CHAPTER THREE

A GLANCE AT THE MISSIONARY LABORS OF THE HOLY GHOST FATHERS IN THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY

1. Fields of Labor

At the end of their studies, priests trained in the Holy Ghost Seminary were perfectly free to choose the diocese or mission in which they wished to work or, if they preferred, to join a religious order. At the beginning especially, many placed themselves at the disposal of bishops in France and thus became members of the diocesan clergy. In fact, the French bishops soon came to regard Holy Ghost Seminary as an interdiocesan institution to which all of them could appeal for men.

Of those who entered religious orders, a notable proportion went to the Society of St. Louis de Montfort. A great number also felt the call of the orient and set off for the Far East as missionaries under the auspices of the Foreign Missions of Paris. This additional source of personnel was a particularly welcome blessing for the Foreign Missions Society because that organization was just then experiencing a severe shortage of priests.

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Far East. The number of Spiritans\(^1\) who went to China and other Far Eastern countries must have been considerable if we

\(^1\)Before 1848, the following meanings of the term “Spiritan” or Holy Ghost Father may be distinguished:

1. Any priest trained in Holy Ghost Seminary.
2. Any foreign missionary trained in Holy Ghost Seminary, whether directly presented by the Seminary to his Ecclesiastical Superior or through the Foreign Missions of Paris.
3. A foreign missionary trained in Holy Ghost Seminary and directly presented by it to his Ecclesiastical Superior.
4. Foreign missionaries associated as members of the Congregation.
5. Directors of Holy Ghost Seminary.
7. Members of the First Order (cf. ibid.)

In addition, the term was sometimes usurped without right by priests working in missions entrusted to the Congregation but having no special connection with Holy Ghost Seminary. In 1848 the term became reserved exclusively for members of the Congregation. In this chapter we use it in its broad eighteenth century sense as applicable to categories two, three and four.

MS. Rath, Far East. The number of Spiritans\(^1\) who went to China and other Far Eastern countries must have been considerable if we
may judge by the statistics on those who were appointed Vicars Apostolic. In Cambodia, Cochin China, the Spiritan Bishop William Piguel succeeded his confreere Bishop Edmund Bennetat. Both became confessors of the Faith for, after suffering prison and persecution, they died in exile. In 1746, Father Louis Devaux became Coadjutor with the right of succession of the Bishop of West Tonkin. He too went through life victimized by bitter persecution. Father John Maigrot, who had gone to China in 1740, was appointed Vicar Apostolic of Szechwan thirteen years later. The documents arrived too late, however, for by then the intrepid priest had already died. In 1764 the Holy See named Father Peter Kerhervé Vicar Apostolic of the same mission, but this Spiritan returned the papal bulls saying that Father Andrew Lee, a Chinese priest, would be more suitable. He died two years later. Father Urban Lefevre, who also became a Vicar Apostolic in China, returned to France after thirteen years of untold sufferings and died a martyr’s death in September 1789, a victim of the French Revolution. The most important of all Spiritan bishops in the Far East, however, was undoubtedly Bishop Francis Pottier, who for thirty years labored in the immense Vicariate of Szechwan. His story will be told later.

Other Holy Ghost Fathers of the period became outstanding missionaries in the Far East without being raised to the episcopal rank. Cochin China benefitted by the apostolate of Father Rivoal who, after thirty years of unremitting toil in the Orient, returned in 1763 to end his days in France. The Christians of Siam were strengthened during the cruel persecution of Emperor Phaia-Tacs by the fearless ministration of Father James Corre. Father John Perrin spent twenty years in India and is known not only for his missionary work but also for his scholarly publications dealing with the Far East.

The West. It is known also that many of these eighteenth century Spiritans came to the Western Hemisphere to labor in French Guiana, the West Indies, and the immense diocese of Quebec. In fact, as early as 1732, we find one of them, Father Frison de la Mothe, on the faculty of the Quebec seminary. Other outstanding characters of this group will be treated more fully in the course of this chapter.

2 The history of many of these early Spiritans in Canada has been traced by Father Albert David, C.S.Sp. Cf. Bibliography, pp. 603 f.
At first, the priests sent to Canada applied to the Foreign Missions of Paris to obtain their ecclesiastical and civil appointments, but the scarcity of other priests in the Foreign Missions Seminary and a variety of other reasons soon forced the Bishop of Quebec to deal immediately with the Holy Ghost Fathers. From 1752 on, his Vicar General in Paris selected his own Spiritans and sent them directly to the Bishop for their appointments. A number of these were used as professors at the Seminary of Quebec or as pastors in the environs of the diocesan see, while others took care of the French settlers and the Indians in Acadia.

The number of Spiritans who went to Canada during the eighteenth-century is difficult to determine since complete lists are not available. Father Peter de la Rue, Abbot of Isle Dieu, who was Chaplain General of the colonies, in charge of the religious interests of French overseas territories, wrote to the Propaganda in 1771 as follows:

During the thirty-eight years that, as Vicar General, I have been in charge of all French and Indian Missions in the vast and extended Diocese of Quebec in North America, I have sent only subjects trained and educated at the Seminary of the Holy Ghost. All have always surpassed our hopes, and not a single one has betrayed our confidence.
About twenty years earlier, in 1753, he had written that “the majority of the staff in the Seminary of Quebec” had been furnished by Holy Ghost Seminary. Although it is true that Father de la Rue was very fond of the Holy Ghost Fathers and therefore may have exaggerated somewhat, nevertheless there is every reason to believe that his reports are substantially correct. Moreover, as we have seen, Bishop Dosquet of Quebec gave the Spiritans a substantial property at Sarcelles in gratitude for their services. He would scarcely have done this if their contributions to his diocese had not been quite significant. Again, Father Becquet, the Superior General, wrote in 1768 that his Congregation “for the past thirty years had trained all the missionaries employed in Acadia and among the savages of that peninsula.” The Chaplain General of the Colônesies was so impressed by the work done by these priests that he wanted them to replace the Recollects, whose missions in Canada had fallen on evil days. He began by placing the Recollects under the control of a Holy Ghost Father, Peter Maillard, Vicar General of the Bishop of Quebec. At the same time he advised the Bishop to staff his seminary with Spiritans.

Unfortunately, the cession of Canada to the British in 1763 put an end to these plans and doomed the successful efforts of the Canadian Holy Ghost Fathers to complete frustration. Fearing their influence on the people, the British conquerors had denied further admission to any French priests. Only two more Spiritans succeeded, during 1772, in gaining entrance on the ground that they were of Canadian extraction. Others tried again in 1784, including the Bishop’s own nephew, but they were stopped in London and sent back to France. However, during the French Revolution, in 1792, two Spiritans from St. Pierre and Miquelon, who had refused to take the schismatic oath imposed by the Government, were allowed to take refuge in Canada. The last survivor of these early Holy Ghost Fathers died in Canada in 1835.

It is interesting to note at this juncture that the Congregation’s first representatives in the United States arrived in 1795. They came as refugees from Guiana, which was then experiencing the blessings of Liberty, Equality and Fraternity. There were three of them: Fathers Moranville, Duhamel, and Hérad, and they were Holy Ghost Fathers in the strict sense of the term for they were actual members of the Congregation.

The French text has the term *sujets* which obviously does not refer to seminarians.
It would lead us too far afield to describe the labors of all these priests in detail. An exception, however, must be made in the case of Peter Maillard, the Apostle of the Micmac Indians; John Le Loutre, the Father of the Acadians; and Bishop Francis Pottier, the Founder of the Missions of Szechwan in China.

2. Peter Maillard, the Apostle of the Micmacs, and John Le Loutre, the Father of the Acadians

Acadia, long a bone of contention between the French and the British, was finally ceded to England by the Treaty of Utrecht in 1713. It was promptly renamed Nova Scotia. Provisionally, the conquerors had to spare the proud national feelings of the French settlers of Acadia, for a mass emigration to neighboring Cape Breton Island, still in French hands, would have utterly ruined the economy of Nova Scotia and considerably strengthened the French forces nearby. On the other hand, their loyalty to France and their unshakeable profession of the Catholic Faith were considered so dangerous that as early as 1720 there was some question of forcibly deporting the entire French population. A kind of uneasy truce was reached in 1730 when the Acadians swore loyalty to the British Crown on condition that they would be allowed to remain neutral in case of conflict between France and England.

The territory was inhabited also by nomadic Micmac Indians, who had been converted to Catholicism and wanted very much to remain loyal to the King of France. The situation was further complicated by the fact that the conquerors hoped to make Protestants out of these Micmacs who were so fiercely attached to their religion and their priests. Thus national and religious aspects became inextricably interwoven. French and Catholic came to be the alternative of British and Protestant. It is in this politically-religious context that the activity of Father Le Loutre must be interpreted.

When he arrived in Acadia in 1737, Le Loutre was received by another Spiritan who had arrived there two years earlier: Father Peter Maillard, the Apostle of the Micmac Indians. Father Maillard had been the first to acquire a complete mastery of their difficult language, for which he created a hieroglyphic alphabet, a
R. H. M. 13, 481 ff. grammar and a dictionary, in addition to a book of prayers, hymns and sermons. After studying the formidable language under his direction, Father Le Loutre received his appointment for the mission of Chigabenakady, a settlement of Acadians and Indians that had not seen a priest for a period of twelve years.

Loyal to his promise to keep the Acadians subject to England, he spent five years there exercising his ministry and building churches and chapels throughout the area. However, in 1744, war broke out again between the French and British. With the aid of the Micmacs, accompanied by Father Maillard as their military chaplain, Marquis Duquesne, the French Governor, tried to capture the British fortress of Annapolis. Instead, the English turned the tables and captured the French stronghold of Louisbourg. They immediately insisted on seeing both Father Maillard and Father Le Loutre. Upon their sworn promise that he need have no fears for his liberty, the former presented himself and was promptly arrested and deported to Boston. Father Le Loutre distrusted the British assurances, however, and escaped to Quebec, together with a deputation of Micmacs.

Now that Father Maillard was gone, the Quebec Government considered Father Le Loutre as the man in charge of Indian Missions. After supplying the Micmacs with copious ammunition, the Governor confidentially told the priest that a French naval squadron was expected within the year and that it would expel the English. For that reason it was important to keep the Indians in readiness so that they might aid the French operation by cutting British communication lines. Apparently, the British commander heard of this development, for he ordered the immediate arrest of Father Le Loutre. The priest and his Indians, however, were too deeply ensconced in the forest to be much troubled by the threat of arrest.\textsuperscript{5}

Late in 1746 the French squadron arrived, but in a state of complete disorganization. Its commander had just died and a contagious disease was rapidly killing its complement of men. Under

\textsuperscript{4}A printed edition of his Micmac grammar appeared in New York in 1864, while his manual of prayers, hymns and sermons was printed in 1866 in Vienna, and again in 1921 in Restigouche, Quebec.

\textsuperscript{5}The Indians had sworn allegiance to France and thus were bound to help the French forces. Father Le Loutre was their chaplain and leader, and it is in this capacity that he took part in their expeditions. On the other hand, he carefully abstained from appealing for help to the Acadian French settlers, who had sworn to observe neutrality in any conflict between France and England.
the circumstances, there was little the fleet could do but return to France. Shortly thereafter, Father Le Loutre followed them to Paris to plead the cause of his people. Urged to return as soon as possible to Acadia, he sailed in the spring of 1747 but was captured on the high seas by the British. After spending three months in jail at Winchester, he was released and sent back to France. Undaunted, he embarked again only to meet the same fate once more. Meanwhile, in 1748 the diplomats at Aachen had again declared that France and England were at peace and had returned Cape Breton Island to the French. The following spring Father Le Loutre was back in Acadia once more ministering to his beloved Indians and Acadians.

He soon noticed that the pious phrases of the diplomats had changed nothing in the state of tension existing in the country. The new British Governor, Cornwallis, declared war on the Micmacs, offering a bounty of ten pounds for every scalp. With respect to the Acadians, Governor Shirley of Massachusetts had proposed “to chase the Catholic Priests from Nova Scotia and substitute French Protestant ministers for them, open Scottish schools, and favor those inhabitants who become Protestants and see to it that their children learn English.” Cornwallis made it clear that they had to choose between deportation and confiscation of all their possessions or unconditional allegiance to England with military service under the British flag. As their shepherd and leader, Father Le Loutre could not find it in his heart to stand idly by. He resolved to defend both Indians and Acadians against these cruel and unjust measures.

While arranging the resettlement of a number of Acadians on islands that were still in French hands, he spent the winter of 1749 with the Micmacs, baptizing and instructing his new converts. At the same time, he directed the Indians to patrol the peninsula and intercept all British messengers. With a bounty on the head of every one of his Indian flock, one can hardly blame the priest for taking so active a part in political and military affairs. At the same time, however, he took care that no harm befell their English prisoners. When the Micmacs brought in their captives, Father Le Loutre was on the spot to purchase their lives with money borrowed from the Acadians. While the English Governor had put a price of 500 livres on his head (and soon raised it to a thousand), the priest spent as much as twenty-five thousand livres in redeeming English prisoners from his
Indians. The Micmacs grew bolder with their success. In a daring raid in 1751, they went so far as to penetrate into an English fortress to liberate a priest who had been held prisoner there for six months.

The following year, leaving his Indians in the care of a fellow priest, Father Le Loutre again crossed the Atlantic to plead more urgently at Paris the cause of his Acadians. New hope came to these unfortunate people when he returned in the spring of 1752 with a fairly large amount of money and supplies to aid in their resettlement on land still held by France. One can readily see why, when he built a beautiful church and fortress at Beauséjour, many Acadians flocked to him from English-held territories. The enraged British Governor now raised the price on his head to six thousand livres, but to no avail. Not a single hand, whether Acadian or Indian, could be induced to earn such blood-money by murdering this beloved priest who fearlessly continued his daily rounds among his flock. The Governor then tried to buy the priest’s loyalty for a hundred thousand livres and a promise of freedom of religion. Freedom of religion might have induced him to waver for a moment, but in view of past experiences, what value could anyone attach to such assurances? As to his loyalty, it was not for sale.

In 1754 Father Le Loutre made certain proposals to the British in behalf of the Micmac Indians. They were scornfully rejected by Governor Lawrence, who had other plans in mind. Soon after, he sent three thousand soldiers from Boston to besiege the fortress of Beauséjour. On June 16, 1755, the fort crumbled and resistance ceased. With a heavy heart, shortly before the surrender, Father Le Loutre set fire to the beautiful church he had just finished. He preferred to see it go up in flames rather than let it fall into Protestant hands.

While the French commander of the fort fraternized with his conquerors at a lavish meal, the priest quietly slipped away through a secret exit and after trudging through three hundred leagues of dense forest he finally reached Quebec. By the middle of August he was again skimming over the waves to seek help in France. Captured once more on the high seas, this valiant defender of the Acadians was thrown into prison in Jersey, where this time he languished for eight years. Meanwhile his Acadians were deprived of their priests, hunted down and stripped of all their possessions. Six thousand of them died of starvation; others went into exile;

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6The British subsequently reimbursed him for these expenses.
the remainder were loaded on ships and scattered all along the East coast of America. As all of us know, the tragic story of these Acadians wanderers has been immortalized by Longfellow in his Evangeline, but the worst fate of all befell those who were deported to New England. Puritans, full of hatred for anything Catholic, deprived them of every religious comfort and even went so far as to separate them from their children. After the peace treaty of 1763, Father Le Loutre once more regained his freedom. Without delay he went to work on a program to resettle twenty-five hundred Acadians who had sought refuge in France. Every ounce of his customary energy was poured into the project, but even his powerful influence had little effect on a people whose homesickness for the New World made them highly reluctant to take up permanent residence in France. In the midst of this melancholy work of resettlement, Father Le Loutre died at Poitou in 1772.

B. R. H., 1929, 444

After their beloved champion had passed to his eternal reward, most of the Acadian exiles in France set sail for Louisiana. There they joined a large group of their displaced compatriots who had drifted down to the New Orleans region from various points along the eastern coast of America. While a great number of them established permanent domicile here, during the ensuing decades many quietly slipped back into Canada and settled once more in the land where they had been born. Moreover, a large group of Acadian families that had previously been dispersed throughout New England were now gathered together by Father John Brault and guided back to peaceful homesteads on Montreal Island. It seems particularly fitting that Father Brault, himself an Acadian and a Holy Ghost Father like Le Loutre, should have been the one to bring this tragic saga to a close.

As for Father Maillard, whom we left deported in Boston in 1745, no power on earth was able to keep him away from the flock entrusted to his care. From Boston he was shipped to England and from there to France, but in the fall of the next year he was back again in Acadia, just in time to replace Father Le Loutre, who wanted to leave for Paris to plead the cause of his Acadians. As chaplain of the Micmacs who were officially at war with the English, he lived with them in the woods and accompanied them on their military expeditions. As a result, on several occasions he was able, like Father Le Loutre, to save their captives from torture and death.

B. R. H., 1929, 368
In 1758, when the fall of Louisbourg definitely sealed the fate of Acadia, Henry Schomberg, commander of the British troops, gave Father Maillard an ultimatum: allegiance to the King of England with a promise of freedom of religion and guaranteed property rights or death to all his Indians. Though at first sight the offer may seem to have been rather generous, in reality it was all to the advantage of the British. The woods of Nova Scotia were swarming with roaming bands of Micmacs, all of them firmly resolved to perish rather than surrender. Without hesitation they scalped any British colonist who fell into their hands. The situation was so bad that the colonists of Halifax did not dare to leave the protection of their palisades. Belatedly, therefore, the English learned that only Catholic priests would be able to induce the Indians to make peace. Father Maillard, on the other hand, was wise enough to see that there was no longer any hope of a French coup in Nova Scotia. He therefore agreed to use his influence in bringing about peace between the Micmacs and the English.

Sir Charles Lawrence, the Governor of Nova Scotia, called him to Halifax, where he gave him a pension of one hundred pounds and the use of a building for Catholic religious services. Till his death, Father Maillard was the only Catholic priest tolerated in Nova Scotia.

At once he courageously began to take care of his flock, which consisted not only of the few score Catholics who lived in Halifax, but of all the Acadians and Indians scattered throughout the Province. His position was a very delicate one, for he faced the hostility of the Protestant ministers and the special bitterness of a French apostate priest who had been called to Nova Scotia for the avowed purpose of proselytizing the remaining Acadians. Nevertheless, his genteel manners, his learning, and his diplomacy secured him general good will. He used it to organize his Acadians and Indians for the preservation of their Faith despite the lack of priests. Everywhere, lay volunteers were put in charge of scattered groups to instruct the faithful, lead them in Sunday prayers, baptize their children, and witness their marriages. The Indian tribes were induced to bury the hatchet. Copies of his manuscripts containing prayers, hymns and sermons were placed in the hands of every chieftain. In the absence of a priest, the chief was to hold Sunday services as described in the book, and to use its formulas for baptisms, marriages, and funerals. Thanks
to these books, the Micmacs continued to resist every effort of the Protestant missionaries to proselytize them.

In 1762, when he was about to meet a group of Indians who were opposing the government, he fell seriously ill. Medical care was provided by Dr. Thomas Wood, a former army surgeon, who had become an Anglican minister. Soon it became apparent that death was not far away. Since there was no Catholic priest available, Dr. Wood offered him the religious assistance of the Anglican Church. Father Maillard politely declined, saying: "I have served God all my life. Every day I have prepared myself for death by offering the holy sacrifice of the Mass." He died on August 12, 1762, and the size of his funeral testified to the high esteem in which he was held. Over and above his beloved Indians and Acadians, nearly all persons of rank were in attendance, and the President of the Council as well as the Speaker of the House acted as pall-bearers. The funeral was held at St. Paul's Episcopal Church by Dr. Wood, who read the Anglican funeral service and tried to convince the Acadians and Indians that Father Maillard had appointed him as his spiritual successor.

He succeeded only in revealing himself as an impostor, however, for even after his death Father Maillard's carefully organized program continued his apostolate among the Indians. Thanks especially to Maillard's prayerbook, the Micmacs soon discovered the ruse when Dr. Wood began to masquerade among them as the successor of their apostle. They demanded a Catholic priest. When at first their demand was rejected, their attitude became so threatening that upon the advice of the military commanders of Nova Scotia the government finally gave in in 1768 and provided a priest for them. In 1774, Father Joseph Bourg, another eighteenth century Spiritan, took over the spiritual care of Nova Scotia and New Brunswick. He earned the gratitude of the Government by pacifying the Indians during the American War of Independence. In fact, it was largely through his influence that Catholics subsequently obtained freedom of religion in Nova Scotia.7

The mortal remains of Father Maillard were buried in the common cemetery of Halifax, without any monument to blazon forth his praise. He did not need any. The Faith preserved among his Micmacs to this day constitutes a living monument to the work of their great apostle.

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7A statue in his honor has since been erected in Carleton, Nova Scotia.
John Le Loutre, the Father of the Acadians.
(Courtesy Public Archives of Canada).

Bishop Francis Pottier, the Founder of the Szechwan Missions.
(Portrait by a contemporary Chinese artist).
The Spiritan Motherhouse at Paris. Construction was started in 1732. The main wing visible on this photo was designed by Chalgrin, the architect of the Arc de Triomphe.
3. **Bishop Francis Pottier, 1726-1792, the Founder of the Szechwan Missions**

Su. 51 ff.

Francis Pottier was born in 1726 at Chapelle-Saint-Hippolyte in the present Province of Indre-et-Loire, France. Orphaned at the age of eight, he entered the home of a wealthy maternal uncle. Later he was sent to the local college of Loches for his classical and philosophical studies.

Su. 63 ff.

In 1748 the young man entered Holy Ghost Seminary in Paris, specifically because his uncle hoped that by taking a degree at the Sorbonne Francis would be able to enter upon a distinguished ecclesiastical career. Apparently the old man did not realize that students in this seminary neither studied at the Sorbonne nor prepared themselves for careers in the Church. Francis himself, however, immediately caught the spirit of the house, for during the opening retreat of his first year he grew conscious of a burning desire to consecrate himself to the Missions.

In another respect, the new seminary proved somewhat disappointing to him: Father Bouic, the Superior, told him that, like most of the other newcomers, he would have to begin his philosophy all over again. According to the standards of Holy Ghost Seminary, the course he had finished at the small country college of Loches was judged to be deficient in several respects. The next year he was still in doubt as to whether he would be permitted to start theology for, he wrote, “the Superior usually does not grant this privilege to those who have not studied physical science.”8 Then too, as we have seen above, the course of studies at Holy Ghost Seminary lasted two years longer than was customary in most other seminaries.

Su. 72

cf. p. 16

Accordingly, his ordination was to take place much later than his relatives had at first expected. They found this delay most annoying for they were impatient to see him return to his native town and begin his quest for a rich benefice. Francis himself, however, was completely disinterested in becoming the possessor of a substantial income. The missionary idea which had seized him at the very inception of his seminary career continued to gain ground in his mind. He began to prepare his family for a grave disappointment of their fond hopes by telling them that he had no desire to

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8Twice weekly, the Holy Ghost seminarians went to a Jesuit College for experimental physics.
take any degrees and by alleging that, if necessary, such a degree could even be bought later for a few francs.

In fear that a visit home might expose him to the danger of betraying his intentions, he refrained from joining his family for the long vacation and spent his holidays instead at the summer villa of the Seminary. He realized, of course, that he could not conceal his plans forever. When the end of his studies approached in 1753, he began to prepare his relatives for the bad news. After a few more or less distinct hints, he finally opened his mind and told them that, with the consent of his director, he had decided to become a missionary. As he expected, his family fumed and fretted, but Francis stood firm. After Easter of that year, he followed the example of some of his fellow-students and joined the Foreign Missions Society, under whose auspices alone he could be sent out to the Far East.

Six months later he was on his way to China. Passing through Gorée, off the west coast of Africa, and sailing around the Cape and across the Indian Ocean, he arrived in September 1754 at Macao, the Portugese enclave in China. Fifteen months later, he started his perilous journey through the Celestial Empire toward his destination in the Province of Szechwan.

Szechwan, "The Four Rivers," is a populous and fertile territory of about 200,000 square miles, lying east of Tibet. At the time Father Pottier made his journey, a recent papal condemnation of the idolatry implicit in the exaggerated honor paid to Confucius and to ancestors in general had resulted in a Chinese decree against Christian missionaries. Consequently, he had to be smuggled into the country in disguise, oft-times concealed under a pile of merchandise carried by the riverboats. The strange food, the total lack of exercise, the absence of companionship, and everlasting inspections by Chinese police, all conspired to work on his nerves. When sickness struck the lonely priest, his courage was at the breaking-point. Homesick, he thought with immense longing of the green rolling hills of his native land and the kind sweet friends in faraway France, the France he was destined never to see again. Grace, however, promptly gained control. Slowly he began again to look forward with enthusiasm to his apostolate among the Chinese and by the time he reached Szechwan three months later, his self-confidence had fully revived.
Su. 127 ff. Two Chinese priests were all that was left of the once flourishing mission. All Europeans had been expelled and persecution was still rife. As a matter of fact, it was never to stop completely during the more than thirty years that Father Pottier was to spend in this remote mission. Fortunately, the Faith had been kept alive by the magnificent work of a number of native catechists. Father Pottier began at once to recruit more of them and to train them better for their task. He then undertook long and weary marches to visit personally the scattered survivors of persecution throughout his immense territory.

Su. 147 ff. In August, 1760, the edicts of prohibition were intensified. Many of his Christians were thrown into jail. The next month, in order not to expose more of them to this fate, he allowed himself to be captured. After spending two and a half months in a dungeon and being questioned several times under torture, he was condemned to exile and a military escort led him away with a heavy chain around his neck. However, by means of a clever bribe he succeeded in having the exile rescinded and then quietly returned to his mission.

Su. 159 ff. Two years later his secret correspondence was intercepted when the mission's private mail-carrier was arrested. It should be mentioned here that all supplies, books, correspondence, and money had to be secretly imported. For this purpose, the missions had set up a large smuggling system with headquarters in Macao. Even the smallest non-Chinese article, such as a ritual or a stole, was bound to arouse the suspicion of customs officials. Customs existed not only at the borders of the country but everywhere throughout China where different provinces met. Nevertheless, these smugglers for the Lord were rarely caught during the thirty-two years Father Pottier spent in China. In the investigation that followed upon interception of his mail, the authorities tried to discover Father Pottier's whereabouts, and he was forced to go into complete hiding again. A Chinese fellow-priest was caught, tortured, and exiled, but despite this new wave of persecution, the mission work continued to make astonishing progress.

Goyau, I, 411 f. During all these years the mission had been without a Vicar Apostolic. In 1762, the Holy See had appointed another Spiritan, Father Kerhervé, to this position but he declined the honor and returned the papal Bulls with a letter advising Rome that Father
Andrew Lee, a Chinese priest, would be the better choice. Five years later, Father Pottier, who had also tried to have someone else named, was made Vicar Apostolic of Szechwan and Titular Bishop of Agathopolis. The news of this appointment reached him only in 1769. It coincided with a fresh outbreak of persecution which made it necessary for him to avoid arrest by hiding for some time in a lonely cave. Then, when things quieted down he marched two hundred and fifty leagues over mountains and valleys to a neighboring province where, in deepest secrecy, he received his episcopal consecration from the hands of a fellow bishop. In the interim, troubles had abated somewhat in Szechwan, so he quietly returned to his post.

Although new local persecutions continued to break out with monotonous regularity, the apostolate was carried on successfully despite this opposition or perhaps even because of it. The striking change of life evident in many of the new converts and their steadfast loyalty to Christ did not fail to make a profound impression on the neighboring Chinese who witnessed their trials. As a result, many more sought admission to the Church even though it could offer them no immediate worldly prospects other than prison and torture.

Because European priests were much more exposed to the danger of discovery and exile than were the Chinese, Bishop Pottier made determined efforts to increase his native clergy. For this purpose he sent a number of suitable boys to the College of Pondicherry in India, where they could study Latin. When this measure did not have the desired result, he approached the Propaganda in 1779 and obtained permission to ordain Chinese priests locally without teaching them any Latin whatsoever. He then founded a small college in a remote part of the Province, where he hoped it would function quietly without drawing the unwelcome attention of civil authorities. In two years’ time Bishop Pottier had the great consolation of ordaining the first three priests who completed its course of studies. His Christians proved to be too indiscreet, however, and all hope of peaceful operation had to be abandoned. In 1782 the institution was transferred to a still more remote part of the country. There, despite wars and oppression, it performed nobly for more than three decades before a disastrous fire levelled it to the ground. Though its career was regrettably brief, it had rendered invaluable service to the Church in the Orient.
While thus providing for a future clergy, Bishop Pottier had his hands full in moderating the excesses of some of his French missionaries. Under the pretext of aiming high, they had introduced all kinds of extraordinary "obligations" for the faithful: compulsory vigils throughout the night before all major feasts and Communion days; on Fridays, fast and abstinence from wine, tobacco, and heating, in addition to one hundred strokes of the discipline; two hours of prayer every day and hundreds of prayers on Sundays; the list was endless. Moreover, they had modified the rules of the Institute of Virgins, founded in 1745 by Bishop de Martillat. Girls down to the age of eleven were now permitted to take the public vow of chastity, roam around from house to house teaching catechism, and even preach in the absence of a priest. After consulting the Propaganda, Bishop Pottier vigorously condemned these practices. He did not, however, succeed in restoring unity among his missionaries until the principal author of these innovations decided to leave China.

In 1784 the aging prelate received news from Rome that one of his priests had been appointed his coadjutor and had been formally ordered not to refuse the position. It was a great relief for the old Bishop, who feared that sooner or later he himself would fall into the hands of the authorities and thereby leave the mission without any center of jurisdiction. His joy, however, was shortlived. In the same year another persecution broke out. The government had learned that more European priests were trying to steal into the country. During the wholesale investigation that ensued, his coadjutor was captured. The arrest caused great excitement, for the chief officers of the Province had proudly reported to the Imperial Court that there were no Europeans left in their territory and now, to save their flock from torture, a number of missionaries had surrendered to the governor. All were transported to Peking and sentenced to life imprisonment. However, shortly after, when two of them had already died in their dungeon, the others were released and exiled.

Bishop Pottier and the priests who had not surrendered were left undisturbed, undoubtedly because the local authorities feared that the arrest of more Europeans would unfavorably reflect on their vigilance in the past and thus more surely expose them to the Emperor's ire. These missionaries felt so secure that on two
occasions they even dared to hold public processions in a town whose mandarin had secretly become a Catholic. In this manner, active missionary work continued more or less openly wherever there was a local lull in persecution.

To the great joy of the Bishop, his intrepid coadjutor and another priest were smuggled back into China and soon joined him. Now, worn out by thirty years of unremitting toil—he had never left his mission to return to Europe or even to take a rest elsewhere—the prelate realized that his days were numbered. He therefore left the care of the Vicariate to his coadjutor and reserved to himself only a small district where he might work till death would claim him.

Three years later, on September 28, 1792, the valiant old missionary went to his reward. Though it was important to avoid attracting the attention of the authorities, a large number of his Christians insisted on accompanying the body to the grave. Despite efforts of the priests to avoid anything spectacular, even the beggars of the city contributed money to make his funeral as solemn as possible.

Bishop Pottier is venerated as the Founder of the Catholic Missions in the immense Province of Szechwan. Although others had labored there before him, it was only under his leadership that the mission really developed. Where there had been only 3,000 Christians on his arrival, there were more than 25,000 at the time of his death. During the twenty-three years of his episcopate, nearly a 100,000 souls had been regenerated for Christ in the redeeming waters of Baptism.

Throughout his long life Bishop Pottier remained attached to the Holy Ghost Seminary in which he had found his vocation. Nearly every year he managed to smuggle out of China a letter addressed to Father Bouic or to his successor Father Becquet. Their answers, however, only rarely reached him in the hiding places of Szechwan. Nevertheless, he continued writing. As he expressed it in one of his letters:

Gratitude dictates this duty to me, and death alone will be able to prevent me from fulfilling it. God forbid that I ever forget the inestimable benefits I have received in the Seminary.