CHAPTER TWO

FROM THE DEATH OF THE FOUNDER TO THE FRENCH REVOLUTION, 1709-1802

1. *The Immediate Successors*

Bio. 17

After the death of Father des Places, his associates chose as their Superior a young man of twenty-three, Father James Garnier. Unfortunately, the burdens of his office, coupled with the rigors of the severe winter of 1709, proved too much for him. He died in March 1710, leaving the nascent Society orphaned for the second time within six months. Providence then came forward with a priest who was destined to rule the Congregation and its works for the next fifty-three years.

Bio. 20 ff.

Father Louis Bouic (1684-1763) must have been a remarkable young man. He had entered the seminary as a deacon only four months before the assembled members of the Congregation elected him to the superiorship. In their triennial inquiry whether a new Superior ought to be elected, his confreres no less than seventeen times declared themselves satisfied with his rule. Such talents for government and so long an incumbency gave him an opportunity to consolidate the young society firmly and to build up its defenses against a variety of hostile forces that soon began to threaten its very existence.

2. *Continuing Relations with St. Louis de Montfort*

Once the Seminary of the Holy Ghost was formally established on Pentecost Sunday, 1703, St. Louis left Paris and plunged into his own apostolic activities. His first idea of organizing retreats and missions had evolved into the more durable plan of founding a congregation for this specific purpose. Therefore, in June 1713, he wrote a Rule for his new religious society, which he called the Society of Mary. This institute was not to engage in any teaching activities; instead, he insisted that it devote itself exclusively to mission-work and preaching. Since the recruitment of vocations was to be taken care of by his agreement with Father des Places, he inserted the following provision into the Rule:
This society accepts only priests who have been trained in seminaries. Therefore, clerics in the lower orders are excluded until they are ordained. However, there is a seminary in Paris [that of the Holy Ghost] in which young clerics who have a vocation for the missions are prepared for admission by study and virtue.

Although the exact nature of the Saint’s agreement with Father des Places is not known, it is interesting to see that de Montfort considered the Seminary of the Holy Ghost as a house of his own society. He explicitly refers to it in his Rule as one of the two houses the Society may have as its own:

The Society may not possess more than two houses in the Kingdom [of France]: the first in Paris, to train clerics in the apostolic spirit; the other outside Paris in a province, where those who are unable to work can go for a rest.¹

Shortly after writing his Rule, St. Louis went to Paris “to remind his friend’s successors about the agreement and to make certain that this training school for priests . . . would really function as the seminary of his Society of Mary.” There was ample reason for this reminder. Ten years had elapsed since he had made his agreement with Father des Places and the Saint had not yet received any of the promised recruits for his work. Now that his own plans had assumed definite form, he wanted “to enter into a serious, carefully planned, and definite convention with the growing community of the Holy Ghost” regarding the recruitment of members for his Society of Mary.

As soon as he arrived in Paris, de Montfort must have realized at once that the Holy Ghost Seminary was now leading a life of its own. Although it was one of the few places where they received him with a sincere display of respect and friendship, he saw that he could no longer consider this institution as a house of his own Society. However, there was still no reason why the Seminary should not play the role he had assigned to it in his Rule—viz., the education of aspirant priests who would join him after their ordination. Father Bouic and the other directors were quite willing “to

¹In 1713 St. Louis had at his disposal a house in the country which he wanted to use as a rest home for the old and sick members of his new society. Historians agree that the house in Paris can be no other than the Seminary of the Holy Ghost.
1° on ne reçoit en cette compagnie
que les prêtres désirant dans
Les séminaires, ainsi que les ecclésiastiques
des ordres inférieurs en sont exclus.
Jusqu'à ce qu'ils aient reçu la sacre.
Il y avait donc à Paris un séminaire
ou les jeunes ecclésiastiques qui assistaient
aux missions de la compagnie, se dispo-
sent pour la science et l'ecclésiastique.
entrer.

3° la compagnie n'a et ne peut avoir en
propre que deux maisons dans le
royaume; la première à Paris pour
former des ecclésiastiques à la proche
l'asile; et la seconde de plain en une province,
de France pour se mêler à son
être du combattant pour affiner ses forts
D'abord après la retraite et la pêche répandant...

Father Louis Bouic, third Superior General of the Congregation of the Holy Ghost (1710-1763).
aid him efficiently by training aspirants capable of supporting and continuing the good work” of the Society of Mary. Accordingly, a new agreement was drawn up between the Saint and the Spiritans: they were to operate independently, but would train, free of charge, candidates who desired to enter his Society, thereby eliminating the need of special Montfortist seminaries. To make his community more attractive to such aspirants and to permanently seal the covenant, St. Louis went so far as to change the name of his Society to that of the Holy Ghost. Accordingly, after his return from Paris, he began to refer to his Society in this fashion and signed official papers as “Louis-Mary de Montfort Grignion, priest-missionary of the Society of the Holy Ghost.”

This new agreement was considerably more productive. The Saint’s first associate, Father Vatel, came to him from Holy Ghost Seminary, and others, such as Fathers Thomas, Heydan, Le Vallois and Besnard followed later. Father Thomas was one of the directors of the Seminary and therefore a Holy Ghost Father in the strict sense of the term. It looks as though he was about to assume an important role among the Montfortists, for in 1723 he officially dedicated the Motherhouse of St. Louis’ Society to the Holy Ghost. Shortly after, however, he was called back to Paris. Father Bouic could not carry on without him. It was Father Besnard who later became the successor of St. Louis as Superior General of the Society. Then even the saintly Father Caris, bursar of Holy Ghost Seminary, very nearly joined St. Louis. Father Bouic found it necessary to detain him at the very moment when he was bidding his Seminary confreres farewell just prior to his departure.

During the course of the nineteenth century, however, the Holy Ghost Fathers began to direct all the aspirants in their Seminary

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2Devotion to the Holy Ghost was very popular in those days among the faithful of Brittany. Three religious foundations of the time were dedicated to Him: Poullart des Places’ Congregation, St. Louis de Montfort’s Society, and the Sisters of the Holy Ghost founded by Father John Leudeger (1649-1722). In addition, there was in Brittany a Holy Ghost Missionary Band led at that time by Father Francis Le Grand, S.J. Cf. W. M. Stadelman, C.S.Sp., Glories of the Holy Ghost, Techy, Ill., 1919 pp. 241 ff.

3This close association between the two societies explains why historians occasionally are deceived by the similarity of titles and erroneously present St. Louis de Montfort as the founder of the Holy Ghost Fathers. On the other hand, the Jansenists inveighed against the Company of Mary which, they said, had “gone underground” in the Holy Ghost Society because it could not obtain separate legal recognition.
Vo. 247 to the missions. The Society of St. Louis, therefore, had to modify its Founder's text of the Rule in order to assure the recruitment of members. As amended in 1872 it now reads:

This society accepts not only priests who have been trained in seminaries, but also young men who have finished only the classes preparatory to theology. As a source of vocations, this scholasticate replaces the Seminary of the Holy Ghost.

It was also during the nineteenth century that the Society of St. Louis began to call itself again the Society of Mary, as the Saint had called it before his visit to the Holy Ghost Fathers in 1713.

Although relations between the Holy Ghost Fathers and the Society of Mary are no longer as intimate as they were in the eighteenth century, the two congregations have always continued to regard each other as close relatives, united by the bonds of common origin, lengthy association, and cordial affection.

3. The Struggle for Legal Recognition

Like most other religious institutes in the Church, the Holy Ghost Society began its existence as a diocesan foundation under the sole authority of the local bishop. In this case it was the Archbishop of Paris, Cardinal de Noailles, who gave Father des Places permission to start his work. Soon, however, opposition began to arise. The powerful Sorbonne felt slighted by the fact that, despite all its pressure, Claude's students avoided its courses as a matter of principle. The Gallicanists were irked by the Seminary's inviolable attachment to the prerogatives of the Holy See. The Jansenists were furious because they could not lay hold on the minds of these future priests who carefully avoided every contaminated source of doctrine. These enemies soon succeeded in turning even Cardinal de Noailles against the work he had previously blessed. To make matters worse, it was not long before the Parliament of France joined the ranks of these formidable opponents.

A legacy left to the Seminary provided them with a welcome opportunity for an all-out attack. In 1723, a pious priest, Father Charles Le Baigue, bequeathed 44,000 livres to the young foundation on condition that the Spiritans build their own seminary in the parish of St. Medard. As often happens in such cases, Father LeBaigue's nephews and nieces were chagrined to see so much money going to charity. Claiming that the Fathers "had circumvented the holy piety of their deceased relative by their clever mach-
institutions," they appealed to the courts to obtain an annulment of the legacy. The Sorbonne joined forces with them and contended that Holy Ghost Seminary, by refusing to take its degrees, was violating the University’s established rights. Even the pastor of St. Medard entered the fray to voice his fears that soon all benefices within his parish would be taken over by the Seminary.

Legal grounds for the annulment of the legacy were soon found: a royal edict of 1666 prohibited the foundation of any college, monastery, or community without previous royal permission. Any contravention of this edict deprived such a college, monastery, or community of all legal rights and even of the hope of ever being legally recognized. It was argued, therefore, that the Holy Ghost Society should not only be deprived of the legacy; it did not even have the right to exist.

Luckily, the royal edict had made an exception for seminaries, which, under episcopal authority, could be founded without previous permission from the King, and it looked as though this might save Father des Places' foundation. Meanwhile, however, Cardinal de Noailles, the Archbishop of Paris, had fallen under the evil influence of his Jansenistic surroundings and was induced to object to the recognition of Holy Ghost Seminary on the pretext that his Archdiocese was well provided with seminaries and had no need of this new one dedicated to the Holy Ghost.

* N. D. 3 ff.

Fortunately, the Society had powerful protectors also, and they succeeded in obtaining from the King not only the necessary papers for local recognition, but even an annual royal grant of six hundred livres and the validation of any possible irregularities in the legacy of Father Le Baigne. In spite of all this, the Jansenists prevailed on Parliament to voice strong opposition to the King's decision. Repeatedly, government lawyers found new legal obstacles to bar the registration of the royal document and thus render it ineffective. No less than four times the King had to issue new papers before all avenues of escape were blocked. He even went so far as to revoke the edict of 1666 to the extent that such a move was necessary to save the Holy Ghost Fathers and their seminary. The struggle lasted eleven years, but in the end the Congregation emerged victoriously, thanks especially to the protection of Cardinal de Fleury, the King's Minister of State. In 1734, legal recognition was finally granted, although the legacy which had occasioned all the trouble was lost somewhere along the way.
The protracted battle had a beneficial side-effect inasmuch as it compelled the Spiritans to complete the Rule which had been left unfinished by Father des Places. After the death of Cardinal de Noailles, this Rule was presented to the new Archbishop of Paris, Charles de Vintimille, and it was he who granted in writing the first official ecclesiastical approbation of the Society (1734). In the finished version of the Rule, Father Bouic made one significant addition to the text. Among the specific aims of the Society, he listed the preparation of students for foreign missionary work and in this brief item we find the first clear indication of that strong apostolic trend which was to assume such an ever-increasing importance in the history of des Places’ foundation.

4. Growth of the Society

Although Kings and Cardinals, Bishops and nobles made frequent gifts to the seminary, most of the support for its hundred seminarians came from the voluntary contributions of the ordinary faithful. It was not always easy to find the necessary funds, especially at the beginning. The first procurator or bursar, saintly Father Peter Caris (1684-1757), who was known throughout Paris as “the poor priest,” often had anxious moments trying to make ends meet. In general, however, he must have been an excellent provider, for under his stewardship the financial situation of the young Spiritan community improved sufficiently to make it possible for him to acquire the necessary land and to build on it a permanent home for his seminarians. Construction began in 1732 on a sizable plot facing on what is now the Rue Lhomond. Two years later the new seminary was dedicated. It was a simple but beautiful building, one of the best in Paris at that time. To this

4The annals of the Congregation relate that on one occasion he returned home empty-handed when there was neither food in the house nor further credit at the butcher’s and the baker’s. Undaunted, the community went to the refectory, recited prayers before and after meals, and then repaired to the chapel for the customary adoration of the Blessed Sacrament. They were still there when an unknown source delivered such an abundance of food at the door that the meal which followed was the best they ever had. That same day enough money was received to pay outstanding meat and grocery bills.

An interesting anecdote about Father Caris tells us that one day, as he was making his rounds in Paris, he was drenched by the foul contents of a pail emptied from a second-story window. As the frightened householder offered his abject apologies, he was so struck by the saintly humility of this priest who had taken no offense whatsoever that he made a large contribution to the Seminary.
From the Death of the Founder to the French Revolution  

Bio. 33 day it still serves as the Motherhouse of the Congregation. Most likely, it was at this time also that the students began to take courses at home and ceased to go to the Jesuits for all their classes.

*N. D. 13 A few years earlier, in 1729, a small property had been acquired at Gentilly and this served as a combined farm and summer retreat. In 1752 Bishop Peter Dosquet of Quebec gave the Society another property near Paris at Sarcelles, in gratitude for the services the Seminary had rendered to the Church in Canada.

*N. D. 18 A third property, called la Chyperie, near Orleans, was donated to the Society in 1777. It soon became the favorite retreat of the Directors of the Seminary.

Fl. 404 Far more important than these material acquisitions, however, was the fact that in 1736 the bishop of Meaux, Cardinal de Bissy, confided his diocesan senior seminary and seminary-college to the Society. Under the capable direction of Father James Lars (1705-1782) the previously debt-ridden institutions saw their dilapidated structures replaced by beautiful buildings, their obligations paid, and their students increasing in numbers and quality. The future priests trained in them were imbued by the new directors with that same love for humble and neglected positions in the diocese which had become the hallmark of Holy Ghost Seminary in Paris. The senior seminary remained under the direction of the Spiritans till 1807, when their Congregation, dispersed by the French Revolution, was no longer able to provide personnel for it. The example of Cardinal de Bissy was followed in 1737 by the Bishop of Verdun, who offered his seminary to the Congregation in an effort to purify it of Jansenism. The acceptance of this offer once more brought the Holy Ghost Fathers into conflict with the adherents of that heresy.

5. Renewed Struggle Against the Jansenists

Fl. 434 ff. As we have seen before, from the very beginning the Holy Ghost Society had been the object of the Jansenists' hatred. From crude jokes and deprecating remarks about its graduates they had proceeded to an all-out attack in their efforts to crush the Society and prevent its Seminary from gaining legal recognition. One can easily imagine how infuriated they must have been in 1737 when,

*N. D. 18

\[5\text{In 1777 another seminary was accepted in Corsica, but extant records do not show that personnel was actually sent to this institution.}\]
at the end of that long drawn-out litigation, the seminary of Verdun, then a stronghold of Jansenism, was confided to the Society they so thoroughly detested. Not a single one of the priests trained in Holy Ghost Seminary had ever gone over to the Jansenists, and now these people were invited to take over one of the bulwarks of Jansenism! Father Bouic entrusted this delicate mission to a capable Director, Father Peter Thomas, who was accompanied by several professors, notably Father Francis Becquet, one of his best theologians.

The Jansenists had prepared a hot reception for them. Insults, insults, and accusations rained down on them from all sides. Soon the whole diocese became involved in a controversy whose climax was reached in 1741 when two anonymous pamphlets were published under the title Lettres à M. Becquet (Letters to Father Becquet). They were Jansenist replies to a number of theological theses that Father Becquet had published in defense of the Catholic view. To give the reader an idea of the venomous tone of these pamphlets, let us quote a few sentences that illustrate the acrimony of the controversy:

Whoever mentions the name of Placist [i.e., Spiritan] refers to something even worse than a Jesuit, at least if that is possible. If the cheeks of a Placist could blush, yours should be red with shame . . .

You deserve to have the Bishop shut you up forever and send you back to wallow in the gutters of Clermont College whence you have come forth to breathe over us all the pestiferous and horrid odors that exude from this source.

The Bishop of Verdun sharply condemned the pamphlets in a pastoral letter of 1744, and ordered all the priests of his diocese to send him in writing statements that they agreed with this condemnation. Then, since Father Jolly was known to have had a hand in the publication, he was promptly relieved of his parish.

If the Bishop thought that his action would settle the affair, he was much mistaken. In short order the whole of Lorraine was in an uproar, some siding with Father Becquet and the Bishop, others supporting the Jansenists. Soon the Royal Courts of Paris and

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6Bishop de Bethune of Verdun (+1720) and Father Habert, Vicar General under Bishop de Bethune, were among the leaders of the Jansenistic movement in France. Their evil example had corrupted many of the secular and regular clergy. For example, the Canons Regular, who directed the seminary, had made it a hot-bed of Jansenism.
Nancy were drawn into the controversy. From his residence at Nancy, Stanislaus, King of Poland and Lorraine, appointed a parliamentary commission to find out who had dared to print these Letters without legal permission. Before long, the police began to make wholesale arrests of suspects, print shops were closed, and a number of pastors were turned out of their parishes. In Pont-à-Mousson alone, where the Letters had been secretly printed, approximately thirty persons were condemned to heavy fines and imprisonment. Then, when influential Jansenists succeeded in having these convictions declared illegal, the parliamentary commission established a special court of justice from which there was no further appeal. In 1746 this court sentenced Father Jolly to a sharp reprimand, three years in prison, and a fine. Another pastor lost his parish. The printer was fined, publicly reprimanded "with his head uncovered and on his knees," and deprived of his licence. King Stanislaus then closed this particular episode with a royal edict whereby anyone found with the Letters in his possession was to be punished by a fine of five hundred livres. Shortly after, Rome placed the Letters on the Index of Forbidden Books (1746), where they have remained till this day.

Although these decisions of the supreme authorities of Church and State terminated the struggle to the advantage of the Spiritans, the influence of the Jansenists remained strong in Verdun—too strong for a peaceful and effective administration of the seminary. For this reason the Congregation regretfully informed the Bishop of its decision to withdraw its personnel to Paris in 1747.

Back in Paris, in the more academic milieu of the Sorbonne, Father Becquet continued his battle against the Jansenists for fifteen more years until at last, in 1763, he was elected to assume the leadership of the Congregation. Since he was better trained in theological controversy than in business matters, he soon encountered financial difficulties when he undertook to complete the seminary by the addition of a large chapel and some new wings. In fact, things became so serious that there was even danger of a forced sale. Finally, he was rescued by the Archbishop of Paris, who persuaded the authorities to assign to the Seminary part of the income derived from certain defunct monasteries of the Celestines.

Father Becquet's superiorship is important for two reasons: for the first time in the history of the Congregation territories were
officially entrusted to its spiritual care and, for the first time also, members of the Congregation itself departed for the foreign missions.

6. First Missions Entrusted to the Congregation

In 1763, King Louis XV of France decided to replace all religious orders in the American French colonies by secular priests. This sweeping resolution caused Father Peter de la Rue, the Chaplain General of the Colonies, to send a long memorandum to the Court advising the King to entrust these missions to the Spiritans. In support of his recommendation, he said:

Only the Holy Ghost Seminary is capable of furnishing as many subjects as will be necessary, both in number and quality, because of the kind of training that is given in their house.

Acting in accord with this advice, therefore, the Propaganda confided to the Congregation its first territory: the tiny islands of St. Pierre et Miquelon, off the coast of Newfoundland.

By the treaty of Paris in 1763, France had been forced to cede Canada to the British and these little islands were all that remained of its former vast possessions in North America. At the request of the King of France, Rome withdrew them from the jurisdiction of the Bishop of Quebec and in 1766 erected them into an Apostolic Prefecture, which it entrusted to the Congregation—an arrangement which has continued to this day. At about the same time, the suppression of the Jesuits in France had deprived French Guiana in South America of its missionaries. After several attempts to obtain good priests had failed, this territory also was entrusted to the Spiritans, who sent their first missionaries into this distant French possession in 1775. A few years later, African Senegal likewise came under the spiritual care of the Congregation.

Slowly its Superior General—a title assumed by Father Becquet in 1766—took over the function, formerly exercised by the Chaplain General of France, of being the intermediary between the French Government and the Propaganda in religious matters pertaining to French colonies.

It was the new responsibility for Guiana in particular that made Father Becquet examine more closely the way in which Spiritans were henceforth to handle missions entrusted to their
care. Although extant records do not treat the matter very clearly, this much appears certain: it was decided that from then on membership in the Congregation would no longer be limited to the professors of its seminaries and colleges; it would now be open to missionaries as well. Moreover, with the aid of the Government, a special retirement fund was created to take care of these men when sickness or old age would force them to return to France.

Bio. 97 ff.

The first departure under this new modus agendi took place in 1778, when a member of the Congregation, Father Dominic de Glicourt was sent to French Guiana to become its Prefect Apostolic. He was accompanied by Father James Bertout, the future restorer of the Congregation after the French Revolution. When their vessel was shipwrecked off the coast of Africa, both priests were among the seventeen survivors of the disaster. Captured subsequently by Moorish bandits, they were dragged on a two-month journey through the desert to the settlement of St. Louis in Senegal.

Their Moorish captors hoped to get a sizable ransom for the two priests, but the colony had been captured by the English twenty years before and the British governor was less than enthusiastic about the prospect of spending huge sums of money to rescue dangerous Frenchmen. However, under the pressure of European residents in the town, he finally agreed to buy their freedom after the pirates had considerably lowered their demands. Great was the rejoicing among the numerous Catholics of St. Louis who, since the capture of Senegal by the British, had been deprived of the services of a priest and were living their faith as best as they could under the direction of a layman.

But the governor felt differently about the situation. Fearing a return of French influence, he refused the priests permission to exercise any pastoral functions and finally went so far as to forbid them to celebrate Mass. Within six days of their arrival, he had them shipped to Gorée on a British vessel. Short as their stay in Senegal had been, however, the Fathers had seen and heard enough to analyze the situation: the colonists wanted desperately to oust the British; they earnestly desired freedom to exercise their religion; and there was only a small garrison of sixty men to maintain British rule.
Bio. 101 f. In Gorée the two priests were transferred to an English vessel sailing for London. Buffeted by storms, the ship twice came near to being wrecked. It took nine weeks to reach the Channel. Then, just before entering the Thames, it was overtaken and captured by a daring French privateer, who took all the passengers and crew to Le Havre as prisoners of war. Freed at last when their identity was established, the two Spiritans returned to Paris where they related their adventures to the Minister of the Navy, who was then in charge of the colonies. The Minister displayed more than usually keen interest in their description of the situation at St. Louis. He recommended that they hold themselves in readiness for a new departure—so he said—to Guiana.

Bio. 103 ff. A month later sailing orders arrived. By that time, however, Father Bertout was ill and had to be replaced by another member of the Congregation, Father Seveno. Arriving at Lorient, their port of embarcation, they saw that a squadron of sixteen warships was being readied to accompany them. Evidently, their voyage was not going to be a simple crossing of the Atlantic to South America as they had assumed when they set out. It was not till they were off the coast of Africa that the commander revealed the intentions of the Government: the fleet was to capture Senegal, as well as all other British establishments on the West Coast of Africa. Father de Glicourt was presented with written orders from the King to stay in Senegal after the conquest and look after the spiritual needs of the population. Father Seveno, as far as we know, continued on to Guiana.

After the British Governor recognized the futility of resistance and ran up the white flag of unconditional surrender, the Catholics of St. Louis received Father de Glicourt with delirious demonstrations of joy. Shortly afterward, the Propaganda named Father de Glicourt Prefect Apostolic of Senegal and everything pointed to a peaceful beginning. Then France sent out a new Governor who was radically anticlerical. When Father de Glicourt saw his Vicar General jailed and learned that he himself was to share the same fate, he secretly embarked for Paris in 1782 and promptly obtained the recall of the obnoxious Governor.

Father de Glicourt himself did not return to Africa. His post was filled by Father Costes who with Father Chevalier established missions at Albreda and Joal. Although both of these efforts were blessed with much success, Father Costes succumbed to the ravages
of the climate in 1784 and his companion followed him to the grave shortly thereafter. It was not till the middle of the nineteenth century that a member of the Congregation would return to these regions which subsequently were to assume such a central position in the work of the Holy Ghost Fathers.

This first excursion of members into the foreign missionary field was soon followed by similar apostolic endeavors. Available records do not indicate with any degree of accuracy how many members of the Congregation left France to engage in apostolic work, but we do know that between 1778 and 1792 Guiana alone was blessed by the labors of Fathers Seveno, Lanoe, Legrand, Duhamel, Moranville, Hérénd and Hochard.

7. The French Revolution

In 1788, on the eve of the Revolution, Father John Duflos (1726-1805) became Superior General. He was the son of a wealthy family and thus could not normally have entered Holy Ghost Seminary. But the young man found an ingenious solution: by abandoning his income in favor of the Seminary, he made himself unable to pay for his board and room and thereby found a justifiable title to admission. He was accepted as a member of the Congregation in 1750. Soon after, he became professor of moral theology, a function which he fulfilled quite ably for the next thirty years.

Father Duflos barely had time to pay the last debts contracted by Father Becquet when, in 1789, the National Assembly put all ecclesiastical goods at the disposal of the nation and compelled him to submit a detailed inventory of all the Congregation's assets. Outright suppression followed on August 10, 1792, and the possessions of the Congregation were put up for sale. Nine days later a mob of several thousand armed revolutionaries descended on the peaceful neighborhood of the seminary. Thirty-two priests of the Eudists, who lived close by, were arrested and faced the firing-squad and guillotine shortly thereafter. Part of the mob that captured them next turned its attention to the Seminary and invaded it by scaling the walls. Apparently the strenuous climb had made them thirsty, for once inside they immediately headed for the wine cellar. Quickly decapitating the bottles and dispatching their contents, these wild insurgents celebrated the great Revolution with gleeful savagery. Meanwhile, the community and the few remain-
ing seminarians had gathered upstairs expecting the worst. They sorrowfully bade each other farewell with “Till we meet again in eternity,” and then proceeded to ready their souls for the last moment.

Providentially, however, the wine was strong and heady. It made the mob forget the objects of its vengeance. One by one these poor besotted maniacs directed their uncertain steps to the front door and sought to recover their wits in the fresh air outside. The escape had been close. It was repeated two weeks later when the wholesale murder of priests all over Paris again left the Spiritans untouched. However, because no one could reasonably hope for a continuation of such good fortune, the members of the Society decided to disperse in civilian clothes and seek shelter individually. Some fled to Switzerland, others to Italy and England, and still others courageously went into hiding in the neighborhood.

In 1793 the Government first leased out and then sold the seminary. Part of it saw service as a wall-paper factory and the remainder was sublet as “rooms for rent.” Before long these quarters were occupied by disguised nuns from confiscated convents. Even a number of Holy Ghost Fathers quietly rented back their old rooms and stayed there unknown throughout the Terror. However, in 1797, when the tide of persecution rose to new heights of severity, they thought it more prudent to seek refuge elsewhere. Only one priest was left behind, and he concealed himself in the spacious library. This lonely figure out of the past never left his hiding place except to hold services in the seminary chapel, which somehow had escaped destruction and which now was used again, first in secret and then more and more openly, for religious worship.

In Meaux, the Government had appointed a “constitutional” bishop, who bitterly complained to the civil authorities that the Holy Ghost Fathers in the seminary there refused to recognize his authority. Immediately things began to happen. Plundered by revolutionary mobs, the Spiritan College and Seminary of Meaux had already been closed in 1792. Of the seven Holy Ghost Fathers assigned to it, four returned to Paris, while the others stayed behind to exercise their sacred ministry. One of them, Father de Glicourt, the former Prefect Apostolic of Senegal, was arrested in 1795. Although subsequently released, he suffered imprisonment again in 1799 and was later condemned to deportation. The fall of the Directory, which occurred later that same year, found him in the
fortress of Oléron, and he was then promptly released. A similar fate befell Father Thomas Rupalet (1718-1799), the superior of the Seminary-College. He was arrested in 1797 after his return from Paris and only released from prison to die in a nearby hospital. His post remained unfilled until, after the signing of the Concordat in 1802, Father de Glicourt was appointed Superior and charged with the task of re-establishing the seminary.

Throughout these harrowing years of revolution and persecution, the Society was buoyed up by one great consolation. Although its possessions had been confiscated, its students were dispersed, most of its members suffered exile or imprisonment, and its very existence before the law had vanished, not a single Holy Ghost Father had followed the easy path of compromise which led other priests to take the schismatic oath imposed on the clergy by the Revolutionary Government.

From its foundation in 1703 until the Revolution drew a bloody veil over its activities, the Congregation had educated and trained about 1600 priests in its Parisian seminary alone. Throughout France and far beyond its borders, Spiritans were known for their unshakable adherence to the Holy See, their purity of doctrine, and the careful way in which they trained students in the duties and virtues of the priestly life. It should not come as a surprise, therefore, when the documents of history show that, although in principle its students were prepared for the humblest functions in the Church, many of them were entrusted with highly responsible positions in the dioceses and missions where they served. A number of them were raised to the episcopal dignity, while countless others became professors at various seminaries where they further propagated the ideals which the Congregation had instilled in them.

Although the priests issuing from Holy Ghost Seminary were not ipso facto members of the Congregation itself, they were known throughout the world as "Spiritans," which is the familiar equivalent of "Holy Ghost Fathers." They were proud of this title, and the Congregation has every reason to be proud of them. To omit their work entirely from the history of the Holy Ghost Fathers would be almost as unreasonable as to limit the history of the Foreign Mission Society of Paris to the local events of its Parisian Seminary and ignore entirely the labors of its priests in the Far East.