evening catechism classes for his beloved blacks.

There is another letter that has survived, written by Brother Scubilion during this period. It is dated 8 December 1855 and is addressed to the Brother director at Avallon in France, near Annay-la-Côte where Brother Scubilion was born. Parts of it have already been cited in connection with the story of his birth. It is appropriate now to quote from it more at length, as he gives his impressions of how far the mission has

come, how he envisions his present situation, and what his hopes are for the future.

My dear Brother Director, let me now say a brief word about our colony of Reunion. Thanks be to God, religion has made great progress on this island. I recall that when I first arrived here in this colony almost 23 years ago, the country had only 12 priests and 4 Brothers; now we are 61 Brothers and 5 novices, there are more than 60 priests under the leadership of a bishop who is zealous for the glory of God and the salvation of souls. They recently held their retreat and their diocesan synod in our chapel of Our Lady of Victory. Years ago, during the period when slavery prevailed, the churches were never filled; since then any number of new churches and chapels have been built and there are still not enough of them. The factor that has contributed so much to the thriving state of religion is the establishment of two societies: the Society of Saint Vincent de Paul for the whites and the Society of Saint Francis Xavier for the newly enfranchised. We have two Jesuits who preach the parish missions in the diocese. They also conduct a boarding school and college which is going very well; it also serves as a seminary for the bishop. These good Fathers are very zealous; one of them serves as our chaplain and conducts the liturgical services for the Brothers and for our students.

For ten years now these good Fathers have been working hard to implant the Christian religion in Madagascar. They have had to suffer a great deal and so far the work is not very far advanced. However, it seems that the time has come for the conversion of the four million souls that the devil has held captive for so long on that huge African island. Let us pray that the cross will soon be implanted at the very summit of the Mascarene mountains so that it will dominate the whole country and drive the devils away from it. The town where the queen resides has 60,000 souls; the Malagasy are good people once they are fortunate enough to learn about the true God. I know because I have instructed some of them here and already a goodly number

of them have become Christians; several have made their first communion. I hope that the time is near when the disciples of our venerable Father and Founder will be spread in great numbers throughout that land. When that day arrives, I will be very happy—since it was 22 years ago that I asked this grace of God—if I myself could be one of those who will have the joy of bringing the gospel to those good Malagasy people. Brother Jurson promised me as much in a letter, but he added, “Meanwhile continue to teach very well your old folks on the island of Bourbon.”

So that is how I occupy the time waiting for that glorious day. It is true that I am happy with these good former slaves. When I am sitting among them it is as if I were placed on the throne of the most distinguished monarch in the whole world. They listen to me speaking of God as if it were God himself speaking through my mouth. These poor unfortunates went to a great deal of trouble to learn the principal truths of our holy religion. They say to me in their own language: “Me, I know that what you say to me; you say to me how many Good God there are: only one, he himself make me to love him and win his paradise. How many persons in God? Three, da Fahdda, da Son, da Holy Spirit.”

I have heard it said that Father Darcy, the former pastor at Tharoiseau, has become pastor of the church of Saint-Lazare in Avallon. If he is still there, please give him my regards.

*I am with very great respect, your most humble and obedient servant,
Brother Scubilion*

It might be recalled that in the earlier part of this same letter, Brother Scubilion spoke of carrying the cross for Tharoiseau at the age of nineteen in the procession to implant the mission cross at Avallon. He was to have the opportunity to plant the cross once more, but it would not be in Madagascar.

Brother Scubilion remained in Saint-Denis in a more or less transitional situation for a little over a year. Although the letter of December 1855 written from there has none of the

foreboding of the letter sent from La Possession a year earlier—quite the contrary, since he speaks of his hopes of being assigned to Madagascar—it is nonetheless probable that the signs of fatigue were still apparent. This would explain why he was sent to Salazie in April 1856. Salazie was located in the cool mountain area at the center of one of the picturesque *cirques* at an elevation of about fifteen hundred feet. The Brothers had opened there a school of arts and crafts, as well as a rest home for the Brothers who needed a change of climate and a respite from their labors. For the first time in his many years on the island, Brother Scubilion was away from the relentless heat of the coastal towns. To occupy some of his time he was assigned to help with supervising the boarding students. The change of scene and of climate was not to last for long, however. Six months later, with the opening of the school year in October and the opening of a new school, obedience called him once more to procure the glory of God in a new context and a new venture. This assignment was to be his last.

8.

Holy Mary

The location chosen for the opening of the new foundation was Sainte-Marie, a small town on the northern coast of Reunion about eight miles from Saint-Denis, the capital. As had been the case at La Possession, the parish there was considered a troubled one, despite the services of a pastor, Father Rigault, and the facilities of a century-old church. There were some two thousand enfranchised blacks in the parish and a collection of about three thousand workers imported from India, Africa, and Madagascar. Most of these workers, engaged under long-term contracts, had never been catechized or baptized, and there was a good percentage of backsliders among the enfranchised blacks as well. It was just the sort of situation that the Brothers preferred in choosing a site for a new school.

On 14 October 1856 the usual three Brothers arrived to take up their duties: Brother Gendulphe, the Director, Brother Léonien-Marie, a young Creole of twenty-nine years, and Brother Scubilion, who was sent, in the words of the Provincial, "to fill out the number required for the community." Once again he was the bottom man on the team, charged with the temporalities and the evening catechism for the workers, tasks considered incidental to the main business of running the school. Brother Jean-de-Matha probably had something more in mind, however, realizing from past experience that the very presence of the saintly Brother was enough to transform a parish and to make the school a success. If that was his design, it certainly succeeded.

The eleven years that Brother Scubilion spent at Sainte-Marie, the last years of his life, proved to be the same in some respects but very different in other ways from his previous

assignments. First of all, he was now considerably older. Chasagnon paints this verbal portrait:

His hair had turned completely white, as white as snow. His mortifications, his labors and his fatigue had given to his face the appearance of a hollow-jowled ascetic, but it was serene and agreeable all the same. You could see that behind his pale and diaphanous complexion there was a pure and beautiful soul. He had a high forehead, long since deprived of much of the hair, his nose was pointed and a bit long, he ordinarily kept his eyes lowered and his mouth relaxed in a sweet smile. His tall frame of more than usual height became slightly stooped toward the end of his life, but that only seemed to give the impression of the kindness that inclined him to the lowly and the disadvantaged. In all, an admirable simplicity and exquisite modesty invested his whole personality with charm and attractiveness.

There would be differences in other aspects as well. Wherever he had been before he had always left behind a reputation for holiness that was evident in all that he said and did. Now the spirituality that was deep within him began to manifest itself in unusual phenomena: unexplainable cures, conversion of hardened sinners, and a sort of clairvoyance into persons and events. From his youth he had cultivated a fervent devotion to the passion and cross of Christ, which now he increasingly endured in his own flesh. His catechisms, which once brought the gospel message to hundreds of the blacks and enfranchised at a time, had been successful as much by his genuine sanctity and personal appeal as by the effectiveness of his teaching methods. Now the audience would be more varied, but the numbers fewer and the influence more intense, more direct, more personal. Although he always accepted in obedience any assignment that was given him, he never seemed satisfied with the limited horizons of any particular locality. His apostolic zeal for souls became more and more insatiable. Reunion was becoming too small to contain his missionary spirit, and so the prospect of evangelizing Madagascar began to dominate his dreams and schemes. All in all, in these last years at Sainte-Marie, the classic portrait of a saint emerged with ever increasing clarity and definition.

At first the situation of Brother Scubilion at Sainte-Marie did not seem to promise much more than a semi-active retirement. His responsibilities for the temporalities were hardly such as to occupy him full-time. Since he had lost most of his teeth, it was difficult for people to understand what he was saying. Sometimes he would help the other Brothers with the younger children in the school, teaching them the sign of the cross and their simple prayers. With the older ones, he could supervise them in chapel or teach them how to serve Mass. He continued the evening classes as well, relying on the ever popular chants and the force of his personality to get the message across.

A new opportunity presented itself out of his daily contacts with the students around the school. He discerned almost intuitively that some of them had a more developed religious sensitivity than others. To these he gave his special attention and eventually organized them into the Society of Saint Aloysius Gonzaga. This small but elite group was limited to about fifteen or sixteen of the young teenagers. Brother Scubilion would meet with them in the Brothers' chapel, where he trained them in the techniques of meditative prayer, exhorted them to practices of penance, and suggested projects for apostolic works. On major holidays when the town would go wild, he would lead his little group away from temptation by taking them on long hikes to explore the surrounding countryside. On one occasion they managed to climb the three thousand feet to the top of Mount Charpentier to enjoy the exhilarating view. At other times they would go on pilgrimages to some of the more distinguished churches and shrines in the colony. Beyond catechesis, this was a genuine introduction for these youngsters into the full living of the Christian life.

Meanwhile the evening catechisms for adult workers continued but in much more difficult circumstances. Eight years after the emancipation most of the enfranchised blacks had already been prepared for baptism. In 1857 there were only thirty-two of them in attendance at the evening sessions in Sainte-Marie. But Brother Scubilion was not discouraged. He refused to close down the program and continued to receive those who would come. Not content with waiting for them, he went as before to the factories and the barrios to seek them out.

In this way he discovered the large numbers of imported workers who had been brought in to keep the sugar refineries going. In the eyes of Brother Scubilion they were all pagans, some honest, most indifferent, and not a few hostile. Here indeed was a new outlet for his apostolic zeal. It wasn't long before his venerable appearance and the force of his personal faith won many of them over. Thus it was that during these last years he had the joy of bringing to baptism a significant number of Indians, Kafirs, and Malagasy, as well as many of the most recalcitrant of the enfranchised blacks.

Brother Scubilion was not satisfied in these activities, associated in one way or another with the school, that he was yet procuring the glory of God as far as he was able. He felt that God could still require more of him. Accordingly he involved himself more and more in the life of the parish. He soon became a fixture at all the regular services, acting as sacristan or serving Mass as the occasion would require. He had his place in the sanctuary where he would kneel erect and without support, so utterly and obviously transfigured by the contemplation of the divine mysteries as to have an unforgettable effect on the rest of the congregation.

By this stage in his life, his prayer had become so intense that his whole physical appearance would be altered. For years afterward people remembered his attitude of prayer, comparing it to that of the adoring angels. One of the wealthy women of the parish, Madame Brisac, related that when the Blessed Sacrament was to be exposed and the priest opened the tabernacle, the whole countenance of Brother Scubilion, kneeling at his place in the sanctuary, would become illuminated and glow with a rosy tinge that was altogether of another world. You would have thought that the Lord himself had appeared to him visibly, she said, and this glow would last for hours at a time. The schoolchildren who sang in the choir and were seated around him also related that they had seen the same phenomenon many times.

This kind of breakthrough into the physical order of the spiritual forces that were working in Brother Scubilion began to multiply. One of the Brothers who was with him in the community at Sainte-Marie tells the following story about his own experience:

It was on a Sunday in the year 1865 that I was suddenly overcome by an extraordinary sense of religious fervor during the parish Mass. It was such that neither my duty to watch over the children, nor the sermon, nor the liturgical hymns, could in any way diminish it. Astonished at the persistence of this unusual state, I began to think that this must have come from some external power quite independently of the state of my soul. But I could not imagine what this might be, especially since it was just an ordinary Sunday.

When I got back to the community, Brother Scubilion said to me: "Our mantles got mixed up by mistake. You took mine and I took yours." Then I knew, and thirty-five years later I am still convinced, that the reason for my extraordinary devotional state was the mantle of Brother Scubilion that I was wearing.

The involvement of Brother Scubilion with the parish was intensified when, in 1858, the elderly pastor retired to Saint-Denis. Father Carrier, who had known and admired Brother Scubilion in La Possession, was appointed to take his place. Thus there began a working relationship between the two men, something close to a partnership, that was to last until the Brother's death. The new pastor came to depend on Brother Scubilion for many things, including his advice and assistance in dealing with difficult cases involving the pastoral ministry. He often referred to Brother Scubilion as "my auxiliary and my vicar." Indeed he owed the Brother his very life.

In March 1859 a terrible epidemic of cholera swept over the island of Reunion, brought there by a ship from the coast of Africa. Sainte-Marie, so near to the port, was one of the places hardest hit. The Brothers rose to the occasion heroically, as did the priests and religious Sisters, heedless of the danger to themselves. Many of them were publicly cited afterward for their services. In his report, the governor of Reunion wrote:

The Brothers of the Christian Schools at Saint-Denis, whose buildings we used to set up infirmary Number 4, were the equal of the Sisters whom they came to assist. The Brothers were our best infirmarians. In addition they pro-

vided such other services as were compatible with their establishments (outpatient centers, recovery wards, and military barracks). The records they kept of admissions, discharges, and deaths were in perfect order, such as rarely happens at the height of an epidemic such as this one.

At Sainte-Marie, Brother Scubilion worked with all his energy to assist the Jesuit Father Berger in his ministry to the cholera victims. The pastor, Father Carrier, was not able to join them in this work, since he himself had contracted the disease. His condition deteriorated rapidly to the point where the doctors gave up all hope of a recovery. At one moment it seemed that death was imminent. Brother Scubilion did all he could to comfort his friend, but above all he continued to trust in earnest prayer. Little by little Father Carrier began to show signs of improvement. Then, some days later, still rather weak and supported by Brother Scubilion, he was able to say a Mass of thanksgiving. "If I am still alive today," he said afterward, "I owe it to the devoted care of Brother Scubilion, but above all to his prayers."

After this incident, Father Carrier became more dependent than ever on his "vicar." Brother Scubilion was called upon regularly to visit the sick, to comfort the dying, and especially to persuade those who had long been negligent of their religious duties to become reconciled with God. To this end, he would get them to accept a medal of the Blessed Virgin and then he would kneel and recite aloud the Lord's prayer. "That one is the best," he would say, "it was taught to us by Christ himself." The Brother's appeal was irresistible, and many a hardened sinner was brought to tears by his entreaties. In particular cases where the dying person would refuse to see the priest, Brother Scubilion would go, sometimes as far away as thirty or forty miles, saying the rosary en route, and with his gentle smile and reassurance overcome all objection. He would return to Father Carrier, shouting from afar off that the patient was waiting for him, that God's grace had won the victory. It was said in Sainte-Marie that no one could recall a single case where a dying sinner had refused to listen to Brother Scubilion.

One spectacular instance, documented in the memoirs of

those who knew the man, concerned one of the supervisors of the port at Sainte-Marie. This man had lived his whole life without any concern either for God or his own salvation. Indifference degenerated into a hostility toward religion that was often manifest in outbursts of rage or sarcasm whenever anyone broached the subject. On one 15 August, the feast of the Assumption of Mary into heaven, he gave the order to load one of the ships. The whole town was scandalized at such a blatant violation of the holy day. "So what," he replied ironically, "I suppose the Virgin Mary is going to feed my men when they have nothing to eat!"

Eventually the man fell gravely ill; the doctors declared that the case was hopeless and that death could come at any moment. Twice the pastor had tried to speak to him, and twice he had been repulsed by curses and blasphemies. Father Carrier decided it was better not to try again. He confided his lack of success to Brother Scubilion, who hesitated not a moment. At nine o'clock that night he went to the dying man's bedside, where he prayed on his knees with the fervor of a saint. The poor man, overcome by the patience and the charity of the Brother, finally yielded. At midnight he humbly and contritely received the priest he had previously spurned. He died the next morning, fully repentant, trusting in God, and full of gratitude to the Brother who had opened up to him the prospect of eternal life.

This was not an isolated case. One such convert from the error of his ways was so taken by the exhortations of Brother Scubilion, and so grateful for his return to the faith, that he asked to make public reparation for the scandal he had given. At the first opportunity he stood courageously before the congregation in the church, acknowledged his failings, and declared that his mockery of religion had been nothing but hypocrisy and sham. Another one told the pastor, "I would have become a Freemason if it had not been for that Brother." "What did he say to you?" the priest asked. "Nothing that my ears could make out," he replied, "his look alone is enough to win you over." It should be recalled that by this time Brother Scubilion had lost his teeth, and people were saying that you were lucky if you could make out one word in ten that he spoke.

These "miracles" in the spiritual order had their counterparts in the physical realm as well. The story has already been told of the cure of Father Carrier during the cholera epidemic. If that were the only such instance, one would be inclined to attribute it to natural causes, which might well have been the case. But there were other such cures involving Brother Scubilion during his lifetime. A century and more later, we are less inclined to look for supernatural explanations, or to make clear-cut divisions between natural and supernatural forces. More is known about the power of the human psyche, especially where the full intensity of that power is brought to bear on the physical environment. When the element of profound faith and religious fervor is added, it is not surprising that extraordinary events do occur. Faith healing is not the freaky phenomenon that it was once thought to be. After all, the ministry of healing was an integral part of the mission of Jesus Christ, as it should be for the Christian. It is not necessary, therefore, to use the language of miracles to accept at face value the reality of the unusual healing events that took place in connection with the prayer and intercession of Brother Scubilion. A few examples follow.

Among the pupils in the school at Sainte-Marie, there was a lad about seven years old whose name was Octave Piton. He had great difficulty with his lessons, since he was mute and almost completely deaf. Brother Scubilion took an interest in him at once. Every day, without making a fuss, he would take the boy aside to coach him in his lessons. But the Brother wanted to do more. After the morning Mass, he would take the boy to the chapel of the Brothers' community, and there the two of them, the young child and the old man, would pray fervently together. Then Brother Scubilion would take some of the oil from the sanctuary lamp that burned before the tabernacle and rub it on the lips and on the ears of the deaf-mute. This they did together every day for two months. After that time, the boy's hearing improved noticeably and he was able to speak well enough to be understood. As time went on his hearing and his speech continued to improve, and his cure turned out to be permanent.

On another occasion in 1866 a baby named Louis-Lucien Biberon, aged six months, became mortally ill with persistent dysentery. The doctors gave up all hope that the child could survive. This caused great distress among the townsfolk, since the Biberons were wealthy landowners and well thought of in Sainte-Marie. When Brother Scubilion learned of their trouble, he came one evening and prayed beside the bed of the sick child. "You have nothing to fear," he told them, "your baby will live. I will go to get a scapular to put around his neck and then he will get well for sure." This gave hope and encouragement to the parents who had faith in what the Brother said. That night the child slept peacefully. The next morning the parents were awakened by the happy gurgling of their dear little son. From that moment on all symptoms of the disease had disappeared.

One of Brother Scubilion's confreres in the community at Sainte-Marie, the same in fact who had changed mantles with him at Sunday Mass, relates the following story:

One evening in 1865, at about eight o'clock or so, the father of one of the families in the parish arrived at the community house in tears. My good Brother, he said, our child is dying. I have come to beg of you to ask God for us to spare his life. Brother Scubilion replied: My friend, all you need is to have faith in the goodness of God. Saint Joseph will hear your prayers. Now come with me. They went outside to where there was a shrine to Saint Joseph and they both knelt in prayer. The good Brother, animated by the kind of faith that only saints possess, recited his favorite prayer, the Our Father. Then he added this invocation: Saint Joseph, hear this family in their desolation and save their child. Then he picked some of the herbs that were growing at the foot of the steps in front of the shrine; he touched them to the statue of Saint Joseph and made the sign of the cross over them. Turning to the father, who was still seen to be crying, he said: Have these herbs boiled and give them to the child. The next morning the father returned full of joy to thank the Brother. He said that as soon as the child drank a few drops of the concoction that he came to his senses, was completely at rest, and in fact was cured.

These and similar occurrences spread the word all over the colony that indeed there was a saint among them.

But Brother Scubilion's energy was directed much more to finding new ways to give glory to God rather than to himself. All his life he had been devoted in a special way to the passion and to the cross of Jesus Christ. It is sufficient to recall the book of meditations on the passion of Christ that he had used before entering the novitiate of the Brothers. In the letter written back to France in 1855, he recalled his participation as a young man in the ceremony of implanting the cross at Avallon, and he expressed the hope that he might some day see the cross raised on the heights in Madagascar. Now it was time to think of leaving behind on the island of Reunion some visible reminder of this theme that so dominated his meditation and his exhortations.

Across from the school of the Brothers at Sainte-Marie there was a rocky elevation surrounded by aloes, lilacs and palms, overlooking the main road through the island. It occurred to Brother Scubilion that all it needed to crown the summit was a crucifixion scene. With the approval of the pastor, the Brother Director, and the local authorities, he undertook a collection for just such a shrine. No one could refuse the outstretched hand of the saintly old man, and the contributions soon came pouring in.

He set to work with the vigor of a man half his age. He went up into the mountains eight miles away to select the wood and to direct the carpenters who were to fashion it into a cross. He helped to clear the site and to build up the masonry at the base. He also arranged to erect the stations of the cross in the path leading up to the summit. Once the calvary group was in place, he had a small chapel built nearby to honor Our Lady of Sorrows of La Salette, at that time a very popular devotion on the island. To complete the Holy Family, he set up another shrine not far away to honor Saint Joseph. Not satisfied with all of this, he started a campaign that was eventually successful to have a huge cross erected on top of Mount Charpentier overlooking the Indian Ocean at a height of some three thousand feet. Brother Scubilion could rest content that he had implanted the cross on the island of Reunion in more ways than one.



Brother Leone Morelli, Postulator General, and Brother Polycarpe, Vice-Postulator, at the Cross erected by Brother Scubilion in Sainte-Marie

The shrines built by Brother Scubilion across from the school soon became centers of popular devotion. The local inhabitants would often stop as they were passing by to venerate the cross or to kneel at the shrines of Our Lady and Saint Joseph. Pilgrims coming from all over the island left behind huge garlands of flowers, and candles were burning constantly before the statues. Many spiritual and temporal favors were attributed to the prayers that were offered there. One of the Brothers described his impressions in this way:

In October of 1864, I had hardly been settled at Saint-Suzanne when I had the good fortune to go to meet Brother Scubilion. I had to admire his charity and the trouble he took to welcome us when we came to see him. His very appearance made a striking impression on me. Then, when I saw the marvelous calvary group that he had erected, my admiration only grew. But when I was brought to the chapel of the Holy Family and when I saw people of every age and of both sexes stop before the shrine, light a candle, say a devout prayer, and then respectfully depart, my admiration was even greater. I blessed heaven for having given such a Brother to our community at Sainte-Marie.

In the midst of all this activity, Brother Scubilion's own interior and spiritual life was coming to full maturity as he approached the end of his days. There is no way of knowing for sure how he felt within himself about the veneration in which he was held or the unusual events that seemed to result from his prayer. All the evidence indicates that he was neither overly surprised nor did he think that whatever good was accomplished had anything much to do with him. In the tradition of De La Salle, he attributed everything to the power and the goodness of God. His whole life was dominated by the promise he had made in the formula of his vows: "To procure God's glory as far as I am able and as God will require of me."

Like many great saints before and since, Brother Scubilion, when he thought of himself at all, could only consider that he was a worthless sinner. After the annual retreat in 1863, he wrote the following:

I ought to have great confidence in God and never give up hope that he will grant me his salvation. I must say in the words of holy Job: Even if God would slay me, I would continue to trust in him. I must think often of the words of Saint Paul: I know not whether I am worthy of love or of hate. Will I go to heaven after my death or will I go to hell? God alone knows and I do not. What then should I do? What should I say? It is important that I be not discouraged. Do everything for the glory of God. I should say to myself: I am going to heaven. That is what God wants. Jesus Christ is my salvation, since he died and rose again for me. Amen. It is true. He is waiting for me in heaven.

On the same occasion he put into writing a list of twelve rules for himself that give an insight into his spiritual and devotional life. It is likely that he had been carrying these things in his memory for many years, perhaps even from his novitiate days:

- 1. Perform all my actions for the glory of God.*
- 2. Flee the world and avoid sin.*
- 3. Think often of the four last things.*
- 4. Meditate often on the sufferings of Jesus Christ.*
- 5. Ask myself: why did God make me? what is my final destiny?*
- 6. God is my destiny: that is what heaven is.*
- 7. Adore Jesus Christ in the Eucharist: give him love for love during communion time.*
- 8. Have a great devotion to the divine hearts of Jesus and Mary.*
- 9. Often invoke Saint Joseph, Saints Joachim and Anne, Saint John the Baptist and Saint Elizabeth.*
- 10. Invoke the saints of the Old Testament together with the patriarchs: Adam, Abel, Noah, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Daniel, Job, and Tobias, etc.*
- 11. Pray to the nine choirs of angels: have a great devotion to Saint Michael, the prince of heaven, and to Saints Gabriel and Raphael.*
- 12. Have a great devotion to the venerable De La Salle.*

No other spiritual writings of Brother Scubilion prior to 1863 have survived. This is not surprising since he was not much given to writing of any kind. Retreat notes were often written on odd scraps of paper, and many Brothers would each year destroy the notes from the previous annual retreat. There have survived, however, three letters that Brother Scubilion addressed to the Blessed Virgin Mary in 1863, 1864 and 1865 respectively. The letter dated 11 August 1864 is the longest and contains six petitions which reveal some of the Brother's principal concerns at this moment in his life. It reads in part:

O Mary, my Good Mother, obtain for me first of all the grace of a good death so that I may be able to arrive in heaven as quickly as possible and by the shortest route.

Secondly, I recommend to you the community of the Brothers at Sainte-Marie and that the three Brothers who now compose it will come back again to this parish after the retreat, if God so wills it.

Thirdly, O Good Mother, in the name of all the sorrows you endured at the foot of the cross, I recommend to you the pastor of the church at Sainte-Marie, and all those who will be assigned to this parish after him, that they may all be zealous and arouse the faithful to a great devotion, O Mary, to the sorrows that afflicted your immaculate heart at the foot of the cross.

Fourthly, O Virgin of La Salette, I recommend to you all the people living in Sainte-Marie and all those who will pass before your statue which is located by the side of the imperial highway, that they may all go to heaven one day. O Good Mother, ask your Son to bestow all his spiritual and temporal blessings on the whole town of Sainte-Marie, of which you are the special patroness.

Fifthly, O Queen of Heaven and Earth, I recommend to you in a special way our pupils, both those in the day school and those who come in the evening, and also for the members of the Societies of Saint Francis Xavier and Saint Vincent de Paul, that they may persevere in good. I recommend to you also all those who contributed to the implanting of the missionary cross and the other crosses for the

stations, as well as those who gave donations for the chapel and the shrines.

Sixthly, O Holy Virgin, I recommend to your care the two statues which are due to arrive, the one representing your apparition on Mount La Salette, the other your spouse Saint Joseph. Ah, how happy I will be when the statues get here! I will get down on my knees the minute they arrive, O my Good Mother. It will be very painful for me if I am not here when they arrive. Oh, how many Ave's will be said before your statue, O Good Mother! I rejoice in advance at the very thought.

I pray also for our Holy Father, the Pope, and for all the clergy.

O Mary, my Good Mother, in conclusion please accept this letter which I address to you in heaven. I trust that from the heights of heaven you can see what it contains. Accept, O Queen of Heaven, my very humble respects and submission as I am respectfully your servant and your slave.

Brother Scubilion

While this devotional style is quite foreign to contemporary sensibilities, the essential element should not be overlooked. Brother Scubilion was evidently very much concerned with those about him. He incorporated their needs as well as his apostolic enterprises into his devotion and his prayer.

As was evident in the letter that Brother Scubilion wrote back to France in 1855, there remained one dream yet to be fulfilled, one hope to be realized, one more victory to be won for the cross of Christ. He wanted in the worst way to have some share in bringing the gospel to the neighboring island of Madagascar. That became at least a possibility with the death in 1860 of the cruel and bloodthirsty Queen Ranavalona at the age of eighty-four. During her long reign she refused to allow missionaries to come to the island, and those who dared to do so were brutally tortured and killed. The Jesuit Fathers, primarily charged with the Malagasy mission, had brought many of the youngsters to Reunion for their education, and some of them attended the Brothers' schools. Now that condi-

tions were more favorable, the Jesuits made repeated requests to Brother Philippe, the Superior General of the Brothers, to provide the Brothers needed to open a school on Madagascar. These requests had to be denied because of lack of personnel.

As time went on and nothing was done, the Brothers on Reunion just about gave up hope of ever being part of the Madagascar mission. But Brother Scubilion refused to share the common discouragement. He insisted that the day would yet come when the Brothers would be sent to that most extensive of the African islands. He expressed the hope that he might be among the first to go there. Accordingly he redoubled his prayers and acts of penance for that intention. Finally in October 1866 the negotiations were completed and Brother Jean-de-Matha was authorized by the Superior General to found a school on Madagascar. There was universal rejoicing among the Brothers on Reunion when they heard the news. Brother Gonzalvien later wrote in his memoirs: "Almost at once and with one voice this triumph was attributed to the prayers of Brother Scubilion. Everyone recognized that his intercessory power was at work in this turn of events which only a few months before had seemed so hopeless."

The three Brothers assigned to the pioneer mission in Madagascar were Brothers Gonzalvien, Ladolien and Yon. Brother Gonzalvien had been one of the ten missionary Brothers who came from France in 1850. He was later to become the provincial superior for Reunion and Madagascar. Brother Ladolien, a former pupil of Brother Scubilion at Saint-Leu, was the first black Brother to be admitted to the Institute. Brother Yon was also black and a native of Reunion. On 8 November 1866, the three of them came to Saint-Denis, where Brother Scubilion was in the infirmary, to say good-bye to him and to recommend their mission to his prayers. Brother Gonzalvien recalled what the venerable old Brother said to them on that occasion: "Ah, so you are leaving for that island that I myself so very much wanted to evangelize. Now I cannot follow you, but I will pray for the success of your labors. I congratulate you on the glorious mission that has been confided to you. Now that we shall have schools on Madagascar, I will die happy." Then he embraced

each one of them and said: "Amen, my dear Brothers, may the good Lord bless you and be with you in all your ways. I repeat again and again that I will pray for you."

Six months later Brother Scubilion entered into his heavenly reward.

9.

Mission Accomplished

The illness that brought Brother Scubilion to the infirmary in the provincialate house at Saint-Denis first became apparent in the early autumn of 1866. Prior to that time he had enjoyed generally good health, despite his exhaustive labors in the tropical heat and the austerity of his penitential practices over the course of more than thirty years. Very many of his confreres, both missionaries from France and the young men from Reunion that he had attracted to the Institute, had long since fallen victim to the climate, the fatigue, or to the variety of tropical diseases that infected the island. During Brother Scubilion's last years, it is true, the normal debilities of old age had made their appearance: the receding hairline, the loss of his teeth, a stooped posture, a slower gait, and a less steady hand. Otherwise he was healthy enough to meet the rigorous demands of the daily schedule of religious exercises in the Brothers' community, to manage the temporalities of community and school, and to engage in a full round of apostolic activities in the school and in the parish. He had never really been sick in his life. His first serious illness was to be his last.

In the month of September 1866 the Brothers came to Saint-Denis as usual from all over the island for the annual retreat. Brother Scubilion arrived with the other Brothers from Sainte-Marie to enter into the routine of the retreat program. The last bit of his writing that has survived consists of these terse resolutions that he scribbled on the back of an envelope:

Obedience; presence of God; fight off sleep during meditation time. Make a good examination of conscience as a preparation for receiving the sacraments. Have a great

devotion to the Most Holy Virgin and to Saint Anne. Perform all my actions and whatever good works I am able to do, all of them for the souls in purgatory.

Meditate on the passion of Jesus Christ almost every day and also on the four last ends of man. I will also invoke often the nine choirs of angels.

It is hard to tell from these resolutions whether or not the illness that would soon lay him low was already making itself felt. However that may be, it should be some comfort for those who find meditation difficult to know that so saintly a person, at least in his old age, had trouble staying awake during the time of mental prayer.

As the retreat progressed, however, it was noticed that Brother Scubilion had practically to drag himself from one retreat exercise to another and that he was evidently in great pain. The superiors finally ordered him to remain in bed and the doctor was called. The trouble turned out to be that scourge of old and aging men, enlargement of the prostate. Treatment today is a matter of routine, but a century ago in a remote tropical island, the remedial procedures were rather primitive and as painful as the disease itself. These the good Brother suffered without uttering a single complaint, enduring in silence the excruciating process that had most men screaming in agony. Even so, the condition of the patient remained precarious and the pain was unrelieved. Doctor Vinson who attended him was convinced that he could not survive much longer. Brother Scubilion then began a novena to Saint Joseph. Very soon the pain disappeared and the Brother seemed to be completely cured. Doctor Vinson declared that, in view of the patient's age and condition, this sudden and unexpected improvement had to be the product of the supernatural power stemming from the man's faith.

Sometime toward the end of November, Brother Scubilion was well enough to return to Sainte-Marie and resume his usual duties. The people of the parish were overjoyed. When he had failed to return the previous September there was consternation and rage. A delegation came to the Brothers' house demanding to know where he was: What have you done with *our*

saint? Has he been given another assignment? Are they trying to take him away from us? Tell us where he is and we will go and force the superiors to send him back to us. He has done wonderful things for all our families; he is our relic, he is our possession, his place is here and here it is that he ought to die and be laid to rest. Brother Louis-Marie, the director, tried to reassure them as best he could. It wasn't until they saw the holy Brother present again among them with the snowy patches of white hair and the familiar smile that they were satisfied.

Brother Scubilion was less occupied with all the fuss made over him than with the vision of eternity that his brush with death had opened before him. As long before as 1855 he had written "My death approaches, eternity advances, time is nothing, eternity is everything." That premonition had proven to be a bit premature. More recently, in his retreat resolutions of 1863 and 1866, he had listed among them his determination to meditate often on the so-called "four last things," that is, death, judgment, heaven and hell. Now he had more reason than ever to do so.

No doubt, too, during this period he had occasion to reread often the letter he had written to the Blessed Virgin Mary in 1863:

O Good Mother, when my soul will be on the point of departing to appear before God, be my refuge at that moment that will decide my happiness or my misery for all eternity. Beg of your Son that he may be my savior and not my judge. Oh, come down from the height of heaven to gather up my poor soul as it is escaping from my body in order to present it personally to your loving Son. Be my liberator and guide me into the heavenly Jerusalem, there to bless the adorable Trinity for all eternity.

And this is part of the prayer to Saint Joseph composed by Brother Scubilion and dictated to one of the Brothers:

O Holy Patriarch, I pray you with all my heart to be good enough to petition the adorable Infant Jesus for the graces that I need the most, both for soul and body, above all for the grace of a happy death when my last words will

be: Jesus, Mary and Joseph, I give you my heart, my soul and my life.

With thoughts such as these as the theme of his meditations, Brother Scubilion was well prepared for the final struggle that was not long in coming.

The improvement in his condition that enabled Brother Scubilion to return to Sainte-Marie proved to be little more than a brief respite. The prostate problem began acting up once again. A sudden and terrible crisis developed on 3 March 1867, which that year was the Sunday before Ash Wednesday. The danger seemed so serious that it was decided to administer holy communion in the form of viaticum, that is, the last spiritual food for the journey to heaven, and also the sacrament of extreme unction or the last anointing, as it was then called. Despite his agony, the Brother received these sacraments with great fervor from the hands of his good friend and pastor, Father Carrier. Seeing the Brothers gathered around his bedside, Brother Scubilion humbly begged their pardon for the bad example he might have given them. The whole scene was so moving that not many of those present were able to keep back the tears.

Shortly thereafter, however, the crisis passed and the immediate danger was over. But the forty days of Lent that followed were a slow and painful agony. Yet no sighs or complaints escaped from the dying Brother. He found consolation in his favorite prayers, often fingering his rosary or kissing the image of Jesus crucified. One of the Brothers asked: Are you suffering a great deal, my good Brother?—I suffer just as much as God wants me to, came the reply.—Will you join us in praying for a cure since we still need your prayers?—We should pray instead that the will of God be done. If it is God's will that I should go to him, I will pray for you then when I arrive in paradise.

Once the inhabitants of Sainte-Marie learned of the seriousness of Brother Scubilion's condition, some of them would come every day to inquire after him and try if possible to visit with him. Expressions of concern came from all kinds of people, small and great, rich and poor, and above all the

blacks, so totally devoted were they to the man they looked upon as their father. They brought him all sorts of little presents that they thought would please him. He only replied with thanks, saying, "My dear little children, I no longer have need of anything."

During these days, Father Carrier came whenever possible to celebrate Mass in the chapel of the Brothers' community so that Brother Scubilion could be brought there to share the eucharistic sacrifice and to receive his Lord. As 19 March, the feast of Saint Joseph, approached he expressed a desire to attend Mass on that special day. In the church regulations of that time, the priest was allowed to celebrate only one Mass on such a feast, and that had to be for the parish. Over the objections of the Brothers, with every step a painful effort, Brother Scubilion was half carried to the church for one last time to give public witness to his faith and devotion. It did not escape the notice of the Brothers that their Founder, John Baptist de La Salle, had in a similar manner aroused himself from his death-bed to celebrate Mass for the last time on the feast of Saint Joseph.

Friday, 12 April that year was the Friday before Palm Sunday. Brother Scubilion endured his Good Friday a week in advance as the pain became more unrelenting and intensified. The agony continued all through the night. Shortly after midnight he began to fail visibly, and the Brothers assembled to begin the prayers for the dying. Once again the Brother begged pardon of those he might have scandalized. At five in the morning, Father Carrier was called. The dying man greeted his old friend with a smile and asked to have communion brought one more time. But he was too weak to be able to swallow the host. The best the distraught pastor could do was to give the final absolution. Almost at once Brother Scubilion lost consciousness; then he was heard to whisper the prayer he had prepared: "Jesus, Mary, and Joseph, I give you my heart, my soul and my life." Brother Louis-Marie, the Director, then bent over the old man and spoke into his ear the signal of the community: "Live Jesus in our Hearts!" With a voice that was all but inaudible, the dying son of De La Salle whispered the familiar response: "Forever!" With that he died. It was 6:15 a.m.

on Saturday, 13 April 1867. Immediately after, Father Carrier went with the Brothers to the community chapel where he celebrated a Mass for his friend and confidant, the Brother he called his "vicar."

Brother Scubilion was seventy years old when he died, having spent forty-five years in the Institute and thirty-four in the missions on the island of Bourbon/Reunion. The *curriculum vitae*, prepared at the provincialate house in Saint-Denis by Brother Hieronimo, the Director, for circulation among the Brothers, is straightforward enough and sums up those seventy years:

Brother Scubilion

ROUSSEAU, Jean-Bernard, son of Bernard Rousseau and Reine Pelletier, born March 22, 1797 at Annay-la-Côte, canton of Avallon, department of Yvonne.

Entered the Novitiate in Paris November 9, 1822 and took the religious habit on the following December 25.

He left the Novitiate on November 4, 1823 to report to Alençon where he was put in charge of temporalities.

He made his triennial vows at Caen on September 15, 1825. He renewed his vows at Alençon and at Poitiers. He made his perpetual profession at Nantes on September 27, 1827.

He was sent to Poitiers in 1826 to teach class. In 1828 he returned to Alençon, also to teach class.

He was at Poitiers in 1830 and at Chinon in 1831. He left that community in April 1833 to embark at Bordeaux on April 20 in the company of Brother Jean-de-Matha and Brother Vétérins for Bourbon where they arrived on July 14, 1833.

He was put in charge of the primary class at Saint-Benoît from 1833-1836; then at Saint-Paul from 1836-1841; he returned to Saint-Benoît from 1841-1843.

On September 12, 1843 he was put in charge of the primary class at Saint-Leu up until 1850.

On September 10, 1850 he was assigned to La Possession to teach the evening class and to fill the functions of Sub-Director.

On April 3, 1855 Brother Scubilion arrived at Saint-Denis where he was put in charge of the storeroom, the laundry and the evening classes.

On April 25, 1856 he was sent to Salazie to assist in supervising the boarding students.

In the following September he rounded out the number for the community at Sainte-Marie where he stayed until his death, except for one month at Sainte-Suzanne between December 13, 1858 and January 22, 1859, after which he returned to Sainte-Marie where he died, fortified by the sacraments and in the peace of the Lord on Saturday April 13, 1867 at 6:15 a.m.

It could be said of him that he was beloved by God and the people.

Brother Hieronimo

Director of Saint-Denis

As the news of Brother Scubilion's death spread, expressions of consternation and grief were heard all over the parish. People started coming to the Brothers' house in large numbers, repeating over and over, "Our venerable Brother is dead, the saint is dead!" The body of Brother Scubilion, dressed in his religious habit, was laid out in the Brothers' chapel. Everyone wanted to have a look at the man they so loved, pray for him or perhaps to him, and venerate his mortal remains. All day long they came, blacks and whites, young and old, men, women, and children, to file past the bier of their beloved "Brother, the saint." Many brought medals, rosaries and other pious objects to touch to the body. The bolder ones clipped off some of the old man's white hairs or little pieces of his clothing. One of the women in the parish, an artist and a longtime admirer of Brother Scubilion, came to paint his portrait so that the features of the holy man would not be forgotten. That portrait has served over the years as the basis for printed reproductions. Although the essential features have been judged reasonably accurate, it remains the portrait of a dead man, with nothing of the characteristic and charming smile.

On that very day a subscription was raised to procure a leaden casket to enclose the box of pine wood that ordinarily



Portrait of Brother Scubilion drawn by an artist while the body was laid out for burial.

sufficed for the burial of the Brothers. It was also planned to erect a suitable monument over the grave. Since the Brothers did not own a cemetery plot in Sainte-Marie, the town authorities provided a gravesite free of charge close to the central cross in the municipal cemetery. The burial was set for Sunday, 14 April, which happened to be Palm Sunday. The funeral procession was a triumph. The casket was carried by former students, men and boys, who vied with one another for the honor. Brothers came from the neighboring towns with Brother Hieronimo at their head. Brother Jean-de-Matha, the Provincial and the companion of Brother Scubilion on the voyage to Bourbon, was at that time almost blind and unable to attend. The Brothers were followed by an enormous crowd that moved forward in respectful silence, waving the palm branches that had been blessed during the liturgy just concluded in the church.

Father Carrier, himself overcome with emotion, presided over the prayers of commendation at the grave. That very evening, alone with his thoughts and his memories, he put his impressions in writing.

Yesterday, at about six o'clock in the morning, Brother Scubilion of the Institute of the Brothers of Christian Doctrine (sic) rendered his beautiful soul up to God.

This venerable old man, who for thirty-six (sic) years carried out his humble but very useful duties in this country, held an irresistible ascendancy not only over his many former students now dispersed to the four winds, but also over all those who came to know him. He was loved and respected by everyone, even by atheists and libertines, who would never dare to refuse the medals and other religious articles that he knew how to offer to them and get them to accept from him. To this he would add his good advice and words of encouragement to piety. We will never be able to measure all the good he was able to accomplish and the evil that he was able to prevent.

Now his loss has been sincerely mourned by everyone. As soon as the news of his death became known, the inhabitants of Sainte-Marie, who always regarded him as

their friend and respected him as a saint, got together and, despite the short notice, they were able to collect the funds necessary to cover the cost of a leaden casket and a stone monument which will soon be erected over the grave of the venerable Brother.

His burial, which took place this morning, brought to Sainte-Marie a whole crowd of strangers to the parish. Several speeches would have been delivered at the interment of the humble Brother if the very strict Rule of his Institute had not forbidden it. The people had to be satisfied to leave unspoken their feelings of esteem and veneration which filled all their hearts. For myself, I retire for the night full of deep emotion, I meditate in silence on these words of Sacred Scripture: "Say to the just man, since you have done well..."

10:00 p.m., April 14, 1867

Carrier

The solemn Mass of Requiem could not be celebrated during Holy Week or Easter so it was set for Thursday, 2 May. In spite of bad weather, it was very well attended, and a large number of those present received holy communion, something rather unusual at the time. After Mass, and almost spontaneously, the whole congregation went to the cemetery to kneel and pray at the grave of Brother Scubilion, adorned ever since the burial with flowers from all over the island. From that day to this the memory of the saintly Brother has been held in honor at Sainte-Marie. Father Carrier suggested to Brother Jean-de-Matha that he gather and preserve whatever he could that pertained to Brother Scubilion. He said that he would not be surprised if some extraordinary favors would be attributed to the Brother's heavenly intercession. Subsequent events would show that Brother Scubilion's influence for good would carry far beyond the limits of his earthly life.

10.

Beatitude

Beatitude is a fancy word for happiness. Most people are familiar with the "beatitudes" in the gospel, whereby Jesus declares "blessed" or happy those who are poor in spirit, clean of heart, who suffer persecution for the sake of justice, and the like. For centuries the Roman Catholic Church has had the practice of solemnly declaring that certain persons, exemplary and indeed heroic in the practice of Christian virtue in this life, have attained to eternal happiness and so are to be honored with the title of Blessed. This is the penultimate stage in the process leading to formal canonization, the declaration that such a person is a "saint."

Thus it is that the death of a holy person such as Brother Scubilion is associated not with sorrow but with happiness. He found his happiness in this life by living according to the gospel beatitudes and in fidelity to his vow to "procure the glory of God as far as I am able." The events that followed his death suggest not only that he himself has already entered into the joy of the Lord, but also that his intercessory power before the throne of heaven continues to bring blessings and happiness to those who seek his aid. All that is needed now to make it official is for church authority to confirm the fact by conferring the title of Blessed on Brother Scubilion.

The people of Reunion did not find it necessary to wait for the long process leading to formal beatification. "We have a new protector in heaven" was the common expression heard throughout the island, as the news spread that Brother Scubilion had died. As Chassagnon puts it: "Brother Scubilion had disappeared from human sight, but for his friends he was not absent, he was not faraway. He still lived in their midst, trans-

formed it is true, and energized by the supreme glory that was the crown of his virtuous life. But the hearts of the people knew how to reach up to him once again in the brightness of his glory; their love for him was strong enough to stretch to his place in heaven."

No sooner were the mortal remains of Brother Scubilion laid to rest than his tomb in the cemetery at Sainte-Marie became a center of devotion. Pilgrims who came to the shrine of Our Lady of La Salette that Brother Scubilion had erected would then be drawn invariably to honor the Brother they loved so much. They placed flowers on the grave and burned votive candles to keep his memory alive. Spiritual and temporal favors were attributed to his intercession. Among the many such that Chassagnon recounts, the following is typical.

In 1868 Pierre-Paul Noël, the two-year-old son of M. Séraphim Noël, an officer in the customs service at Sainte-Marie, fell critically ill. His condition was brought about by a very painful teething complicated by malarial fever. Doctor Vinson who was treating the child had given up all hope.

The father was beside himself with grief but in his faith he found an extraordinary remedy. He said to himself, "Why could not that saintly Brother, who not so long ago was available to help those in distress, be now the one to save the life of my son?" He went in tears to kneel before the tomb of Brother Scubilion and prayed from the depths of his heart, "Dear Brother, spare my child." He had no sooner uttered his prayer when a great calm came over his troubled soul. He returned home full of confidence and there he found a great happiness awaiting him. The sick child was better, the fever had suddenly disappeared, and from that time forward he enjoyed perfect health.

Incidents of this sort occurred repeatedly over the years. Devotion to Brother Scubilion was a popular movement, spontaneous and mysterious in its force and durability. The Brothers themselves had little to do with it. In fact, from 1892 on, the Brothers were forced by the laicization movements in France to abandon the school and the community at Sainte-Marie. Yet

for thirty years the memory of Brother Scubilion continued to be held in veneration by the people of Reunion, favors of many kinds were attributed to his intercession, and the pilgrimages to his tomb never ceased.

For the most part, however, this remained a local phenomenon, a manifestation of the devotedness of simple people that had no impact beyond the confines of the island. Then in 1898 a particularly impressive cure attributed to Brother Scubilion took place in the capital city of Saint-Denis. When a certain M. Elphège was cured of a grave encephalitis, Brother Benoît, then provincial superior of the Brothers on the island, decided to bring it to the attention of the superiors in France. On 30 November 1898, he wrote to Brother Apronien-Marie, Assistant Superior General, as follows:

My dear Brother Assistant:

There is a family in Saint-Denis that recently made a novena for the cure of one of their members. During the course of this novena they went to Sainte-Marie to the tomb of the much venerated Brother Scubilion to ask for his intercession. At the very hour while the family was kneeling in prayer at the cemetery to obtain this favor, the sick man, who had remained in Saint-Denis, rose from his bed and asked for something to eat. This, in spite of his condition which, according to two doctors, had been absolutely without hope by reason of the illness diagnosed as a very grave case of encephalitis.

We have asked the doctor, who is a Catholic, to confirm in writing what he said when he saw his patient completely and suddenly cured: "This is a miracle." A copy of his statement is enclosed. . . .

God be blessed since it seems that he wishes to glorify one of his servants from this Catholic country of Bourbon where Christian education, so flourishing up until recently, is now undergoing such cruel treatment from the enemies of our holy religion.

At this particular moment in the Institute's history, the superiors in France were preoccupied with the preparations for the canonization of the Founder, John Baptist de La Salle,

which took place on 24 May 1900. Next in priority was the cause of Brother Benilde from Saugues in France. The preliminary process of gathering information for that cause had been completed in 1899. Nevertheless, Brother Gabriel-Marie, the Superior General, assigned two Brothers to begin to gather data on Brother Scubilion. Brother Riotisme-Joseph, who had been Director at Sainte-Marie from 1878 to 1880 and who had already followed with interest the accounts of favors attributed to Brother Scubilion, was appointed to collect testimony on the island of Reunion. Brother Idlevarus, the director of the school at Avallon near the village where Jean-Bernard was born, was appointed to conduct interviews and to collect documents in various parts of France. Brother Robustien, then Procurator General of the Brothers and resident in Rome, was kept informed of these developments with a view to the eventual introduction of the cause at the Vatican.

The preliminary informative process required at the local level by canon law began at Saint-Denis under the presidency of Bishop Fabre in June 1902 and lasted until October 1905. Since many of the witnesses to the life and virtues of Brother Scubilion were then living in France, a parallel process was conducted in Marseilles, in the course of which the well-documented biography of Father Chassagnon that had appeared in 1902 was added to the dossier.

In his account of this part of the process in the official *Summary documentorum*, Father Augustin Amore, OFM, the reporter for the Vatican Congregation, writes as follows:

As far as the testimony from overseas is concerned, it is remarkable that we find represented the Vicar General of the diocese of Saint-Denis, two priests of whom one is a pastor, five Sisters of the Congregation of Saint Joseph of Cluny, five teachers, two professors, a councillor general of the government, a pharmacist, a writer, as well as several farmers, workers, artisans and four women. I never would have thought that in the beginning of this century so much testimony could be gathered in a mission country on a remote island in the middle of the Indian Ocean.

Meanwhile, letters petitioning for the introduction of the cause, *litterae postulatores* as they are called in law, had to be forwarded to Rome. Of these, six came from cardinals, sixty-nine from archbishops and bishops, thirteen from superior generals of other congregations. In addition there were three sets of petitions signed by numerous members of the clergy and four signed by a number of civil servants and other lay people. After giving this list, Father Amore comments in the *Summarium documentorum*:

The number and quality of the opinions favorable to a simple religious who was not a priest and who lived for the greater part of his life on a faraway island in the Indian Ocean give an idea of the favorable impression left everywhere by the Brothers of the Christian Schools. There is evidently a universal desire, especially on the part of the hierarchy, to see them prosper in the important apostolate of education which is theirs. The content of these letters, each of them different the one from the other, something that rarely happens, reflects the high esteem that people had of this Brother.

It might have been expected that the cause for beatification that had begun so auspiciously would have moved rather quickly to a successful conclusion. Such was not to be the case. First of all, the required dossiers had to be prepared for the Promoter of the Faith, commonly known as "the devil's advocate." Then there had to be an examination of the writings, very few in the case of Brother Scubilion, with a declaration that they contained no obstacle to continuing the cause. This did not come until February 1912. On 15 May of that year Brother Gabriel-Marie addressed a circular letter to the whole Institute of the Brothers outlining the progress of the cause, developing at some length the significance of the life and virtues of Brother Scubilion, and expressing the hope that the formal introduction of the cause would soon be announced and the title of Venerable bestowed on the servant of God.

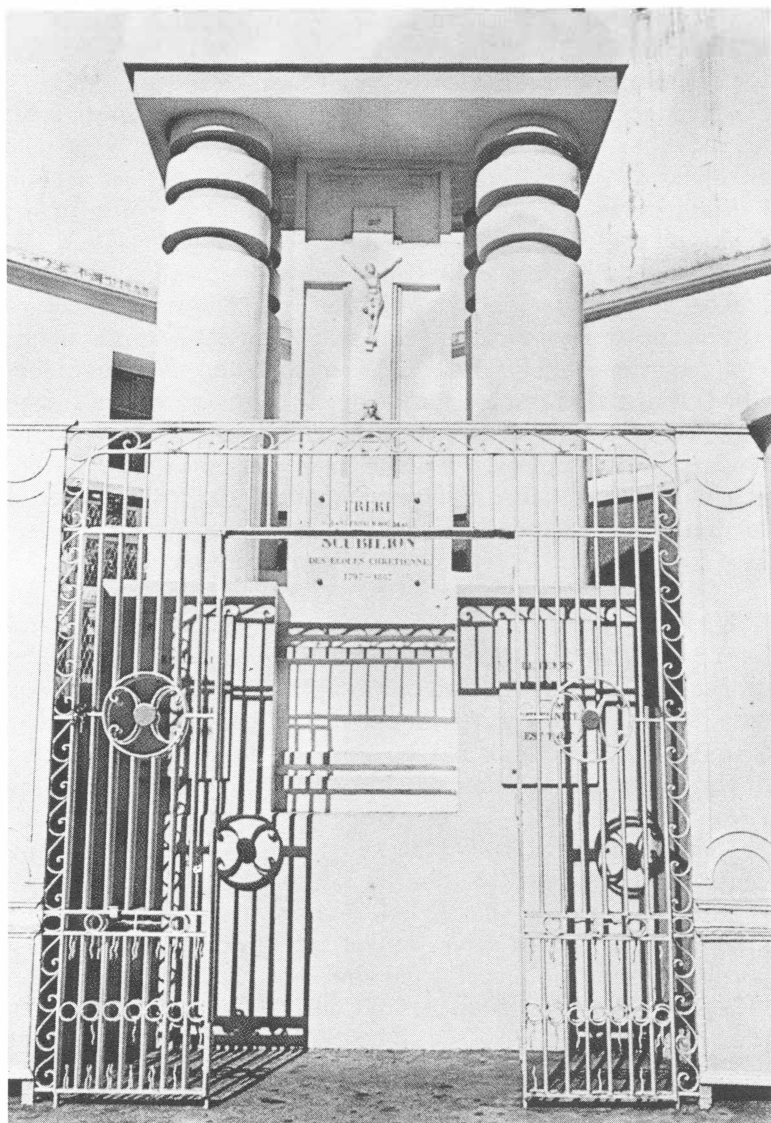
By that time, however, the process had ground to a halt. The First World War broke out soon thereafter, and the reconstruction that followed served to set the priorities elsewhere.

It was not until 1939, and due largely to the efforts of Brother Polycarpe-Marie, who had been given charge of the cause on the island of Reunion, that events began to move again.

The most dramatic of these involved the transfer of the mortal remains of Brother Scubilion from Sainte-Marie, where the Brothers had long since been forced to abandon their school, to Saint-Denis, the capital and the center of the Brothers' enterprises on the island. The exhumation took place early in the morning of 30 August 1939. It was found that the leaden casket had collapsed under the weight of the ground above it, moisture had hastened decomposition, and only a few of the larger bones and vertebrae had survived. The remains, once formally identified, were placed in a new casket and brought with great solemnity first to the chapel at Sainte-Marie and then to Saint-Denis. Huge crowds followed the procession, and many favors were attributed to Brother Scubilion on that day. Since then a magnificent mausoleum has been built to provide suitable access for the pilgrims who come to pray before the tomb.

Once it became known in Sainte-Marie that the body of "their saint" was to be taken from them, the townspeople protested indignantly. Accordingly, it was arranged to have some of the relics placed in a new tomb in the town cemetery so as to have some tangible reminder of the presence of Brother Scubilion among the people of Sainte-Marie. It remains to this day an object of pilgrimage, with special ceremonies every 13 April, the anniversary of the Brother's death.

The summer of 1939 also saw a renewed interest in the cause on the part of the church authorities in Rome. On 15 August of that year, shortly before the transfer of the remains of Brother Scubilion, the report of the Promoter of the Faith became available. The principal objection that he raised to the introduction of the cause in the Court of Rome was the long interruption in the process. It would be necessary to present new evidence to show that Brother Scubilion's reputation for sanctity had perdured over the long thirty-five-year period that had elapsed since the original testimony had been taken. Depositions to this effect began to be taken at Saint-Denis in October 1939, but the process had to be suspended because of the outbreak of the war in Europe.



Entrance to the tomb of Brother Scubilion in Saint-Denis at the corner of Beaumont and Montreuil streets; Brother Scubilion's remains were transferred to Saint-Denis from Sainte-Marie in 1939.

After World War II was over, there were so many political and economic problems, especially as they affected the Brothers in France and the French colonies, that the cause of Brother Scubilion had once again to yield to more urgent concerns. This meant in particular that the objections raised by the Promoter of the Faith had to be left unanswered. Meanwhile, Brother Polycarpe, now the Vice-postulator for the cause on the island of Reunion, did what he could to keep interest in the cause alive.

His patience was finally rewarded in September 1974, when the Bishop of Saint-Denis, George Guibert, agreed to gather testimony in the diocese to show that the reputation for sanctity of Brother Scubilion had survived the long delays. Such testimony was readily forthcoming from those who could verify the continuing visits to his tomb and the many favors attributed to his intercession. In 1975 Bishop Guibert was succeeded by Gilbert Aubry, the first native of Reunion to be named Bishop of Saint-Denis, a diocese that encompassed the entire island. The new bishop immediately made the cause of Brother Scubilion his own. By 1976 some fifty-three witnesses had testified to the continuing reputation for sanctity of this Brother who had died more than one hundred years before. The conclusions of these investigations were sent to Rome in February of that year.

Writing personally, under date of 2 June 1976, to the Cardinal Prefect of the Congregation in Rome, Bishop Aubry pleaded the cause in these fervent words:

Your Eminence:

It is in my capacity as the new Bishop of Reunion that I wish to add my testimony to the continuing reputation for sanctity of the servant of God, Brother Scubilion, Jean-Bernard Rousseau (1797-1867). I do so with a view to his eventual beatification which is earnestly desired not only by the Institute of the Brothers of the Christian Schools but by a popular current of opinion which runs throughout the entire diocese. The dossier which you have in your possession, giving the conclusions of the diocesan process that terminated on 29 February 1976, shows that there has been



The gravesite of Brother Scubilion in Sainte-Marie continues as a center of veneration and pilgrimages. The tomb contains some of the relics of the Brother.

no interruption in the reputation for sanctity of this servant of God, Brother Scubilion. I agree completely with this conclusion and I ardently hope that the process of beatification can move forward rapidly. Indeed, rather than the miraculous aspect of the favors due to the intercession of Brother Scubilion, we ought to insist rather on the example that he represents for the needs of the apostolate in our own day.

In the past, this man of God, a disciple of Saint John Baptist de La Salle, was faithful to the example of his Founder. He brought a boldness born of the gospel to the very heart of a society that still regarded as normal the institution of slavery, which in the long run destroyed the human dignity of the masters as well as of those who served

them. By his educational work, and through his Christ-like poverty that made him always available to others, this Brother was able to win the confidence of the disinherited and to conquer all hearts in his struggle against the scourge of ignorance and the pride of possession. By his love of God and of people he made himself the slave of the slaves, as I like to express it.

Today . . . the example of Brother Scubilion can still speak to our hearts . . . We need to take risks to show that what was possible in the past through the power of the gospel is still possible today. We need religious men who, at the very heart of what they do, bear witness to what brotherhood means to those who are united to God as the sole absolute. We need teachers who can transform their schools into a total educational community where children, parents and teachers constitute a single community energized by faith, living in the present and yet preparing courageously for the future. We need this even at the cost of a serious examination of the way we have usually done things.

Today it is important that in our schools, where different social classes and different races come together, it be always recalled that Jesus Christ is the reference point for the equality among us. This is truer now at a time when, in the course of political battles, some groups would like to profit by the deep currents of racism and the old wounds from the period of slavery. Rekindled hatred can never be the source of a decent future or a motivation for brotherly love. . . .

Today we need to have set before us the example of a Christian, a brother to all, an educator, a man who lived in our country and who demonstrated during his whole life that the gospel is the only realistic and God-given way to transform impossible situations. I think that Brother Scubilion could be just the example that we need. The greatest miracle that he could perform would be to revitalize ever more forcefully the Brothers of the Christian Schools and to impel all the Christians of the diocese to become infused with the missionary spirit of the gospel and to make it operative in their lives.

Writing five years later, on 28 February 1981, to Cardinal Palazzini, the new Cardinal Prefect of the Congregation for the Causes of the Saints, Bishop Aubry stressed that urgency of the matter:

If I am so bold as to bring this to the attention of your Eminence, it is because we are running out of time. We really and truly need to propose to the local church the example of an evangelizer, at one and the same time humble and adventuresome, a liberator of the deepest human aspirations, a man who could reconcile groups with different ethnic sensibilities as well as social classes representing a variety of special interests.

The beatification of Brother Scubilion would permit the local church to exemplify the contemporary emphasis on "faith in its totality as part of life in its totality." The gospel, faith and culture need to become a single reality on the island of Reunion so that we can be opened through our catholicity to the wider reality of the rest of the world. . . . Recent beatifications . . . give me reason to hope that the beatification of Brother Scubilion will move forward and in this way do a great service to our local church, to the church universal and, at the same time, to the Institute of the Brothers of the Christian Schools.

Events moved rapidly after that. The cause of Brother Scubilion had been entrusted to the historical office of the Congregation for the Causes of the Saints. On the basis of the documents collected during the long preliminary process, the cause was formally introduced into the Roman Congregation on 24 March 1981. With the assistance of Bro. Leone Morelli, Postulator of the Cause and Postulator General of the Brothers' Institute, and Bro. Polycarpe Frari, Vice-postulator, the *Summarium documentorum* was prepared and published by the Congregation in the following year. On 9 June 1984 came the decree affirming that Brother Scubilion had indeed practiced the theological and moral virtues to a heroic degree.

Before any beatification can take place, it must be established that a miraculous cure can be attributed to the interces-

sion of the servant of God. Such a case is presently under study by the Congregation.

During the course of the year 1975, a certain Mme. Marie-Thérèse Horeau, resident on the island of Reunion, began to experience debilitating symptoms that led to the discovery of a large uterine tumor. A hysterectomy was performed on 20 October of that year. At first the recovery seemed to proceed normally. Six days after the operation, however, the wound began to fester and gangrene developed in the abdominal cavity. The woman had a high fever and inadequate circulation of the blood, which was complicated by extensive external hemorrhaging that could not be arrested.

On 30 October a friend of hers suggested a novena to Brother Scubilion and placed his picture with a relic on the bedstead. The patient's condition was so critical on the following day that the husband was told to prepare for the worst. He took the picture of Brother Scubilion into his hands and prayed



Brother Leone Morelli, Postulator General, and Mme. Marie-Thérèse Horeau, whose cure has been attributed to the intercession of Brother Scubilion, with Bishop Gilbert Aubry, Bishop of Saint-Denis

fervently for the recovery of his spouse. On the evening of the next day, All Saints' Day, the hemorrhaging suddenly ceased. The condition of the woman improved so noticeably that the doctor was led to describe her recovery as "spectacular." Within four days Mme. Horeau was out of bed; shortly thereafter she was completely cured and has remained in good health ever since. All the medical testimony on this case has been taken, and the Congregation is in the process of weighing the evidence.

Once a cure has been accepted by the Congregation as miraculous, the way will be cleared for the formal ceremony of beatification. In this case the process has been a long one, stretching back over almost 120 years since Brother Scubilion's death. For some, the canonical process towards beatification moves more rapidly, for others it is longer still. Yet in every case the church moves cautiously, fully aware that it is in the presence of a mystery. Mystery always lies at the cutting edge between matter and spirit, this world and the next, the human and the divine. The canonical process for the causes of saints in its external appearance resembles nothing so much as a long, drawn out judicial trial. Nevertheless, what church authority is looking for is some visible sign that the divine element is present. That is why the three fundamental criteria are insisted upon: reputation for sanctity, heroic virtue, and a certifiable miracle.

Brother Scubilion's reputation for sanctity, as manifested in the postulatory letters, establishes the fact that a considerable segment of the people of God, the faith community, recognizes that this Brother was a man in contact with God. His heroicity in the practice of virtue, impossible on a purely human level, points to the presence of the divine grace that is its source. A miracle, once established, demonstrates that somehow the influence of this holy Brother, now living in God's eternal beatitude, has broken through the barriers to produce a positive empirical effect in human time. Only when assured on all three points does the church procede to a formal declaration that the Brother may be known in the church as "Blessed."

11.

Sanctity

At the conclusion of this narrative that began with the birth of Jean-Bernard Rousseau in 1797 and looks forward to his eventual beatification, it seems appropriate to raise the question: What makes a saint? Or, more specifically: What is it that has brought some of the spiritual sons of De La Salle to be considered for formal canonization? So far the Institute has three canonized saints: the Founder, Saint John Baptist de La Salle; Saint Benilde, a most influential Director of the Brothers' school in Saugues, France; and Saint Miguel Febres Cordero, a model of the Christian teacher-scholar from Ecuador. There are two Brothers who have already been beatified: Blessed Brother Solomon, martyred during the French Revolution; and Blessed Brother Mutien-Marie, a simple and holy man who spent most of his apostolic life at the Brothers' boarding school in Malonne, Belgium.

There can be no doubt that the foundation for the sanctity of these Brothers lay in their fidelity to their vocation as Brothers of the Christian Schools. Every one of them, including the Founder himself, was noted for his exact observance of the austere and primitive Rule; a consuming zeal to use the opportunities that the school situation offers to bring young people closer to God; a special love for the poor and disadvantaged; the practice of penance; and a childlike devotion, expressed in traditional terms, to the Blessed Virgin Mary, to Saint Joseph, and to Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament. As motivation for these various elements, these Brothers lived out their lives in the characteristic spirit that the Founder left as a legacy to his Institute, namely the spirit of faith overflowing into a spirit of zeal.

It may be said that every Brother exemplifies this spirit and these qualities in his life to some degree. Some Brothers, and there were many among the contemporaries of Brother Scubilion, have been distinguished for their strict observance of the Rule, their willingness to wear themselves out in apostolic work, or for the intensity of their penitential practices and devotional life. The question still remains, why should a Brother Miguel, for example, emerge as a canonized saint, or a Brother Scubilion as a candidate for beatification? Some clues may be found in a comparison of these two men.

At first glance they seem to have been very different. Brother Miguel came from a well-to-do and well-educated family. He was physically delicate and partially crippled. He entered the Institute at a very early age, fourteen to be exact, and spent most of his life in his native Ecuador. Although self-educated for the most part, he was successful as a teacher at many levels and attained high academic honors as a scholar and author.

Brother Scubilion, on the other hand, the son of a stonemason, grew up in an atmosphere of poverty and hard work. Physically strong and vigorous, he had little formal education and did not take easily to books and learning. He entered the Institute relatively late, at age twenty-five, and spent most of his active life far from his native France on the remote island of Reunion. He was not notably successful in the classroom and so was assigned for the most part to housekeeping duties or to the most elementary classes.

It would be difficult to find two such contrasting personalities in the whole Institute. Yet each was recognized, already in his lifetime, as a saint. In either case, people were accustomed to say: "There goes that Brother who is a saint!" Beneath the surface, therefore, the two must have had much in common. That can be seen in the exceptional quality of their faith and zeal and the concrete forms that it took, as well as in their special influence and the impression they made on others.

In the spiritual doctrine of John Baptist de La Salle, the means he suggests to acquire the spirit of faith include mental prayer, awareness of the presence of God, and trust in the providence of God. Brother Miguel and Brother Scubilion were liv-

ing examples of this doctrine, as the Founder himself had been. They walked continually in the presence of God; you might say that they were preoccupied with the thought of God, oblivious to everything around them. In their daily ministry, they saw God in the persons they encountered on their way. They recognized and accepted the will of God in everything that happened to them. Whether in success or failure, joy or sorrow, praise or blame, they instinctively "attributed all to God," as the Founder had recommended. The spirit of faith in its fullness is nothing less than such an overwhelming awareness of God that it could be said of these men that they were truly in love with God.

For a Christian the love of God overflows into the love of neighbor. In Lasallian terms, this principle is concretized when the spirit of faith is manifest in zeal for souls. To put it another way, Lasallian spirituality is by definition an apostolic spirituality, focused for the most part on the young, especially the most disadvantaged. This is the context in which Brother Miguel and Brother Scubilion lived out their vowed consecration to procure the glory of God as far as they were able and as God would require of them.

The extraordinary thing about the two of them is that each in his own way found creative outlets for his zeal that were both special and innovative. Brother Miguel spent more than thirty years preparing young Ecuadorian lads for their first communion, with enough intensity to affect significantly the rest of their lives. Brother Scubilion spent more than thirty years preparing the enslaved and then the enfranchised blacks on the island of Reunion for their baptism and communion, with equally long-lasting effect. Both were masterful catechists with a gift for bringing the dull formulas of the catechism to life. This they did as much by the force of their personal awareness of the God of whom they spoke as by the effectiveness and originality of their methods. For both of them, as for De La Salle, their catechesis aimed at making their pupils into disciples of Jesus Christ. Beyond the needs of young people, the two Brothers responded with apostolic alacrity, in a way that was rare in the Institute at that time, to the opportunities offered to them to minister to adults: Miguel by bringing a Christian perspective

to the scholarly milieu in which he moved, Scubilion in his catechesis for adult blacks and his ministry of assisting the pastor of Sainte-Marie.

The total effect of this extraordinary faith and zeal was such that the divine energy at its source became ever more visible for all to see. The people in Quito or Sainte-Marie would commonly say of Brother Miguel or Brother Scubilion, "There goes the saint." They immediately recognized that there was something about them that was special. People sought their advice, their prayers, and their help in distress. Despite their preference for meditation and obscurity, both were cheerful, characteristically smiling, and always available to others. They had the gift of winning hearts and bringing the wayward back to God. After their deaths, unusual favors were associated with their relics and attributed to their intercession. Rather than receding into oblivion as the years passed by, their memory was kept alive and became an active force in the lives of succeeding generations. No wonder, then, that Brother Miguel has been recently canonized and Brother Scubilion is well on his way to beatification.

All that remains for the readers who have come this far is to reflect on the meaning of Brother Scubilion for them. There can be no question, either for the Brothers or for their many students and friends, of reproducing the lifestyle or the apostolic work of a man who lived in a faraway land a century and a half ago. Yet there is much that can be learned from this Brother with such an odd-sounding name: self-mastery in devotion to the cross of Christ, how to make the best use of limited talents, indefatigable zeal to spread the message of the gospel, loving concern for the little people, respect for human dignity and freedom regardless of race, prayerfulness, and trust in God.

For those who have been associated with the De La Salle Brothers and have come to admire them, Brother Scubilion can be a telling example of the full scope of the Brothers' vocation. For the Brothers themselves, Brother Scubilion provides a yardstick by which to measure their own achievements, when they renew, as he did so often, their formula of vows: "Most Holy Trinity, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, with profound respect

before your infinite majesty, I consecrate myself entirely to you to procure your glory as far as I am able and as you will require of me. . . .”