

that the less of my own personal activity I put into the work, the better it progressed. The boarding school in particular flourished. People were coming to appreciate a system of education distinguished by its simplicity and by a spirit of piety in which the spirit of the world had no part. Soon the buildings on Rue du Regard were too small for the growing works. We had to think of building elsewhere. I was terrified at this necessity in view of the blunders I had already committed. I felt that I had neither the courage nor the resources to begin again.

1853

About this time, Father Mary ended his novitiate and his scholasticate. He came to Paris; he was just as poor as I was; but he had enough confidence to make up for my deficiencies; and this confidence could move mountains. Thanks to providential help which always came at the crucial moment, we were able to consider buying a building. The Oratorians bought our house on Rue du Regard for 150,000 francs. This enabled us to buy in our turn. Father Mary, who always went right ahead, found three neighbouring houses with a fairly large property on Notre Dame des Champs Street. We bought it and we were able to live much more easily a community life while the novitiate, the converts' workrooms and boarding school were well established, especially since we had a temporary chapel. My brother looked after the business of taking possession. I was very happy to have something to give him to do for at this time he was no longer a Jesuit. Here I must give an account of one of the most delicate events of my life. My brother's Superiors had sent him to Vaugirard College; his heart was at Sion. He hated the idea of teaching Latin rules to a class of small children, and from that time on, he was haunted by the idea that he should leave the Jesuits. On the other hand, he felt truly called to be associated with me in my ministry, persuaded that the Lord had called him in a special way to work for the conversion of the Jews. Perhaps I should have opposed this idea about which he spoke to me every day, but this was difficult for me since I secretly shared it. Like him, I believed that his conversion and vocation were for a special end, and that he could not follow his vocation if he remained a Jesuit. I am sure that he had only a temporary

vocation to the Jesuits so that his studies would be well-founded and that he would be well prepared for his ministry at Our Lady of Sion. In any case the community needed priestly direction and it was our duty to provide it. I had already admitted as my helpers several priests who seemed to me well disposed to work with me, but one after the other they left for reasons which seemed to me to be inadmissible. Faced with these inconstant people, I often found myself in an embarrassing situation. With all my heart I was working to found a modest priestly community which seemed to me to have indisputable advantages. But as the level of the community grew, the whole building seemed to crumble. Fortunately I did not become discouraged; I set to work again with new materials, followed by new disappointments. I placed all my hope in Father Mary. I believed that God destined him for the formation of the small community of the Priests of Sion. Every event seemed to consolidate this opinion; and yet I dared not give in to it, because I was afraid that if Father Mary left the Jesuits, he would be abandoning God's will for him. This question was so serious in my view that I did not want to resolve it alone. I submitted it to examination by several knowledgeable clergymen, first of all to Archbishop Sibour, Archbishop of Paris. All approved Father Mary's decision. However, even their ideas did not bring me peace; I knew that each of these prelates had a grudge against the Jesuits. Then, urged by my brother, I went to Rome to present the case. I left with a heart filled with anxiety, begging the Lord to cause me to drown rather than to allow a procedure which would be against His will. I could feel in advance what a painful surprise my news would be for the Jesuits who loved Father Mary with such a generous love. In reality, they were more upset than surprised. Father Rubillon, Assistant General, whom I first saw, could not deny that Father Mary's special vocation was a valid reason for him to leave the Company of Jesus. He told me to talk to the Superior General. The latter was deeply moved by my news because of the adverse effect that this might have in the Church. Then I was introduced into the presence of Pius IX who listened to me with indulgent kindness as I exposed my ideas. He said to me: "If it is God's will, let it be done!" For me this word was the definite answer; delivered from all my scruples, I wrote to Father Mary that his

freedom had been restored. This decision was received far less warmly in Paris than in Rome. They accused me of having initiated the move, whereas the truth is that if I could have prevented it, I would have done so. God knows that I would willingly have sacrificed my own advantage and my personal consolation to spare the Jesuits a sorrow for which they were so ill-prepared. I have never stopped loving and admiring the Jesuits since I have known them. How can one not love them when they love the Church so much! They have always been the butt of the animosity and persecution of the spirit of the world, for they are always among those to whom the Lord said: "You will be hated on my account." The Company bears the name of Jesus. This explains the hatred of which they are the object. I know that among some of its members, community solidarity can be carried too far and that sometimes they make the good of their order more important than the general good; at least this is what they are reproached with. But what community of human beings does not have some fault?

Whatever the case may be, I have always maintained good relations with them. But how I suffered when I had to let them believe that I had acted in an underhanded manner with them! Thank God, the event was cleared up and charity won the day.

But then there began for me a time of tribulation which lasted for several years.

1852

My brother came to live with me and put himself under my direction. But whether it was that my direction seemed less enlightened, less authoritarian than the one he had left, whether he was undergoing the shock of too sudden a change, he rarely asked my advice and he would not accept my remarks. How heavily my responsibility weighed on me at the view of the temptations facing a young priest who had no idea of the dangers which surrounded him! He did not know what precautions are recommended to priests who are engaged in the day-to-day ministry, and he seemed to me to be like a bird released from its cage which does not know how to use its wings and which, in its jerky

flight, bangs against every obstacle. His zeal was equal to every function, to every defeat, and like a river which has overflowed its banks, he put no limit on his activities. Fortunately he did not have the gift of eloquence which might have increased his presumption. But his burning words awoke passions and sometimes brought about humiliations. Certainly God permitted these failures to keep him on the watch and in humility.

Whatever the case may be, I saw that my brother would not provide the necessary element which I needed to discipline the Fathers of Our Lady of Sion. He himself seemed to see how awkward the situation was. He proposed that he should make a pilgrimage to the Holy Land, and I accepted this idea as an inspiration from heaven. Indeed it was an inspiration of the Blessed Virgin as the future would show.

However God's work continued to develop in the middle of all these crucifying experiences; religious vocations became more numerous when the Sionian tree was ready to be separated from its roots and branches.

It was Father Mary's preaching which gave birth to some of these vocations, including very precious ones. I only want to mention one, and this because of her happy influence on the community of Sion and on myself, and even then I will say little because it is to her that I am dictating these words and that there are favors which will be revealed only in heaven.

Yet I cannot be silent about the dear soul who bears so well the name of Marie Benedicta. I regard her as a priceless gift that the Blessed Virgin gave me; in her I have found the support of a fine intelligence and a heart filled with holiness. I dare say that her soul was united to mine to the point that the vow of Christ might be realized: that they may be one.

Thanks to this perfect harmony of our thoughts and feelings, I found in my daughter the co-operator that the Blessed Virgin had given me to carry out my functions. It was she who co-ordinated the materials of the Directory, and who placed the subjects of meditation in a form

that might be published under the title: "Gleanings from the Gospel." Heaven alone will tell us how much the Congregation owed to this beautiful soul.

I said that other beautiful souls came at this time to consecrate themselves to Our Lady of Sion. It would take too long to talk about each of them, but I cannot fail to mention my daughter Marie-Paul who, in God's view, was to become the right hand of the Superior General. She had been introduced to me by Mrs. Josson, wife of the president of the tribunal of Lille, about whom I shall give some details. Mrs. Josson and her husband had come looking for me at Boulogne-on-the-Sea where I was preaching a novena in preparation for the Assumption. She asked me to preach a sermon at Lille in favor of charity, and this gave me the opportunity to see her frequently and to come to appreciate the fervent desire of her soul. She was the president of several good works, among them a small group of mothers of families who prayed together for their families and children. This union of prayer aroused my sympathy and I could see in it the possibility of fruitful development. In fact, when a few years later, Mr. and Mrs. Josson came to live in Paris, the small society of Christian Mothers met periodically in the chapel of Our Lady of Sion. It was composed of many pious mothers and produced many fruits of consolation. I introduced it to Rome where it was very popular, so much so that Pius IX, always aware of what might be of advantage to the Church, was kind enough to raise the Association of Christian Mothers to the rank of Archconfraternity, fixing its headquarters in Paris in the chapel of Our Lady of Sion.

Since then the filiations with this Mother confraternity have spread throughout almost all the countries of the world; they help to re-awaken the piety of Christian families and at the same time to propagate the name of Our Lady of Sion.

Mrs. Josson became a widow, and she felt irresistibly drawn to the religious life; she generously entered the novitiate in spite of her advanced age. After making profession, she was to become President of the Archconfraternity of Christian Mothers, a function which she fulfilled with a great deal of skill.

While Providence increased the personnel and the resources of the community, it worked at increasing the works of Sion. It is impossible not to admire the work of God in the founding of Grandbourg. One day I had a visit from Mr. Alexis Revenaz, one of the functionaries of the Imperial Marines. I had never seen him and I did not know him at all. He was a respectable man of the world, whose language showed little knowledge of religion, but one could see behind this language an upright heart, honest and loyal. He inspired me with confidence immediately. On my table he opened out a huge paper showing the plan of one of his huge estates. On seeing this, I thought he was coming to propose that I buy it and I told him that the Congregation of Our Lady of Sion was not rich enough to buy a country house. "I'm not offering you a sale but a gift," he answered me. Good fortune of this kind seemed so rare to me, especially today, that I dared to ask for explanations from this mysterious benefactor. He answered me quite simply that he felt driven to found a charitable work on one of his properties, in memory of his worthy wife who had just died, and for this purpose, he intended to give his Grandbourg property to a teaching community which seemed to offer signs of stability. He knew no Congregation of this kind, and after having sought information at the Chancery Office, he was coming to face Our Lady of Sion in all simplicity. We went to visit the Grandbourg estate, and I confess that I was overwhelmed at the sight of the huge orchard and the immense country park. Mr. Revenaz gave us the keys and later regularized the whole process of this fine gift. We soon took possession of it, establishing there the beginnings of a boarding school and a workshop. These were the admirable beginnings of a new colony of Sion which since that time has continued to grow.

## NOTES

- 1 — Some sentences and expressions in the *Memoirs* which convey a kind of instinctive and hereditary repudiation of Jewish and Protestant values have been suppressed. They reflect the Catholic thinking of the last century and might be unnecessarily offensive to readers of today. The complete unaltered text in the Archives is at the disposal of the Congregation.
- 2 — Neither the dates given in the headings nor the division into sections appear in the original text.
- 3 — Father Theodore's statements about his studies are not to be taken seriously. In reality he was highly gifted. He quickly acquired and assimilated knowledge which ordinarily involved more prolonged and intensive study for most people.
- 4 — The aversion was not to Judaism as such, but to what Theodore knew about it. The entire context indicates that he belonged to an assimilated environment, and that his lack of knowledge prevented him from determining the religious value of rabbinical Judaism (cf. *Introd.*).
- 5 — "wretched people". . . According to the context, Father Theodore has in mind misery and ignorance, not moral corruption. The equality of rights obtained during the Revolution and for which Naftali Cerfbeer had worked effectively, had made it possible for some families to acquire culture, wealth and important positions. They constituted, however, a very tiny minority. The poor Jews continued to live in a type of crowded ghetto where they suffered the consequences of extreme poverty: crowded unsanitary lodgings and ignorance.
- 6 — Father Theodore was baptized in 1827; he sought advice from Miss Humann about this marriage in 1825 (or the beginning of 1826 at the latest) and could not therefore have been more than 23 years old.
- 7 — Father Theodore, happy that he had escaped from these "snares", pejoratively describes the "matchmaker" or "shadken", who was often a colourful character, but very useful to the Jews in making it possible for them to marry among their own.
- 8 — "literal" — it seems this word should be understood in the sense of "teaching from a text".

- 9 — Father Theodore shared the concise views of Catholic thinking of his time when there was no question of ecumenism and when the teaching of history was too often characterized by an apologetic concern rather than by scientific precision.
- 10 — It is upon these promises — upon the Word of God, consequently — that Father Theodore's vocation rests; he felt himself called "to work for the fulfillment of the Promises". But how? First of all by prayer: "it is fervent and persevering prayer which will attract grace from heaven". These are Father Marie's words (page 182 in the original French text); but Father Theodore was to repeat them in one form or another throughout his life. Father Marie recommended that his brother provide a Christian education to Israelite children brought to him by their parents. The great poverty of some Jewish families and the wave of dejudaization which followed in the wake of emancipation explains why this work was undertaken. Soon, however, its justification ceased to exist. It then took another form and children from all countries and all religions, were readily accepted (cf. *Introd.* p. 72 in the original French text).

As far as adult baptism was concerned, Father Theodore instructed and introduced into the Church — whether they were Jews, Protestants or unbelievers — only those who came to him. He did not "proselytize" and always taught respect for people's conscience. When the movement into the Church, which accompanied his and Father Marie's conversion, slackened, he insisted more than ever that it is only prayer with "love which wins souls".