Chapter Three: Fr Champagnat and the Sources of Marist Pedagogy

Before embarking on a brief biography of Fr Champagnat and a sketch of the development of his and his early followers’ ideas on education, it is first necessary to nominate and characterise the sources available for such a re-construction. The two central, primary and indispensable documents for this exercise are the *Vie de Marcellin Joseph Benoît Champagnat* (1856) and the *Guide des Écoles* (1853), both of them written by Br Jean-Baptiste Furet, an early disciple of Fr Champagnat and one of the two Assistants General, who shared in the leadership of the Marist Brothers congregation from the death of the founder in 1840 until his own death in 1872. These two books had almost canonical status for the entire century after their publication and played a crucial role in the formation and training of generations of young Marist Brothers, although it is worth noting that the English translation of the *Guide* which was used in Australia until 1931 comprised only a third of the original document. And it must be realized that the *Vie* was written using the style of French, nineteenth century hagiography, rather than the contemporary critical-historical approach.

The more critical-analytical approach to these ‘canonical’ documents dates from the early 1950s when a Marist Father, Jean Coste SM, began editing and arranging the early documents of the Marist Founders in a collection called *Origines Maristes*. And a French Marist Brother, Br Louis Laurent FMS,1 more commonly referred to, nowadays, by his family name, Pierre Zind, began work on his doctoral thesis for the University of Lyons, called *Les Nouvelles Congrégations de Frères Enseignants en France de 1800 à 1830*. At the time Zind began his work, the Marist Brothers’ archives were uncatalogued, had been re-located several times and were to be moved once more, when the Brothers’ General House was established in Rome in 1962. Since the move to Rome, the archives have been put in better order and made more accessible to students; but a centre for the study of the founder’s life has also been established at the original mother house, *l’Hermitage de Notre Dame*, just outside St Chamond, south of Lyon, where the brothers involved in research and reflection also have access to the relevant diocesan, national and prefecture archives.

One collection of documents which is very useful for the early history of the order, from 1830 till 1890 is the *Annals of the Institute* compiled, collated and partially

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1 Using a set of initials to identify different Religious Orders was a mid-to-late twentieth century practice, not much used in the nineteenth century. However, it is useful for distinguishing between different organizations with similar sounding names such as the Marist Fathers (SM = Societas Mariae) and the Marist Brothers (FMS = Fratres Maristae a Scholis) or the De La Salle Brothers (FSC) - known in other English speaking countries as the Christian Brothers – and the Irish Christian Brothers (FSCH).
summarized by Br Avit Bilon, who entered the Marist novitiate at the Hermitage shortly before the Founder’s death and served as Visitor of St Genis Province, then Assistant General in charge of the Province of Bourbonais from 1859 till 1880 when he resigned to devote himself to the editing and collation of the Annals of all the French houses opened until that time, including those that had already been closed. Unlike Br Jean Baptiste, Br Avit recorded the facts as he saw them, making no attempt to ‘gild the lily’ or to edify the readers he had in mind: the Major Superiors. Although a dedicated Religious and a loyal Marist Brother, his accounts are sharp, gossipy, and not entirely lacking in humour, irony and even sarcasm. Of a fellow Provincial Visitor he remarked:

In his visits (he) had made his reputation as a skilful player of boules, but he could not usefully inspect the classes.

Although still not fully transcribed and translated, these Annals have been very helpful in the more realistic and contextualized re-construction of the early days of the Order, undertaken by, among others, Br André Lanfrey in his 1979 doctoral thesis, also at the University of Lyon.

The critical and reflective analysis of the original sources and of the works of Br Jean-Baptiste Furet was given some momentum by the beatification of Fr Champagnat in 1956, even more so by the aftermath of the Second Vatican Council in the early 1960s and, most recently, by his canonization as St Marcellin Champagnat in 1999. The fruits of all this research and reflection – for the purposes of this present thesis, at least - were: a modern critical-historical life of Fr Champagnat, written as a Master’s thesis at the University of New England by Br Stephen Farrell and published by the Sydney Province of the Marist Brothers in 1984; a bi-centenary edition of Br Jean-Baptiste’s Vie which preserves the 1856 text, but in a new English translation, partly annotated with the efforts of Pierre Zind and the scholars working at the Hermitage, Lyon and Rome; an edited collection of the surviving Letters of Fr Champagnat, published in 1991-92; and, since 1990, an on-going series of articles in an international, annual publication called Marist Notebooks which circulates the work in progress at the various centres of Marist studies, but especially those of the Hermitage and the archives in Rome. Br André Lanfrey has also recently published a book, partly based on his doctoral thesis, which analyses the development of Marist pedagogy, in France, between 1850 and 1904. Without reference to these more recent resources, the present chapter would have been an impossible undertaking.

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3 Cited, from Br Avit’s Annals in Sarah Curtis, Educating the Faithful (Dekalb, USA, 2000) p. 70.
4 Une Congrégation Enseignante: Les Frères Maristes de 1850 a 1904.
5 The two most important scholars, working at the Hermitage, are Brothers Alexander Balko and Gabriel Michel. In Rome, the most frequently published scholar is the head of archives, Br Paul Sester. Br André Lanfrey, is based in Lyon, itself. Br Stephen Farrell acknowledged his debt to these men, as well as to Pierre Zind and Fr Coste, in writing his thesis. However, Br Stephen is also very fluent in French himself, and personally studied much of the archival material.
The Education of Young Marcellin: 1789-1829

Marcellin Champagnat was born in 1789, two months before the outbreak of the French Revolution, an event which, naturally, had a profound effect on his childhood, education and adult career. He was the ninth child of a moderately prosperous peasant-proprietor family living in Marlhes, a small country town about ninety-five kilometres south-west of Lyon, and would probably have had a normal elementary education had it not been for the social turmoil of the period. The anti-clericalism of the revolution, however, had swept away the somewhat less than comprehensive network of church-run schools of the ancien régime, and conscription for the Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars made well-qualified lay teachers a very rare commodity in rural France. Marcellin was so shocked by the bullying behaviour of the teacher on his first day at school that he refused to return, despite his parents’ pleas, and his formal education did not resume until his mid-teens when he went for tuition to his brother-in-law’s home, prior to entering the minor seminary at Verrieres, to study for the priesthood.

Family background was, therefore, the major positive influence on his personal development and, in Br Jean-Baptiste’s account, much emphasis was given to the role of his pious mother and to an aunt who had been a Sister of St Joseph, driven from her convent by the Revolution and taking shelter with her brother’s family. Pierre Zind’s and Br Stephen Farrell’s accounts, however, have reclaimed some importance for Marcellin’s father, Jean-Baptiste Champagnat, as a role-model for the growing boy. Champagnat Senior was a literate and articulate member of the Marlhes commune and an active participant in the Revolution, serving at various times as Town Clerk, Magistrate and Colonel of the local National Guard. He was charged with tasks such as pressuring the parish clergy to take the constitutional oath, rounding up and prosecuting draft dodgers and deserters, even leading the civic services for the Supreme Being, in the Temple of the Goddess of Reason – the former parish church. Zind’s reading of his attitude is that he was rather less than a radical Jacobin, but somewhat more than a mere Vicar of Bray. He certainly allowed his wife and his ex-claustrated nun sister to prepare Marcellin for his First Communion and, when his son refused to go back to school after that traumatic first day, he gave the boy some lambs to raise as a commercial project. Judging by the adult Marcellin’s enthusiasm for carpentry and building renovations he also seems to have grounded the boy in a variety of useful skills and a habit of industry. But it has been argued that Champagnat Senior’s most important contribution to his son’s development was his example of balance, moderation and diplomacy. Certainly, the adult Marcellin was less anti-Republican and less Gallican than many of his clerical contemporaries.  

His father died before Marcellin entered the minor seminary at Verrieres and he paid his own expenses out of the proceeds of his lamb-raising; but he had not learned much from his brother-in-law’s tuition. He was the oldest in his class, and he did not find that first year of studies easy. In fact, the rector of the seminary recommended that he not return for a second year. (Br Jean-Baptiste’s account omits all reference to the fact that.

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in that first year, Marcellin became a member, if not the leader, of a group of students called *La Bande Joyeuse* – the Happy Gang – who sometimes frequented taverns on their afternoon off from classes. This sort of detail did not fit in with the rather Jansenistic picture of perfection that Br Jean-Baptiste portrayed and generations of Marist Brothers grew up with this highly puritanical image of their founder.) At this critical juncture, his mother’s influence again came to the fore. She took him on a three day pilgrimage - on foot - to the shrine of St John Francis Regis at La Louvesc, which restored his resolve. Armed with this, and references from his parish priest, Marcellin returned to Verrieres for the second year and, from then on, he seems not to have looked back. He never became an accomplished scholar, but he was conscientious, industrious, pious and enthusiastic.

In 1813, after eight years at Verrieres, he graduated to the major diocesan seminary, St Irenaeus, in Lyon itself. There he fell in with a group of equally zealous and pious seminarians who were to generate the idea of a Marist order. This age cohort of trainee priests was part of a widespread revival of French Catholicism in the aftermath of the Revolution and many of their families’ experiences of the Terror had been more traumatic than Marcellin’s. Jean-Claude Courveille is the man now generally credited with having had the original inspiration to found the Marists and his parents, at some personal risk, had hidden the miraculous statue of Our Lady of Chambriac in their home during the persecution. And Jean-Claude Colin, who was to become the first Superior General of the Marist Fathers, lost both his parents, at a young age, to illnesses they had contracted while sheltering their non-juring parish priest. Most trainee priests of this generation saw the Revolution as an unmitigated disaster, comparable only to the Reformation, and this zealous group of seminarians at Lyon envisaged themselves as founding an order which would restore and defend the Catholic Church as the Jesuits had done in the days of the Counter-Reformation. The Jesuits had been suppressed in Western Europe in 1773, however, and these seminarians considered that the high public profile of the order had contributed to their demise. So although the Society of Jesus (SJ) was re-instated in 1814, these young trainee priests decided to dedicate their Society to Mary (SM), the Mother of Jesus, to ‘doing good quietly’ and to living ‘hidden and unknown.’

Br Jean-Baptiste’s account has the young Marcellin espousing the creation of a group of teaching brothers as part of the proposed Marist Order during these seminary discussions and has the others in the group, as it were, leaving that part of the project in his lap. Contemporary analyses of Marist Origins, by Marist Fathers as well as Marist Brothers, do not seriously challenge this interpretation; but a recent article, by Br André Lanfry, has introduced a nuance to the account, which is important for re-constructing

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8 Jansenism was a pessimistic and puritanical version of Catholicism which took its name from the Flemish theologian Cornelius Jansen who published a book on the pre-destination implications of St Augustine’s writings in the 1640s. It was condemned as heretical by Pope Innocent X in 1653, but remained very influential in France throughout the eighteenth and into the nineteenth centuries, despite being discouraged by the royal court and by the preaching and teaching of the more humanistic Jesuits. The seminaries that the young Marcellin attended were controlled by professors who were Jansenistic and Rigorist in outlook.

9 St John Francis Regis was an early seventeenth Jesuit preacher and home missionary, credited with converting many French Huguenots and reviving Catholicism in south-eastern France.


11 *ibid* p. 133.
the young Marcellin’s educational ambitions at this stage and to which we must return, in due course. In the meantime, suffice it to say that the young seminarians were encouraged by some of their professors and, on the day after their ordination in 1816, they made a short pilgrimage to the ancient shrine of Our Lady at Fourviere, on top of the escarpment above the Saône, and made a solemn pledge to found a Marist Order. As obedient new diocesan priests, they then made their way to the various parishes to which they had been assigned.

Fr Champagnat, as he now was, was sent to the parish of Lavalla, about fifty kilometres south of Lyon and thirty-five north-east of his home town of Marlhes. An earlier Parish Priest had been executed for refusing to take the Constitutional Oath in 1794 and although Catholic practice had been restored under the Napoleonic Concordat in 1801, the current Curé, who had been in the parish for four years when Fr Champagnat arrived, was an alcoholic and afflicted with a bad stammer. He usually did not preach on Sundays. There was a small girls’ school in the village, run by the Sisters of St Joseph and, from 1816 to 1818, a boys’ school, run by a qualified but Protestant teacher, Jean-Baptiste Galley. M. Galley married and moved away in 1818, however, and his only replacement was a qualified, but itinerant, teacher called Jean Montmartin who was a drinking companion of the Parish Priest. Religious Knowledge, that is, formal knowledge of the catechism, which in those Jansenist and Rigorist times was considered essential for salvation, was at low ebb in the parish of Lavalla.

The earnest young curate threw himself into his preaching and teaching catechism to the children of Lavalla and the surrounding hamlets. He had practised this teaching of catechism to children at Marlhes, during his holidays from the seminary, and he was apparently good at it: his classes were popular with the children and during the winter months he gave classes during the week, as well as on Sundays. His single-handed zeal was not sufficient, however. Called to the sickbed of a dying adolescent, Jean-Baptiste Montagne, in one of the outer hamlets of the parish, he was horrified to find the boy quite ignorant of the basic tenets of Christianity and spent two hours instructing him, before hearing his confession. When Fr Champagnat returned to the Montagne home, an hour or so later, having made another sick call in the meantime, the boy had died. Relieved at having arrived in time, but appalled at the thought of how many children were in a similar state of ignorance, the young curate decided to quickly start the congregation of teaching brothers he had expounded to his Marist colleagues in the seminary.

Within a few weeks of the Montagne episode, he had borrowed enough money to buy a run-down house near the presbytery and set to work renovating it with his own hands, and the help of two young men whom he had invited to become catechists. By the second of January 1817, the house was sufficiently weather-proof for the two recruits

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13 This conviction, which is important for understanding the educational motivation of Fr Champagnat was highlighted, for the writer, in a lecture given by Br Leonard Voegtle to a group of Melbourne Province Marist Brothers in December 1992, during the launch of his English translation of the edited letters of Fr Champagnat. But Pierre Zind and, through him, Br Stephen Farrell were aware of this attitude and took it into consideration in their accounts of Fr Champagnat’s intentions. See Farrell, op. cit. pp. 65 & 68.
to move in and begin living a timetabled life of prayer, study, manual work and parish visitation. This date is generally accepted as the foundation date of the Marist Brothers. In May of that year, Fr Champagnat was able to secure the services of an itinerant teacher, working in some of the outer hamlets of the parish, to take over the education of the two young recruits and also to train them in teaching methods. This teacher, Claude Maisonneuve, had been with the De La Salle Brothers for a time and taught using their ‘simultaneous method’ which was to figure prominently in Marist folklore from that time forward. Moreover, because of Maisonneuve’s De La Salle background and the fact that one of the recruits, Jean-Baptiste Audras, had previously been refused admission to the De La Salle Brothers on account of his youth, and because of the later frequent references to this older order, Br Jean-Baptiste’s *Life* implies that Fr Champagnat envisaged a junior version of the De La Salle Brothers from the outset. However, Br Jean-Baptiste did not join the infant order until 1822 and had been led to believe that he was, in fact, joining the De La Salle Brothers, and some modern commentators are by no means convinced of this interpretation.

The argument about Fr Champagnat’s first starting a lay brothers’ branch of a more penitential and monastic religious order, with himself as Superior at a central Mother House and the brothers out in the parishes, with the local *curé* as their virtual Superior, is long, complex and by no means settled. It is set out, in most detail, in a 1995 article by Br Andre Lanfrey, but is also touched on, in passing, in the same author’s critical introduction to the bicentenary edition of the *Life*. Although too complex to detail in this context, it is nevertheless a relevant reference when we are attempting to assess the respective roles of the Founder and his early followers in establishing the teaching tradition of the Marist Brothers. It explains some anomalous aspects of the Br Jean-Baptiste account, which are attributable to the latter’s disregard for chronology, in deploying his source material, and alerts the contemporary reader to these lapses. For his ‘official’ biographer, Fr Champagnat was ‘born a saint’, with a halo over his cradle. There is very little sense of development, evolution or experimentation with different strategies in Br Jean-Baptiste’s account, yet these changes of direction did take place and they can be documented.

To understand the reasons for these changes of direction and their relevance to the Marist teaching tradition in Australia, it is necessary to review developments in French education from the Revolution to the mid eighteen-twenties. As was mentioned earlier, the Church’s widespread, though admittedly incomplete, educational provision in the late eighteenth century France was severely dislocated, if not destroyed, by the early stages of the Revolution and despite many idealistic schemes and even Education Laws passed by the National Convention, such as the Bouquier Law of 1793 and the Danou Law of 1795, nothing substantial or systematic was created to take its place. Even Napoleon’s creation of the Imperial University in 1808, although it established a national three-tier system of accreditation and supervision had little impact on elementary education and,

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15 Br André Lanfrey, *Introduction à la Vie de M.J.B. Champagnat* (Rome, 2000) e.g. pp. 24-26. & p. 188.
as one commentator has put it: ‘Until 1815, legislation on primary education did little more than sanction what communes chose to do.’

During the Restoration period, the Bourbon Monarchy retained Napoleon’s University structure and, by Louis XVIII’s Royal Ordinance of February 1816, 50,000 francs annually were allocated for the printing of text books, the establishing of model schools and the payment of lay teachers. The De La Salle Brothers and several orders of teaching sisters had been restored to legal status under Napoleon in 1803 and began to re-develop; but by 1810, there were still only 160 brothers, compared with the 1000 who had been teaching prior to the Revolution. The status of elementary school teachers was low, and the influence of the Church, during the Restoration, was still omnipresent, consequently, very few model schools were actually started and few lay teachers were attracted to the profession by the 1816 Ordinance. Instead, many dioceses, unable to secure the services of the reviving De La Salle Brothers, started founding orders of *petits frères* to run boys’ schools in their parishes. Then, in April 1824, under the newly elected, ultra-Royalist government, elementary education was put directly under the control of the bishops and the new king, Charles X, who came to the throne later that year, underlined this control by appointing Bishop de Frayssinous, who was already Grand Master of the University, as Minister of Education. This led to a vast expansion of church-controlled primary schools, but it also put a great deal of pressure on the bishops to find suitable personnel to staff these schools.

The situation in the archdiocese of Lyon had been complicated because, the then archbishop, Cardinal Fesch, was Napoleon’s uncle and had been sent into exile, in Rome, after the latter’s final defeat at Waterloo. He refused to resign his See, however, and continued to run the diocese through three vicars general who were zealous and capable churchmen, but quite Gallican in their outlook. One of these men, Fr Bochard, had set up his own Society of the Cross of Jesus, which would also have home-missionary priests and teaching brothers, somewhat similar to the Marist concept, but with the aim of keeping these zealous young men within the Lyon archdiocese. From 1818 onwards, but especially in 1823, Fr Bochard put a great deal of pressure on Fr Champagnat to amalgamate his little group of recruits with the Society of the Cross of Jesus, a pressure the latter was only able to resist with the support of another Vicar General, Fr Courbon, and the Superior of St Irenaeus seminary, Fr Gardette. Fr Champagnat was also subject to the suspicions of Inspector Guillard of the Lyon Academy, that he was teaching Latin, a preserve of those, only, who were licensed to do so by the University.

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20 ‘Little Brothers’, as distinct from *Grands Frères*: the De La Salle Brothers, the ‘established’ order of brothers, who also conducted teacher-training schools. The phrase also came to have the connotation of primary, rather than, secondary school teachers.
21 Gallicanism was a theory of Church-State relations in France which gave the French King a great deal of say in the appointment of bishops and gave the French bishops a strong sense of autonomy, from Rome. Dating back to medieval times, it survived the Revolution and dominated the thinking of many French bishops until 1830. It even influenced Church–State relations in France until 1870.
Perhaps it is in the context of these pressures and suspicions that we should read the quite modest educational aspirations Fr Champagnat held out to his first recruits. In the first statement of commitment that he drew up for them, in 1818, they commit themselves only to ‘teach gratuitously the indigent children whom the Parish Priest of the place will send to us: 1. Catechism, 2. Prayer, 3. Reading; respect for the ministers of Jesus Christ; obedience to parents and to lawful rulers.’\textsuperscript{22} And in a fragment from one of his notebooks, which is difficult to date, but probably contemporaneous, the founder writes ‘Great zeal for the poor, but not to teach them writing.’\textsuperscript{23} In the second ‘school’, away from Lavalla, Le Bessat, where Br Laurent stayed on a weekly basis, in 1819, returning to Lavalla every Thursday to pick up supplies, he seems to have taught only Catechism, Prayers and, perhaps, Reading. Moreover, although the first separate school, the one at Marlhes, which opened in late 1818, taught both reading and writing, this was mainly done, according to Br Jean-Baptiste’s account, because:

The parents send us their children to learn reading and writing, but God leads them to us so that we can teach them to know Jesus Christ and how to reach heaven.\textsuperscript{24}

In Marlhes, the school was formally set up as the communal school and the brothers drew a meagre, government stipend from the communal authorities; but they were certainly very young and inexperienced and succeeded in winning public acceptance more by their good will, than by their good teaching.\textsuperscript{25} It was only with the invitation to open a communal school at Bourg Argental in 1822 that Fr Champagnat seems to have begun to revise his primary objectives more consciously. Bourg Argental had a smaller population than Lavalla or Marlhes but, historically, it had long been an administrative centre and was regarded as a town, rather than a village. Br Jean-Baptiste has the founder sending off the first brothers to this ‘town’ school with the following words:

Brothers, our aim in coming together to form this little society, was to impart christian instruction and christian education to the children of small country parishes; but now we find large towns looking for this same service. It is one we certainly ought not to refuse them … But there are two things I want to say on this point: we should never forget that we were founded principally for country parishes … religious instruction in large parishes and in the towns, needs to be at greater depth because of their greater spiritual needs and their more advanced primary education. In those centres, more than anywhere else, pride of place must be given to catechism and religious practice …The authorities … and the parents … rely on you to give those children sound secular instruction. The Church, who sends you, has loftier goals in view: she asks you to teach those same children to

\textsuperscript{22} Farrell, \textit{op.cit.} p. 76. Br Stephen uses this date, based on Pierre Zind; but it is also accepted by Br Balko.
\textsuperscript{23} \textit{ibid.} p. 77.
\textsuperscript{24} Furet, \textit{op.cit.} p. 83.
\textsuperscript{25} \textit{ibid.} p. 82.
know, love and serve their heavenly Father (and) to make them into good christians.\textsuperscript{26}

Now this ‘speech’ was written down some thirty years after it was ‘made’ and Br Jean-Baptiste was not present when it was said to have been delivered, though he did arrive in Lavalla about six weeks later and, within another six months, was on the staff at Bourg Argental itself. It is a pious and reverent re-construction of the oral tradition. Yet modern scholars of Fr Champagnat and of the writings of Br Jean-Baptiste, such as Br André Lanfrey, would probably accept that this is one instance where the hagiographer, almost unwittingly, admits change and development in the thinking of his hero, whom he normally presents as far-sighted, clear-headed, confident and decisive, from the start.\textsuperscript{27}

At any rate, the school at Bourg Argental was an immediate success and soon had two hundred students. It was this success, and others like it, which probably gave rise to the pressure from Vicar General Bochard, in 1823, to merge the Lavalla Brothers with his diocesan, Society of the Cross of Jesus. However, fate intervened to remove this pressure. In December 1823, the new Pope, Leo XII, appointed the more Ultramontane Bishop de Pins as administrator of Lyon, in place of Cardinal Fesch, who was still in exile, and who still refused to resign. As an ardent Gallican and a loyal servant of Fesch, Fr Bochard resigned as Vicar General and transferred to the neighbouring diocese of Belley, where a more sympathetic bishop remained in charge.\textsuperscript{28} Fr Champagnat immediately wrote to the new Bishop Administrator, won his acceptance and, in early 1824, when primary education was officially put in the hands of the French bishops, received his financial support to found a new and bigger novitiate a few kilometres down stream from Lavalla, at what was to become \textit{l’Hermitage de Notre Dame}. Bishop de Pins also provided Fr Champagnat with the company and, what he believed was the personal support of Fr Courveille, the former seminarian, who had conceived the idea of a Marist society.

It is the presence and influence of Fr Courveille at the Hermitage over the subsequent few years that makes it so difficult to ascertain what Fr Champagnat’s original educational objectives were. The former had never lost sight of his Marist project and although he was sent to the Hermitage at Fr Champagnat’s request and, as far as the bishop was concerned, as his assistant, he regarded himself as the superior of the establishment and took it upon himself to draft a prospectus for the Little Brothers of Mary and to change the design of the brothers’ costume. In the prospectus, which was certainly sighted, and added to, by Fr Champagnat, before being authorised for printing by the new diocesan Vicar General, Fr Cholleton, the name of the congregation is used for the first time, officially, and the reference to being a more economical and affordable version of the De La Salle Brothers is made quite explicit. It also lists the subjects that the brothers will teach as: ‘Catechism, Reading, Writing, Arithmetic, the principles of French Grammar, Church Music and Sacred History.’\textsuperscript{29}

\textsuperscript{26} \textit{ibid.} p. 89.
\textsuperscript{27} Lanfrey, ‘Outline of a Critical Introduction to \textit{The Life of Fr Champagnat}’ in \textit{Marist Notebooks} No.6. 1994 p. 59.
\textsuperscript{28} Kerr, \textit{op.cit.} pp. 190-91.
\textsuperscript{29} Farrell, \textit{op.cit.} p. 99.
Another problem with accepting Br Jean-Baptiste’s account of Fr Champagnat’s original intentions is the scale and function of the complex at the Hermitage. As well as the novitiate for training young brothers, dormitories and a refectory, of course, it eventually had a large, monastic chapel, accommodation for orphans and homeless old men, workshops, where some brothers practised carpentry, tailoring and silk weaving, extensive vegetable gardens, orchards and a dairy. It was, in other words, a fully-fledged monastery. Even the way it was built, by professional builders - but augmented by both Fr Champagnat and the brothers, acting as labourers and apprentices - paints the brothers more as monastic lay brothers, than as straightforward imitators of St John Baptist De La Salle’s congregation. All the brothers stationed in the ten schools, then away from La Valla, returned there in the long summer break of 1824, to help with the building of the Hermitage and this pattern of gathering – though always not for building - recurred every summer break, thereafter. The school brothers went back to their outposts in autumn, but the Founder, who was relieved of his parish duties at La Valla in October that year, kept a group with him at the Hermitage, to get the roof on and make the building more habitable, before winter set in.

Despite his heavy, hands-on involvement in the building project in 1824, Fr Champagnat opened two more schools that year and another in 1825. With the help of Fr Courveille and Vicar General Cholleton, he also drafted the first Statutes of the congregation and forwarded them for approval, via Bishop de Pins, to the Royal Council for Public Instruction in May 1825. It is in the preamble to this document that a version of the aims to educate ‘good citizens and good Christians’, later much quoted, appears. Moreover, it satisfied the Council of Public Instruction which passed the Statutes on to the Council of State, for legal authorisation. The latter, more senior, body however, refused this authorisation. The successes of the extreme royalists and clericalists during the previous year had provoked a prompt anti-clerical backlash, which was to ebb and flow until the 1830 Revolution and long afterwards. The Council of State had tightened restrictions on male religious congregations in a Bill, passed in January 1825 and, in its reply, the Council required Fr Champagnat to change the word ‘vows’ in the Statutes to ‘agreements’, thus changing the proposed religious order into a voluntary or charitable association. Fr Champagnat was not willing to surrender the religious character of his congregation, however, and elected to continue, for the time being, without official authorisation.

Also in May of that year, the community at Lavalla, consisting of twenty brothers and ten postulants, took up residence at the Hermitage. Hence, with the building almost complete, and the authorisation project now in abeyance, Fr Champagnat busied himself with a round of visits of inspection to the scattered school communities. Given his quite frequent absences – on work that he was, after all, fully authorised to undertake – Bishop

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30 Farrell, op.cit. p. 104. The actual version which Br Stephen quotes here is ‘A christian and religious education is the quickest and surest means to ensure good subjects for society and fervent Christians for the Church.’ But it appears in several variations in later applications for authorisation, and, in modern times, in various attempts to define the educational aims of Fr Champagnat.

31 ibid. p. 106.
de Pins sent another priest, Fr Terraillon, who had also been one of the group of young Marist seminarians, to the Hermitage, to assist in the religious instruction of the young brothers. Fr Courveille, who still regarded himself as the Superior General of the entire – though as yet unformed – Marist society, soon became unhappy with the brothers’ continuing recognition of Fr Champagnat as their Superior and he organized two elections, first in September and then October, in which he declared both himself and Fr Terraillon as candidates, as well as Fr Champagnat. On both occasions, the brothers voted quite overwhelmingly for Fr Champagnat, but, during the latter’s absences Fr Courveille still took to acting as Lord Abbot, wearing an ornate blue cloak and circulating the school communities with reproaches and with a set of rules that he had composed.

Exhausted by his labours on the building project and by the round of school visitations – which were mainly made on foot – Fr Champagnat fell seriously ill in December 1825, so seriously, that he made his will and eventually had to retire to the more comfortable presbytery at nearby St Chamond to convalesce. During this illness and absence, Fr Courveille continued to play the Lord Abbot with the brothers and he took it very badly that, when Fr Champagnat returned, they immediately transferred their attention and submission back to the man whom they regarded as their founder and superior. Courveille was so disappointed with this, that he complained to the diocese, which then led to a formal and rather hostile visitation by one of the new Vicars General, Fr Cattet. The latter recommended that the Marist Brothers should be amalgamated with another new order of petits frères, the Brothers of the Sacred Heart, begun by a Fr Coindre, in the same year as the Lavalla foundation. Fortunately, though, Bishop de Pins seems already to have had enough confidence in Fr Champagnat to reject this proposal and, in late April or early May, Fr Courveille abruptly departed the scene, after being involved in a paedophile episode, with one of the young postulants at the Hermitage.

The departure of Fr Courveille – whose influence in these early days has been something of a skeleton in the cupboard for modern historians of both the Marist Fathers and Brothers to exorcise and analyse – seems to mark a transitional phase in the thinking of Fr Champagnat as regards the brothers’ role, a phase which lasted for the next two or three years. In that same year, 1826, he had to dismiss his earliest recruit from Lavalla days, Jean-Marie Grandjean, because of his obstinate obsession with monastic penitential practices such as fasting and wearing hair-shirts. And another early disciple, Br Stephen Roumesy, left of his own accord that year. Again, in 1828-1829, when Fr Champagnat intervened more forcibly in the brothers’ teaching of reading and changed the religious dress to a habit much more like that of the De la Salle Brothers, this provoked a minor rebellion which led to the departure or dismissal of several more of the ‘old’ brothers. Fr Champagnat never lost his own appetite for manual work and the monastic rhythm of life, but from, at least, the July Revolution of 1830 and the Loi Guizot of 1833, he certainly seems to be more clearly focussed on developing a congregation of teaching brothers, modelled on the De La Salles, yet affordable and attractive to poor country

32 Kerr, op. cit. p. 218.
communes and acceptable to the encroaching regulations of the national system of education.33

**Fr Champagnat’s Formation of the Marist Brothers as Teachers: 1830-1840**

Whatever the merits of the monastic, lay brother hypothesis, prior to 1830 there is very little documentary evidence of a clear educational vision that could be confidently attributed to Fr Champagnat. Br Jean-Baptiste, in a late chapter in the *Life* has him say:

If it were only a question of teaching the children secular studies, the Brothers would not be necessary, because secular masters could do that; if our aim were to give religious instruction, we could confine ourselves to being catechists … But ... we want to educate the children, that is … to form them to religious habits and the virtues possessed by a good christian and a good citizen.34

But this ‘quotation’ is difficult to date, much less attribute with certainty to the founder’s own lips and it must be compared with other, almost contradictory, statements from earlier chapters, such as:

Keep in mind that it is your first duty is to bring up the children as christians; that we have undertaken to teach secular sciences only to make it easier to teach them catechism every day … History, grammar, drawing and all other similar subjects, should be like so many baits in your hands, serving to entice the children into your schools and keep them there.35

This latter exhortation is at least datable, seeming to be an extract from one of Fr Champagnat’s circular letters of 1840, but although, ostensibly, minimizing the importance of secular subjects, it actually serves as a preface to the program for an in-service conference on Catechism, Grammar and Parsing, Arithmetic, and French Composition, which all the brothers were expected to attend. Fr Champagnat certainly had different priorities from secular educational thinkers of his time, but he expected the brothers to become competent elementary school teachers, nevertheless.36

Even after 1833, one looks in vain for any extended philosophical or theoretical exposition, by Fr Champagnat, of what he understood by education, much less one which he would have claimed as personal or original. As Br Alexander Balko, who has spent the last forty years mulling over and meditating on the archival material available, observes:

34 Furet, *op.cit.* p. 535.
35 *ibid.* pp. 493-494.
36 Br André remarks: ‘What would distinguish (the Marist Brothers) from the lay teachers was not pedagogical practice but the importance they attached to ‘profane science’: for (the brothers) it was a simple concession, for the latter it was fundamental. The brothers wanted to ‘form’ good Christians who, as a result, would be good citizens; the lay teachers’ mission was to ‘form’ an educated populace who would, therefore, be good citizens.’ Lanfrey, *Marcellin Champagnat & Les Frères Maristes.* p. 238.
Fr Champagnat (was) not an inventor of new educational approaches … he (was) a man who applied pedagogic theories from whom, and wherever, he found them. He admits freely to adopting the techniques perfected by St John Baptist de la Salle … The 1837 ‘Rule’ urges the Brothers to study often and carefully the ‘School Guide’, the pedagogical vade-mecum of the De La Salle Brothers.  

However, Br Balko goes on to claim, that the early brothers nuanced the De La Salle style and justified this variation by the example of their own founder. He claims that:

Fr Champagnat’s disciples seem to have, from the very beginning, made a clear distinction between themselves and their models – by the spirit which animated their pedagogical outlook. The little booklet entitled ‘The twelve virtues of the good teacher’ by the Ven. De la Salle gives ‘Seriousness’ pride of place. (Whereas) a paragraph from the earliest of (Fr Champagnat’s) letters transports us … into a completely different ambience: Things are progressing nicely at Tarentaise. The pupils agree that Br Lawrence was a very ‘nice fellow’ but that his successor is ‘nicer’ still. It should be noted that if the Founder mentions approvingly the expression ‘nice fellow’ it is because it corresponds with his personal view of the ideal teaching ambience.

This conviction that teacher-pupil relations should be friendly and relaxed, as well as his emphasis on the basics of education and on the importance of the junior classes clearly spring – as the Founder himself freely admitted – from his own unhappy early experience of school. And the early example of his father, riding out the tremors of the French Revolution in a turbulent country town, may have contributed to his own determination to make the brothers, at once, politically disengaged and government approved. During the anti-clerical turmoil of the July Revolution of 1830, he kept the brothers calm and detached and he spent a great deal of time and energy, during the last ten years of his life, making repeated attempts to obtain government authorisation for his growing congregation. This latter campaign – like much of Fr Champagnat’s behaviour - was pragmatic rather than ideological. He was urged to undertake it, initially, by his major patron, Archbishop de Pins, and after the Guizot Law of 1833, which made free elementary education compulsory throughout France, teachers legally had to either obtain a brevet – a teaching diploma - or belong to an authorised teaching congregation, like the De La Salle Brothers. If they did not meet these requirements, the brothers would become liable for military conscription. Despite his best efforts, the Marist Founder did not obtain legal authorisation before he died in 1840 – the conscription issue was circumvented by seconding the brothers affected, temporarily, to another, authorised congregation but he certainly imprinted the necessity of such recognition on his followers and it was partially achieved, two years after his death.

37 Balko, ‘Marcellin Champagnat-Educator’ in Marist Notebooks No.1 1990 p. 35.
38 Balko, op.cit. p. 35.
40 Not the De La Salle Brothers; but another, recent and small foundation whose novitiate was at the village of St Paul –Trois-Châteaux.
Interestingly enough, modern reflection on this failure to achieve authorization in the late 1830s, has highlighted an element in the case which, though admitted in Br Jean-Baptiste’s account, is given little emphasis. For Br Jean-Baptiste the central cause of the failure was the hostile attitude of the then Minister for Public Instruction, M. Salvandy, whom he paints as imposing a series of consultations and conditions in order to delay and, finally, to deny the application. One of the conditions suggested, which Br Jean-Baptiste dismisses as ‘a hypocritical show of zeal and good will for the Institute of the De la Salle Brothers’ was that the Marist Brothers should accept authorization to teach in communes with a population of less than eighteen hundred. Considering all the references, in previous applications and prospectuses, to focusing on smaller communes, which could not afford the De la Salle Brothers, this does not seem, on the face of it, an unreasonable compromise. Fr Champagnat, however, with a rather canny entrepreneurial shrewdness, perhaps inherited from his father, would not accept a condition which could unduly restrict the future growth of the Order. In refusing to accept this limited approval he wrote:

It is true that our institute aims to provide the benefits of primary education for the children of small towns and that most of our schools will be opened in such places; yet there are two important reasons that make it necessary for us to have access to more important localities: the need to centralize our schools; and to acquire indispensable resources.

Besides prejudicing future establishments, accepting the proposed limitation would have meant closing some of the existing houses, including the first, at La Valla. In commenting on this refusal, a modern commentator discerns another instance of ‘evolution’ in the thinking of Fr Champagnat which Br Jean-Baptiste has, quite unconsciously, let slip.

The Guizot Law had also made brevets more difficult to obtain and had compelled each Department to establish an École Normale, to train elementary school teachers. The first products of these state teachers’ colleges were not very popular in country parishes, especially with the parish priests, who were usually on the school board of the country communes; but their accredited existence did, nevertheless, put pressure on all the teaching congregations to improve their own members’ qualifications, and the Marist Brothers were a typical example of this. Br Avit Bilon an early brother, who had entered the congregation a few years before the Founder’s death, says bluntly:

Before the law of 1833, the brevet was not required. Fr Champagnat did not foresee that it would be. His first brothers were poorly educated. His meager resources and the numerous requests for brothers that he received left him little

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41 op.cit. p. 211.
42 Furet, op.cit. p. 212.
time to prepare them. Moreover, the people were not very demanding on this point and lay teachers were not much better educated than the brothers. The good Father was thus caught by surprise by the above mentioned law.  

Again, Br Balko has sifted through the archives to attempt a re-construction of Fr Champagnat’s policies and practices in this matter of formation. Even without Br Avit underlining it, we have already seen that some of the earliest brothers were very young and received only a little training, from either Fr Champagnat himself, or the former De La Salle novice, before being sent out to teach catechism or into the first little parish schools. After the 1833 Law, however, the selection and formation processes became, at least in theory, more extended and sophisticated. The novitiate was officially required to be two years long. In the first ‘year,’ the novices, who were, by then, usually in their late teens or early twenties and had to be literate and numerate, lived at the Hermitage and followed a regular timetable of prayer, study and manual work. ‘Subjects essential for primary teaching took turn about … with religious exercises, study of Christian doctrine and manual work.’ The second year of the novitiate was spent in one of the school communities and, as Br Balko puts it:

> The real training of the young Brothers, in teaching catechism and other school subjects, took place during (this) first year in community where, along with doing the housework, they were gradually initiated into teaching. Afterwards they undertook the responsibility for a class under the watchful and fatherly guidance of the Brother Director.

In other words, they became pupil teachers, and their further training took place by part-time study, under the supervision of their Brother Director, topped up, usually, with summer schools at the Hermitage, during the long vacation.

In the early years at the Hermitage, Br Jean-Baptiste’s Life has Fr Champagnat personally leading these summer schools:

> He gave them lessons himself in reading, writing, arithmetic, geography and singing … Having initiated them into these different subjects he went further and showed how they should be communicated to the children, forming them in the method of teaching.

But by the mid-thirties some of the earliest, surviving disciples like Br François, of the 1818 vintage, had matured into a ‘dedicated student.’ Br Jean-Baptiste, himself, who

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47 Br Avit’s first ‘year’ of the novitiate, in 1838, lasted less than seven months and he appears to have been one of the most gifted and more fortunate novices. Perez, *op.cit.* p. 165.
48 Balko, *op.cit.* p. 60.
49 ibid. p. 58.
had joined the congregation, at a slightly older age, in 1822, had become an experienced principal and a ‘self-taught scholar.’ While Br Louis Marie, who had entered in 1832, as a more mature, ex-seminarian, already skilled in mathematics, so impressed his novice master, Br François, that his method of teaching mathematics was quickly adopted across the brothers’ schools. Senior brothers, like these, now took a hand in the organising of the Hermitage summer schools and the young brothers were expected to bring samples of their students’ work to these gatherings for correction and comparison.

Similarly, although Fr Champagnat had placed a great deal of responsibility for the training of the young brothers on the shoulders of the local superiors, (or Brother Directors, as they were called), in the early days, he had followed this up with personal visits to all the schools, going into the young brothers’ classrooms and encouraging the Brother Directors to be zealous in their work of supervision and formation. By the late 1830s, however, there were thirty-seven schools and some of the senior brothers, like Br Jean Baptiste had been given the title first of Grand Recteur then, later, of Head Director and these men took over the work of visitation, acting as district superintendents or inspectors. These same senior brothers were also consulted, both separately and as a panel, before the hand-written Rule which Fr Champagnat had been evolving and adding to, over the years, was finally published, in printed form, in 1837.

Despite these sustained efforts to make sure that the brothers became competent catechists and teachers and that they satisfied the state’s requirements, it cannot be sufficiently stressed that in all that has come down to us from Fr Champagnat about teacher training, whether in the Life, the Letters or the Teacher’s Guide – to which we must shortly turn - his major focus was on the character of the teacher rather than his intellectual development or pedagogical skill. One story from the Life, which became thoroughly embedded in the Australian Marist oral tradition, illustrates this point clearly. One young brother arrived at the Hermitage, for Summer School, with a roll of paper tied to his bag and ostentatiously labelled ‘Great Means of Success’. The founder untied the roll and found that it contained ‘nothing but flourishes, figures of birds and drawings of every kind.’ He sent, first, for the Brother Director, who had supervised the young brother’s training and rebuked him:

What is the value of all your instruction, if this is the best use that can they can make of it. In future, put less emphasis on science and more on piety; but, especially, keep on telling your Brothers that it is through virtue and through God’s help that we do good … this is not done by placing confidence in such trifles.

He then sent for the young brother, himself, rebuked him, also, and threw the offending roll of paper onto the fire, before his very eyes.

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52 Sester, ‘Frère Jean-Baptiste Furet, Biographer of M.Champagnat’ Marist Notebooks No. 1 1990 p. 50.
53 Farell, op.cit. p. 325, footnote 99.
54 Balko, op.cit p. 74.
55 Furet, op.cit. pp. 189-190.
56 ibid. p. 284.
For Fr Champagnat the teacher was to be a guardian angel and a role-model, rather than an intellectual mentor to his students. It is difficult to capture this in a brief quotation from Br Balko, much less Br Jean-Baptiste, but most of the surviving letters of the founder were written to individual brothers, or Brother Directors, counselling them and exhorting them to virtue, zeal, faith and perseverance, rather than to exalted intellectual or pedagogical achievements. Towards the end of one of his essays, Br Balko sums it up thus:

Let us recall the limitations that (the) Marist tradition puts on our activities. In principle we are meant to give Christian education to the poor; consequently the aim of formation is not to indulge in endless study in order to create an intellectual aristocracy. Since the time of our Founder, our preparation has always had in view direct apostolic usefulness ... Let us avoid that formation which is a kind of hibernation, where we spend the best days of our youth withdrawn from reality, without making contact with young people, the poor and the problems of the apostolate.

Returning to our chronological narrative: it should be noted that, after the little lamented Fr Courveille departed the scene, in 1826, Fr Jean Claude Colin, who had been ministering in the neighbouring diocese of Belley, was generally recognized, by the aspirant Marist priests, as their leader and he was, in fact, unofficially elected as their ‘Central’ Superior in 1830. Fr Colin continued to work on writing a Rule for the whole Marist Society, and also at gaining diocesan and Vatican recognition for the nascent congregation. As we have seen in the previous chapter, Vatican recognition was eventually achieved in 1836, but only for the priests’ section of the proposed order. The twenty-one priests involved duly met, in September of that year, to take their vows as members of this new Religious Order, and to officially and formally elect Fr Colin as their first Superior General. At that stage, Fr Champagnat was still hoping that approval for the brothers as part of the larger Marist Society would come in due time, but Fr Colin was not so convinced of either the likelihood, or even the appropriateness, of such an outcome. Fr Colin, after all, had only twenty priests in his group, several of whom were off to Oceania, accompanied, it is true, by a few co-adjutor brothers and a few of Fr Champagnat’s brothers, besides; whereas, the latter had some two hundred brothers, trained or training to become primary school teachers in rural France. The inevitability of the eventual conjunction of the two groups was by no means obvious and, in fact,

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58 Balko, *op.cit.* pp. 75-76.

59 In traditional, clerical Religious Orders, lay brothers acted as domestic servants, tradesmen and farm labourers in support of the priestly members of the Order. Fr Colin had gathered a few of these more traditional brothers around his establishments and some of these went to Oceania with the priests and Fr Champagnat sent a few of his followers too; but the latter, in effect, ceased to be teaching brothers and became co-adjutor brothers to the Marist Fathers (SM) though some did teach catechism in the Pacific Islands, to which they were sent.
considerable tension developed between Fr Champagnat and Fr Colin as to whether the brothers ‘at the Hermitage’ should have teaching, or waiting on the priests, as their first priority.\(^{60}\)

This tension between the two Founders is barely hinted at in Br Jean-Baptiste’s *Life* of Fr Champagnat and, indeed, it is not widely acknowledged in either the fathers’ or the brothers’ congregations, to this day. In 1998, however, Br Gabriel Michel, one of the long-established Marist scholars at the Hermitage, published a substantial, fifty-page article in *Marist Notebooks* on ‘Marcellin Champagnat’s Pathway of Obedience’ which throws new light on this tension and its impact on the future of the two orders.\(^{61}\) According to Br Gabriel - and his contention is backed up by documentation which was either in restricted access or severely edited, at the time - at the fathers’ retreat of 1837, a year after Fr Colin had been elected as Superior General, Fr Champagnat was asked to formally resign his leadership of the Hermitage brothers, basically, as a test of his Religious obedience. He dutifully complied, and was immediately re-instated by Fr Colin; but the tension continued, during the next two years, with Fr Colin demanding that Fr Champagnat send suitably qualified Hermitage brothers to various fathers’ houses and, eventually, that the Hermitage brothers, posted to the fathers’ establishments, wear a different habit from that worn by the teaching brothers. This ambiguity, as to which order, and which Superior, the brothers, posted to the fathers’ houses, were responsible, was satisfactory to neither the fathers nor the teaching brothers concerned and, during the September 1839 fathers’ retreat, Fr Colin asked for a public vote as to whether the co-adjutor brothers should become a separate order, from the teaching brothers. A majority of the priests present, voted for separation. Fr Champagnat, who attended this retreat, but had been taken seriously ill, presumably voted against separation and would have accepted the majority verdict obediently, but with considerable dismay. As Br Jean-Baptiste’s account has it: ‘he had laboured all his life with a single Society in mind.’\(^{62}\)

Given the fragile state of Fr Champagnat’s health, however, Fr Colin decided to take the separation of the two congregations a step further, by instructing Fr Champagnat to have the teaching brothers elect a Superior from among their own number, who would succeed Fr Champagnat, in the event of his death. Even Br Jean-Baptiste’s account makes it clear that this was a wise decision, but one to which Fr Champagnat again agreed obediently, but only with some reluctance.\(^{63}\) The election took place at the end of the brothers’ retreat in mid-October, 1839, with both Fr Champagnat and Fr Colin, supervising the ballot. Br François Rivat was elected ‘Director General’, with Br Louis Marie Labrosse and Br Jean-Baptiste Furet elected, in the same ballot, as his Assistants General. The assembled, professed brothers, who had participated in the election, made

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\(^{61}\) Most of the next two paragraphs is based on this article. Although translated into English by a very French-competent Australian Marist, Br Frederick McMahon, the original author’s style – he has written and published a historical novel on the Fr Champagnat and often interpolates ‘re-constructed’ conversations - is not quite a standard academic argument. Nevertheless, it is adequately footnoted, to primary sources, and the present writer hopes that he represents the relevant thrusts of the article accurately.

\(^{62}\) Furet, *op.cit*., p. 217.

their formal submission to their new Superior, before departing to begin the new school year and, within a little over six months, Fr Champagnat was dead. During his later years, the Founder had been much too busy and he had always been too lacking in personal vanity to sit for his portrait but, on the day he died, the brothers dressed his body in soutane, surplice and stole and summoned a local artist, M. J. Ravery to do the painting. When Br François saw the completed work, he vowed, in his journal, to become the Founder’s ‘living image’. It is to the implementation of the Marist Brothers’ Founder’s vision, by his immediate successors, that we must now turn.

**The Teacher’s Guide & the Canonisation of the Marist Teaching Tradition: 1840-63**

An uncritical reading of the last chapter in Part One of Br Jean-Baptiste’s *Life* makes the period from the Founder’s death, in 1840, to the second General Chapter of 1852–54 sound like a triumphal march from strength to strength, rather like the Israelites’ occupation of the Promised Land, as described in the Book of Joshua. Just as nineteenth century biblical criticism gave a new slant on Joshua, so the work of some modern Marist scholars has put quite a different complexion on both the period in question and on the subsequent decade, which led up to the Vatican’s recognition of the Marist Brothers, as a Religious Congregation in its own right, in 1863.64 During the first twenty years after the Founder’s death, the order was led by Br François and, when he resigned in 1860, he was succeeded by the former First Assistant General, Br Louis Marie, who continued in office until his own death in 1879. It was Br Louis Marie, therefore, who accepted Archbishop Polding’s invitation to send brothers to Sydney. Consequently, the role that both these men played, as early disciples of Fr Champagnat, and also as both Religious Superiors and educational administrators, was crucial in determining the character of the Marist teaching tradition which was established in Australia.

To give Br Jean-Baptiste his due, it must be accepted that the decade after the Founder’s death was a period of remarkable growth: from the 280 members of the Congregation in 1840 to a total of 826 by 1851 - although this does include eighty recruits from the Brothers of St Paul Trois Châteaux, who were amalgamated with the Marists in 1842 and from the Brothers of Viviers, who followed suit, in 1844. Similarly, after the Falloux Law’s encouragement of Religious Orders’ running of elementary schools, numbers continued to increase, reaching a total of 1,408 by the year 1857.65 Far from being the unmixed blessing that Br Jean-Baptiste presents in the *Life*, however, Br André Lanfrey’s modern account describes it as a ‘crisis of growth’ and highlights a series of tensions caused by this expansion.66 There was tension between the brother’s

64 Notably, Br André Lanfrey’s ‘Outline of a Critical Introduction to the Life of Fr Champagnat’ and Br Danilo Farneda ‘The Teacher’s Guide: An Historico-Critical Study’ both published in *Marist Notebooks*, Nos. 6 (1994), and 5 (1993), respectively.


66 *ibid.*
religious vocation as ‘pious laymen’ and their professional vocation as teachers;\(^67\) tension between answering the demands for new establishments and giving the flood of recruits adequate training before sending them out; between the small group of older brothers, some still not very well trained and preferring the lower classes, and those young, new recruits, who gloried in their possession of a *brevet* and, as such, were appointed as Directors of the new schools; between the tight centralizing tendency of Br François and the Assistants General at the Hermitage and the aspirations towards autonomy of the older brothers in the groups associated with St Paul Trois Châteaux, Viviers and the new novitiate at Beaucamp, near Lille.

Again, Br Avit’s *Annals* gives an example of one of these tensions, over which Br Jean-Baptiste has drawn a discreet veil. The boarding school at Grange Payre, near the Hermitage, had, since 1838, been functioning as a juniorate, that is a training house where young teenage boys, aspiring to join the order, could extend their junior secondary education before entering the postulancy or novitiate at the Hermitage.\(^68\) In 1847 it began to function also as a scholasticate, that is, a place where young brothers could continue their professional training, after the novitiate. It could also accommodate older brothers, who had not yet acquired their *brevet*, for in-service and part-time courses, to remedy this deficiency. Unfortunately, the young Br Sylvestre, who was put in charge of these joint *brevet* courses, sought to motivate his students with a spirit of emulation. He put their essays up on the notice board at the Hermitage, where they used to spend Sundays:

The older ones, who were always last, were annoyed about that. The board was smashed up and the pieces thrown into the cesspool during the night of Saturday/Sunday. There was great commotion in the house. Br Jean-Baptiste arrived three days later. He said that the older ones were the ‘strong heads’ of the Institute … They were sent back to the schools … When asked about the incident, Br Dominique answered: ‘That little pest was making fun of the older ones; they taught him a lesson; he deserved it.’\(^69\)

After this incident, Br François drew up more discreet rules, for the running of the scholasticate.\(^70\)

There were even tensions within the governing *troika* of Br François, Br Louis Marie and Br Jean-Baptiste, though one would never guess it, from the last mentioned’s version.\(^71\) From soon after the Founder’s death, there had been doubts raised about Br François’s leadership, even from Fr Colin, the Marist Superior General, who had set his election in motion. And Br Avit, in his typically forthright manner says of him:

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\(^{67}\) In Canon Law the primary aim of any Religious Order is to make its members better Christians, holier people. In a non-clerical order, i.e. where there are no ordained priests, the members are referred to as pious laymen (or women). The active aim or ‘apostolate’ of a Religious Order, such as teaching or nursing, is always the secondary aim in the Church’s view.


\(^{69}\) ibid. p. 45.

\(^{70}\) ibid. p. 71.

\(^{71}\) Furet, *op.cit.* pp. 251-264.
Although he was highly esteemed by all, Br François lacked the character, the initiative, the drive and the dynamism of Fr Champagnat.  

Br Jean-Baptiste, apparently, took up the writing of the founder’s *Life*, only when urged to do so by a Marist Father, because Br François was ‘too busy’ and was perceived to be suffering from frequent headaches. In 1842, the latter was putting the brakes on the brothers’ academic aspirations, reminding them that they should limit themselves to:

- Model handwriting, a deep and practical knowledge of the catechism, good reading, a little grammar and arithmetic … Beyond that, we must only study what is necessary to satisfy the requirement of the locality and the times.

This was not anti-intellectualism, as such, but an attempt by the Superior General to strike a balance between the demands to open new schools and the need to train the flood of recruits to at least the modest degree of religious regularity and classroom competence to which the order then aspired.

Throughout the expansion of the ’forties and ’fifties the Council had to contend, as we have seen, with some recruits who were academically or personally inadequate, on the one hand, and with others, who seemed to be using the order only as a means of gaining their *brevet*, before ‘leaving’ and embarking on careers as lay teachers, or of taking up the study of Latin and aspiring to the priesthood, instead. This last problem was by no means unique to the Marists, of course. The De La Salle Brothers had a very strict rule – informally adopted by Fr Champagnat – against the studying or teaching of Latin, partly to respect the University’s prerogative and maintain their official status as elementary teachers, partly to discourage more ambitious brothers ‘moving up’ to the priesthood. In eighteenth century France, the De la Salle Brothers had often been referred to as *fréres ignorantins* because they did not teach Latin, and although their educational reputation improved dramatically in the nineteenth century, the social status of elementary school teachers and even of teaching brothers was still considerably lower than that of the ordained clergy.

The rate of defections - of brothers leaving the order before, or even after, final profession - did not slow markedly in the 1850s, but the competition from lay teachers and the De La Salles did increase so that, by the mid-fifties, Br François in his circulars was urging the brothers to study hard for their *brevet* examinations. At the same time, he acquiesced in the emotionally wrenching decision to transfer the administrative secretariat of the General House from the hallowed, but remote, Hermitage site, to the new, more centrally located, St Genis-Laval establishment, in the outer suburbs of Lyon.

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72 *ibid.* p. 226, footnote 17.
74 *ibid.* p. 43.
75 *ibid.* p. 43-44.
and he tried to get the brothers, financially, behind this expensive re-location. As well as being more central and therefore, accessible, Br Louis Marie, the first Assistant, also wanted the new General House to be more impressive and monumental; but Br François’ heart was clearly not in it. In 1860, at the age of fifty-two he resigned his life-tenured position as Superior-General. He retired to the Hermitage, where he lived in monastic seclusion, tending a herb garden and starting a Marist tradition of distilling medicinal liqueurs, until his death, in 1881.

If Br François was busy during the forties, working towards government authorisation and spiritually directing the brothers generally, the second member of the troika, Br Jean-Baptiste was pre-occupied with integrating, first, the St Paul Trois Châteaux Brothers from 1842 and, then, the Brothers of Viviers, from 1844 onwards, into the Marist Congregation. He was also heavily engaged in spiritual direction, by correspondence, and was to play a major part in drafting the Common Rules of 1852, the Teacher’s Guide of 1854 and, of course, the Life of 1856. Before attributing too much of the Guide to Br Jean-Baptiste, however, it is worth considering a long, unpublished, and not quite completed treatise on education, which he continued working on until the late 1860s and which has in recent years been reviewed by Br André Lanfrey and also by the recently retired Marist Brothers’ chief archivist in Rome. In this 400 page essay, the text of which is largely composed of quotations from the Fathers of the Church, with hardly any space devoted to the author’s own ideas, Br Jean-Baptiste shows himself to be very little interested in education generally. For him the aim of the Marist Brothers is certainly the Christian Education of children, but the emphasis was much more on the ‘Christian’ than on the ‘Education.’ If the Marist Brothers give elementary education, Br Jean-Baptiste says, it is only as a means to attract the children:

To have them for a longer time, to follow them more closely, to give them more solid religious instruction.

Even the ‘zealous’ brother, who is his imaginary reader, he writes, should not be too concerned about the future careers of worldly students; but should concentrate more on those who seem intended for religious life or the clerical state. These sentiments certainly echo some of the early ideas of Fr Champagnat and, in fact, Br André has traced them to notes which both Br François and Br Jean Baptiste took, independently, of conferences given by the Founder as early as 1824. However, they could hardly constitute an adequate or viable summation of the Marist teaching tradition, if it hoped to be widely accepted as a teaching congregation, as France became more industrialized and the population more urbanized, in the latter part of the nineteenth century.

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80 ibid. p. 47.
82 Almost 600 of his letters survive. Lanfrey, op.cit. p. 36.
84 ibid. p. 34.
85 ibid. p. 37.
In the light of the foregoing paragraphs, it would seem that the driving force behind the codifying and raising the standard of pedagogical practice among the Marists must have been Br Louis Marie Labrosse, the mathematically gifted, ex-seminarian who had joined only in 1832 and had so quickly impressed the novice-master with his teaching ability. Despite his status as a relative newcomer, he had then been elected as First Assistant to Br François in 1839 and was frequently referred to in, the Circulars, as the one to conduct the in-services for those brothers still studying for their *brevets*. He was very much in favour of opening more *pensionnats*, or boarding schools, both to increase the order’s influence and to improve its finances; whereas Br Jean-Baptiste regarded the *pensionnats* as ‘tue-frères’—brother-killers.\(^{87}\) By the mid-fifties Br Louis Marie was apparently, in profound disagreement with Br François, perhaps especially over the shift from the Hermitage to St Genis Laval and its cost.\(^{88}\) But he was the one who succeeded Br François, when the latter resigned as Superior General in 1860. He maintained the policy of ‘expensive’ expansion and was still Superior General when the Australian invitation was accepted in 1868.

This hypothesis is not intended to suggest that Br Louis Marie was less religious or spiritual than Brothers François or Jean-Baptiste or that he was less loyal to the spirit of Fr Champagnat. After he had become Superior General, for instance, he wrote long circulars to the brothers on the cardinal virtues which, coming from an ex-seminarian, were theologically well-argued.\(^{89}\) And he certainly retained the support and co-operation of Br Jean-Baptiste, both as regards the shifting of the General House to St Genis Laval, and in his administration of the order, generally, after Br François’ early resignation.\(^{90}\) Nevertheless, Br Jean Baptiste did have his own differences with Br Louis Marie both about the ‘style’ of Marist administration and, as we have seen above, as regards the dangers to Religious Life posed by the work-load in *pensionnats*.\(^{91}\) Yet Fr Champagnat had sanctioned the opening of boarding schools in his own lifetime and had shown no compunction about leaving the ‘cradle of the institute’ at LaValla, for the much larger, albeit more secluded, mother house at the Hermitage. But Br François and Br Jean-Baptiste appear to have been more inclined towards the more meditative, reflective, quasi-monastic aspect of Fr Champagnat’s inspiration, whereas Br Louis Marie seems to have been more imbued with the shrewd, administrative, quasi-entrepreneurial side of the Founder’s character.\(^{92}\)

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\(^{87}\) Lanfrey, e-mail message 11.3.03. Br André was kind enough to read through an early draft of this chapter and offered this additional piece of information.


\(^{89}\) ibid. p. 37.

\(^{90}\) Furet, *op.cit.* p. 262. A footnote in the bicentennial edition of the *Life* draws attention to the fact that Br Jean-Baptiste edited a speech made by Fr Colin to the 1852-54 Chapter delegates, so as to omit a ‘favourable’ reference to the Hermitage site. Another footnote, p.121, draws attention to the critical comments in the Furet text about the Hermitage’s suitability as a general house, especially in winter.

\(^{91}\) Br André quotes Br Avit’s story of Br Louis Marie standing in front of a map of France, trying to divide it into areas of responsibility for the three major Superiors. ‘This made Br Jean-Baptiste laugh out loud’ according to Br Avit. Br Jean-Baptiste had a much more individual and personalist view of administration. Lanfrey, e-mail 8.06.04.

\(^{92}\) Lanfrey, e-mail 11.03.03.
It is in this context of the tensions caused by the explosive growth of the Congregation and among the leadership group that we must approach the drafting of *The Teacher’s Guide* and Br Jean-Baptiste’s account of it. According to the latter:

There was another matter of equal importance (to obtaining government authorization) which had been exercising the minds of Brother Francis and his Assistants for a long while. That was the revision of the Rules and their final acceptance by the body of the Institute ... To carry out this task, the General Council (i.e. Br Francis and his two Assistants) implemented three measures:

1. They put in writing all the traditional practices which, though not spelt out in the printed Rules, had been established by Fr Champagnat himself and constantly observed by the Brothers.
2. They made a close examination of all the writings, notes and instructions left by the Founder on the Rules; from these, they gleaned whatever was calculated to clarify or explain certain points of Rule, to give them coherence and fill them out.
3. They arranged and classified all this material, dividing it into three main parts under the titles: Common Rules, Rules of Government, and School Guide.

When this was completed, discussed and thoroughly examined, the Superior General summoned a General Chapter in order to submit the work to it. The Chapter members were to study, discuss it and, if they saw fit, to modify it; they would then fix and definitively adopt the Institute’s Rules, form of government and method of teaching. The thirty members of the Chapter were chosen and appointed by all the professed Brothers.

The Chapter members assembled at the Hermitage towards the end of May, 1852 ... They applied themselves assiduously to the discussion of the Rules submitted to them and, being convinced that they reflected the will of their pious Founder and contained his principles and spirit, they adopted them, just as they were, with a few minor modifications.  

Br Jean-Baptiste’s account – only part of which is abridged above – does admit that the General Chapter actually ran to three sessions in 1852,'53 and '54 and that there ‘was some discussion, even lively discussion, concerning certain points of detail’. He omits, however, that the Chapter was dominated by the eighteen delegates from the Hermitage Province as distinct from the five, each, from the St Paul-Trois-Chateaux and Viviers Provinces and the two from the recently established Nord Province, based on the new novitiate at Beaucamp, near Lille. This omission is significant because there was, in fact, a strong move among the delegates for a more de-centralized form of government, which the Hermitage group, led apparently by Br Louis Marie, successfully resisted. This, in turn, enables us to estimate the extent of what Br Jean Baptiste might consider to be, simply ‘points of detail.’  

It is the formation of the *Teacher’s Guide*, rather than the *Common Rules* or the *Constitutions and Rules of Government* that concern us here, however, and we are...

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93 Furet, *op.cit.* pp. 259-60.
fortunate that a historico-critical study of this document has been undertaken in recent years by an Argentinian Marist Brother, Danilo Farneda, who had access to all the relevant archival material, including four unpublished manuscript copies of the Guide itself.\footnote{Farneda, ‘The Teacher’s Guide’ \textit{Marist Notebooks}. No. 5 1994. pp. 49-61.} Br Danilo places the production of the Guide in the same context of rapid expansion described by Br André:

The reduced period of teacher training of the Brothers, brought about by the need to respond to the urgent demands of new foundations, did not guarantee a sufficient pedagogical formation. The Teacher’s Guide could be considered a way of forming teachers by actually teaching.\footnote{Farneda, \textit{op.cit.} p. 56 (footnote 15).}

And he quotes the preface to the 1853 edition of the Guide to support this interpretation of its function:

In his class, more than anywhere else, a Brother needed rules which outlined his duties and the manner of fulfilling them, because if he were free to choose them himself, the possible shortcomings of his teaching and his method would be prejudicial not only to himself but also to his pupils and his confrères.\footnote{ibid. \textit{loc.cit.} (footnote 14).}

Or, as Br André puts it more bluntly: ‘Frequently (these) raw recruits were an embarrassment … and made blunders that brought ridicule on the Brothers’,\footnote{Lanfrey, 1994 p. 43.} and this, at a time, when the Marist Brothers, though much in demand, were also often in competition with lay teachers and, sometimes, with the De La Salle Brothers.\footnote{Balko, ‘The Spiritual Testimony of Father Champagnat’ \textit{Marist Notebooks} No. 6 1994 p. 63.}

Br Danilo then goes on to outline the stages in the development of the Guide, dating a first draft, which Br Jean-Baptiste showed to a Marist priest, Fr Langniet, to 1845.\footnote{The Marist Fathers were, by this stage, running a number of Colleges and Petits Seminaires i.e. they were recognized as secondary school teachers. Although the Marist Brothers had two or three boarding schools, which were modeled on the De La Salle Brothers’ pensionnats and gave a sort of junior secondary education, which became known as enseignement speciale, they were still predominantly elementary school teachers.} This draft was then worked on by the General Administration of the brothers possibly by Br Louis Marie as much as by Br Jean-Baptiste or Br François, until it was presented to the General Chapter of 1852. The Chapter itself, instead of accepting it with a few changes in detail, as Br Jean-Baptiste claimed, formed a ‘Commission of the Guide’ which took the draft away for study and emendation and brought it back, twelve months later, to the second session of the Chapter which did accept the revised version and authorized its publication that same year. The Guide was revised several times by later General Chapters but this 1853 edition was the one on which Br Ludovic and Br John Dullea – two key figures in the Australian foundation – were brought up; and an English translation of part of the same edition, published in Glasgow in 1877, was used in the training of young Australian Marist Brothers from that later date onwards.
The sub-title of both editions of the Guide, sighted by the present writer, claims that it was ‘compiled from the writings and instructions of Fr Champagnat’ and, in the preface to the Constitutions, which were adopted at the third session of the Chapter, in 1854, a similar claim is made for that document.\(^{101}\)

They are our beloved Father’s. They may not all have been written by his hand, but they are still his, for we have gleaned them from his writings or from the customs that he set going amongst us. They are the faithful expression of his will, and enshrine his spirit … his way of directing the Brothers and doing good among the children.\(^{102}\)

However, it must be remembered, as Br Balko has pointed out\(^ {103}\) - and he is echoed by Br Danilo\(^ {104}\) - that Fr Champagnat made no claims to novelty or originality in his practice of pedagogy. In his lifetime and indeed, until 1853, the standard reference point used by the Marist Brothers had been the De La Salle Brothers’ handbook, the Conduite des Écoles Chrétienes. And although, as Br Balko also pointed out, the Marists had nuanced the De La Salle style, the Conduite continued to be the most obvious literary source for the new Marist Guide. Br Danilo in his analysis of the sources of the Guide does maintain that:

\[(\text{It}) \text{ was not the result of a passive assimilation of the norms of the Conduite. After thirty-five years of experience in the schools, the Marist Brothers had acquired a style and some educational insights of their own; so that, at a certain time, the need was felt to clarify in a document this specifically Marist form of education.}\(^ {105}\)\]

Nevertheless, he insists, the Conduite is the main literary source of the Guide, though not its only one.

Among the other literary sources, Br Danilo discovered, were works by Fenelon, Rollin, Br Agathon FSC, Cardinal de la Luzerne, and Bishop Dupanloup. It is a telling list because, although it is possible that Fr Champagnat could have read the works of the first four writers, either in their original, or as references in the Conduite – which was not, itself, an original work\(^ {106}\) - he could not possibly have referred to Bishop Dupanloup, whose quoted works were not published until after 1850. In other words, either Br Jean-Baptiste, Br Louis Marie or, possibly, some other zealous members of the Chapter’s ‘Commission for the Guide’ had begun gilding the lily of Fr Champagnat’s original instructions, with embellishments borrowed from the French Catholic educational classics.\(^ {107}\) The Guide, therefore, actually represents an evolutionary step in the Marists’

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\(^{101}\) i.e. The 1877, abbreviated, Glasgow translation and the 1931, complete, English language edition.

\(^{102}\) Furet, op.cit. p. 261.

\(^{103}\) See above p. 40.

\(^{104}\) Farneda op.cit. p. 59.

\(^{105}\) ibid. p. 51.

\(^{106}\) Balko, ‘Marcellin Champagnat, Educator’ p. 35.

\(^{107}\) Lanfrey, Marcellin Champagnat et Les Frères Maristes (Paris, 1999) p. 211.
understanding of the Founder’s vision and this understanding was to evolve further, in response to changing social and political circumstances within France. The *Guide*, itself, would be revised and re-issued in 1891 and 1931; but, as we have seen, the finished product of these later revisions, like that of the 1854 edition, was still vested with Founder’s own authority. And although only a truncated English translation of the first edition made its way to Australia, the (complete) French first edition was the one on which the first European brothers to come to Australia were ‘raised’. For them, it was Fr Champagnat’s way of teaching.

In his most recent account of the development of this first edition of the *Guide*, Br André highlights two other ways, in which the handbook had evolved from the original vision of the Founder and which help to explain some apparent anomalies in the introduction of Marist pedagogy to Australia.\(^{108}\) As was mentioned, earlier in this chapter, Fr Champagnat had laid down, from the start, that the brothers were to teach using the ‘Simultaneous Method’, pioneered by the De La Salle Brothers, rather than by the ‘Mutual Method’, a monitory method, similar to the English Bell-Lancastrian system, which gained some popularity in French Protestant and ‘liberal’ secular schools both during the early Restoration period, and in the early days of the July Monarchy.\(^{109}\) In the ‘simultaneous’ method, the teacher instructed a whole class of pupils together, rather than hearing their reading, or other lessons, individually, as in the old-fashioned ‘individual’ method, or by farming them out to monitors, as in the ‘mutual’ method. There were clearly some ideological, as well as economic, implications to these two quite different approaches and Fr Champagnat, initially, felt strongly enough about the difference, to close the school at Feurs in 1831, when the anti-clerical mayor of the commune insisted that the brothers should change to the mutual method.\(^{110}\) In the *Guide*, however, it is the ‘Mixed’ or Simultaneous-Mutual method which Br François authorizes, in Chapter XIII:

*Considering the nature and staffing of our schools, the Venerable Champagnat adopted the class (i.e. simultaneous) mode for the Institute, while at the same time admitting that in the lower classes of primary schools, where the number of pupils is unusually large, it might be combined with the monitory (i.e. mutual) mode.*\(^{111}\)

Br André goes on to point out that this compromise position was actually developing before the Founder’s death and that, by 1854, the straight-out Mutual Method had become little more than a historical curiosity; but this example does underline the care with which Br François’ claim of absolute fidelity must be scrutinized.\(^{112}\)

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\(^{109}\) Anderson, *Education in France*, p. 33.


\(^{111}\) This quotation is taken from the 1931, English edition of the *Guide*; the earlier, French, editions not being available in Australia. The bracketed ‘translations’ of the terms ‘mutual’ and ‘simultaneous’, are the present writer’s. *The Teacher’s Guide*. (Grugliasco, 1931) p. 163.

The second example of ‘development’ is, more clearly, an example of deviation from the inspiration of the Founder. Br André, working from the Minutes of the Chapter, reveals that the reference to the use of the ‘strap’ was a matter of extended and heated debate. He notes that the discussion of this subject, on May 20, 1853 which had been ‘vivement combattu’, was re-introduced for discussion on May 30 and the proposition put, that:

The article relating to the strap should be suppressed and those brothers who wish to use it should be required to ask permission from the Superior.

The matter was debated, again, on May 31 and Br André relates that the article, which was finally accepted, defined the strap as a simple piece of leather, forty centimeters long, which should be used rarely, once only, on the left hand, and never, on small children. The use of the strap was ‘tolerated’ not ‘authorised’; and brothers were explicitly forbidden to push, slap, pinch or kick their students, to pull their ears, or their hair, or to hit them with the pointer or the ‘signal’. The pointer, in fact, was to be fastened to the wall by a string, so that it could not be used as a cane.

Nevertheless, as Br André, points out, this ‘tolerance’ of the strap was a departure from the attitude of the Founder, and was, arguably, recognised as such:

An opposition, so entrenched, to the strap and to all inflicted punishments was certainly based on the teaching of the Founder, whose Life includes a diatribe against the strap, (p. 529); but he had been unable to establish a pedagogy, without chastisement, which was so much anchored in tradition. The Guide des Écoles, therefore, evinces an age-old tension between a traditional pedagogy, and another, which is more respectful of the child. To some extent, there is a contradiction between the ideal image of the guardian angel and the strap; a contradiction, however, which some brothers could not comprehend, because, for them, to ‘chastise’ and to ‘hit’ were, more or less, indistinguishable terms and just to control, much less teach, country children was a real challenge.113

This second, and quite undeniable, deviation from the Founder’s vision explains why corporal punishment so quickly became entrenched in Marist Australia, when it was so expressly rejected in the Life of Fr Champagnat. If the first disciples and immediate successors of the Founder had been unable to eradicate corporal punishment in rural and traditional France, what chance would the young Marist trainees in colonial, urban and larrakin Australia have?

Returning, once more, to the chronological narrative, the General Chapter, which eventually ratified the Common Rules, the Teacher’s Guide and the Constitutions and Rules of Government and concluded in 1854, also took the steps of conferring the title of Superior General on Br François and of electing a third Assistant General, Br Pascal, to help him in his administration. The first of these steps was necessary because, when

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113 Lanfrey, (1999). pp. 217-218. The whole of the two preceding paragraphs is based on these pages of Br André’s work; but the original is in French, and the translation of the direct quotes is the present writer’s. The page reference, in the second quotation, has also been changed to suit the English edition.
Br François had been elected to succeed Fr Champagnat, it was still the latter’s hope that the brothers would eventually become part of the combined Marist Order, of which Fr Colin was the recognized Superior General. Br François, therefore, had initially been given the title of Director General and Fr Colin had, in Fr Champagnat’s will, been given a watching brief over the sizeable, but still fledgling, teaching institute. Fr Colin was actually present at the 1852-54 Chapter and helped the Brothers’ General Council with his encouragement and advice; but, quite early in the piece, he made the not unexpected announcement that since there was no prospect of Rome’s accepting the teaching brothers’ amalgamation into the Marist Fathers, they had better formally accept their de facto autonomy. Br François’ re-nomination as Superior General was simply formal recognition of this reality and for the next decade, but especially from 1857 onwards, the Brothers’ General Council worked towards achieving Vatican recognition, as a non-clerical Religious Institute, in its own right; something which was conditionally achieved in 1863.

The reason for the election of the third Assistant General was related to the Chapter’s decision regarding the Rules of Government. Despite the wishes of the St Paul Trois Châteaux delegates, for a more de-centralized form of government, with a resident Provincial Superior administering semi-autonomous provinces, immediate authority was left in the hands of the Superior General and his Assistants. A Provincial/Visitor was appointed to each Province; but the General Council retained the authority to move any brother in any province, though respecting the principle that they were expected to maintain establishments in each diocese in proportion to the number of brothers who had come from that diocese. The Provincial/Visitor’s role was more pedagogical than pastoral and he had to write an account of his Province to the General Council every month, while Brother Directors (i.e. the local Superior in each school community) had to write every second month. This clearly meant that the Assistants would be committed to a very heavy correspondence load and all of them, not just adepts like Br Jean-Baptiste, were expected to write individual responses to their correspondents, as well as contributing to the Circular Letters, which went to all houses with exhortations, announcements, instructions and policy statements. The Provincial/Visitor, in his school visitations would, of course, be expected to comment on how well the directions of the Teacher’s Guide were being followed.

This centralization of authority in the hands of the General Council made the gaining of Vatican approval quite urgent, because until such time as this was granted, the brothers could only work in any individual diocese with the approval of the local bishop. Even after Vatican approval was gained, the local bishop’s approval would still be necessary; but the balance of power between a diocesan bishop and a Superior General, whose order served many dioceses, was thus evened up. The burgeoning teaching orders, male and female, were a new phenomenon to nineteenth century Catholic bishops, most of whom did not accord a particularly high status to these non-clerical religious orders, but who did entertain quite an exalted conception their own

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114 Furet, *op.cit.* p. 263.
115 Lanfrey, ‘Outline of a Critical Introduction’ p. 44.
116 *ibid.* p. 36.
local authority.\textsuperscript{117} The excommunication of Mother Mary McKillop, by Bishop Sheil of Adelaide in 1871, is just one well-known example of these difficulties experienced by the new Religious Orders and one which the Australian Marist Brothers could parallel, at a similar stage of their own development.\textsuperscript{118} The granting of Vatican authorization to the Marist Brothers in 1863 was, therefore, a significant strengthening of the Order’s teaching tradition, since it had now been canonized in the Guide and could also be policed, by the autonomously authorized Provincial/Visitors. The last stepping stone had been set in place, to facilitate the introduction of the Marist Brothers’ teaching tradition to Australia.

\textbf{Conclusion}

By 1863, therefore, the Marist Brothers had developed a rule of life, an approach to teaching, and a system of government, or administration, which would enable them to spread far beyond the dioceses they were serving at the time of the Founder’s death. The inspiration for this ‘system’ was attributed, consistently and very deliberately, to the example and teaching of the Fr Champagnat himself; but it made no special claims to originality or greater effectiveness, as compared with the De La Salle Brothers’, or Jesuit Fathers’ ‘systems’. Fr Champagnat, himself, had laid most emphasis on catechism and elementary education, but he had neither restricted the brothers simply to the role of catechists, nor ruled out junior secondary education, after the style of that provided by the De La Salle pensionnats, in the few boarding schools which had begun operating, before his death. The only clear distinction between the Marist Brothers’ ‘style’ and that of the other, older Orders was that it was aimed at the poorer, mainly rural communes and at a working class or lower middle-class clientele. As a style, this was very conscientiously preserved by the first Superior General, Br François, codified by the Second General Chapter of 1852-54 and extended and implemented by the second Superior General, Br Louis-Marie.

However, as Br André has recently pointed out, the Marist’s pre-industrial and rural origins meant that the first edition of the Guide would soon be overtaken by French economic and social developments.\textsuperscript{119} As that country moved into the industrial revolution and the railway age, the rudimentary network of small rural primary schools, linked to a few, more central pensionnats, where country boys could gain a slightly higher standard of commercial or technical education, which Fr Champagnat had been developing by the time of his death, was already obsolescent. By 1870, parents, even in the traditionally conservative and ‘religious’ rural regions, were no longer satisfied with having their children simply brought up to be literate and numerate as well as obedient and pious; they were beginning to demand qualifications and career prospects.\textsuperscript{120} It was, perhaps: recognition of this trend, in addition to the financial pressures of the move to St Genis; what he considered to be the religiously destructive pressure to achieve brevets

\footnotesize\textsuperscript{117} ibid. p. 47.
\footnotesize\textsuperscript{120} ibid. pp. 243-246.
and even higher teaching qualifications; and the growing competition, both from the De La Salle Brothers and the lay teachers, in the National schools, that provoked the early resignation of poor Br François. It was, almost certainly, this same realization that drove Br Louis Marie to embark on his more academically rigorous and financially demanding program. In so doing, he probably alienated some of the older brothers and, possibly, some of the wealthier, more conservative, Catholic benefactors, who had endowed the larger, pensionnat foundations of the late ’forties and early-to-mid ’fifties. But, like the De La Salle Brothers and even some of the female congregations, he probably felt that he had no other choice. It was in the early stages of this tougher, more demanding and more competitive milieu that the brothers, who brought the Marist teaching tradition to Australia, were trained. It is to them we must now turn.

121 The Novitiate and pensionnat at Beaucamps, near Lille, for instance, was entirely financed by the Countess of La Grandville in 1846. Furet, op.cit. p. 256.