

THE CAUSE OF FR. MOREAU: A NEW PERSPECTIVE 1984-3

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On January 20, 1973, at Le Mans, on the occasion of the 100th anniversary of the death of Fr. Moreau, Father Angelo Mitri, O.M.I., postulator of the cause of our founder since February, 1970,¹ gave a talk before the leaders of the three branches of the Congregation of Holy Cross. Fr. Mitri spoke some truths that were difficult for his audience to accept. And I quote: "The cause of Fr. Moreau, up to this time, has proceeded very quickly. You must have had either an extraordinary postulator or a God who is completely on your side." "However," added Fr. Mitri, "if I compare the progress of Fr. Moreau's cause with that of others, I am tempted to say that there has been an injustice committed."²

Fr. Mitri's way of looking at the cause of our founder was so new that it seems understandable why Fr. Lalande, Superior General at that time (1973), did not dare reproduce this quote in his circular letter on the occasion of the centenary honoring Fr. Moreau.³

Yet, Fr. Mitri knew what he was saying. He had written his thesis in Canon Law precisely on the topic of "the process of beatification." The promulgation of a cause, usually lasts forty years. The cause of Fr. Moreau initiated at Le Mans in 1947, was introduced in Rome eight years later in 1955. The initial procedure being completed, the Dossier on Fr. Moreau's virtues was completed six years later, in 1961. This adds up to fourteen years. At this rate, Fr. Moreau should have been beatified within twenty years instead of forty.

It was only after 1961 that the process began to slow down due to the Vatican Council as well as to other circumstances which I shall discuss later. But now let us return to the remarks of Fr. Mitri. It is true that there have been exceptional persons who helped speed up the cause. First, we have Fr. Cousineau who championed the cause at the outset. Next, we have Mgr. Grente, then the bishop of Le Mans and later cardinal, who led his diocese with authority and who required of his collaborators a high level of efficiency.⁴ Mgr. Grente took the cause of Fr. Moreau so much to heart that even our Superior General found that he pushed too hard.⁵

Fr. Cousineau was not the first person in the history of Holy Cross to seek to refresh the memory of our founder. He wasn't even the first to consider the process of canonization. His predecessor, Fr. Donahue, not to mention Fr. Francois before him, had laid the groundwork. Both these men had evidently created a most favorable situation, particularly through their research on the pertinent documents. Moreover, the tensions which existed at that time between the brothers and priests made the question of canonization a most delicate one. It is not surprising that almost immediately after the establishment of autonomous provinces (in 1945) the introduction of the cause of Fr. Moreau at Le Mans was made possible (1947).

From the start, i.e., from 1947, we had, in Rome, the help of Mgr. Fontenelle, who was chosen as postulator. Mgr. Fontenelle seems to have exerted a strong influence in Roman circles and, in several instances, his interventions proved fruitful. But we also had the most efficacious help in the person of Fr. Edward Heston, Procurator General in Rome for the priests and brothers beginning in 1946. He was a most active and efficient man with a natural and imposing authority who impressed all who witnessed his work. The combining of all Fr. Heston's energies with those of his collaborators explains why, from 1947 to 1961, the cause of Fr. Moreau was carried out so quickly. Fr. Heston had even succeeded in having the Prefect of the Sacred Congregation of Rites, Cardinal Micara, as cardinal "ponens," i.e., as protector of the cause! Cardinal Micara himself took this matter to heart. He and Fr. Heston collaborated very closely. They also became great friends. In March, 1953, at the end of an interview where an important objection from the lawyer acting as "Devil's Advocate" was resolved in favor of Fr. Moreau, Fr. Heston declared: "The Cardinal, at the end . . . gave me a big bear-hug." And he added: "I use my words advisedly."⁶

Let us return to the text of Fr. Mitri. Fr. Mitri also suggested reasons why the cause of Fr. Moreau was slowed down, and nearly stalled, from 1961 to 1973. He said: "The Council [opened in 1962, but in the works since 1960] certainly held back progress, as did the period of insecurity after the Council." "During this period," added Fr. Mitri, "there were three promoters of the faith and the second, for a variety of reasons, left much of the work unfinished. John XXIII (as well as other popes) had pushed certain causes to the detriment of others." Just in passing, let us say that this situation still exists today, particularly in view of the pope's frequent trips. The tendency is to look for the cause (in an advanced stage) of a person from a country the pope will be visiting. The result is that the cause of Fr. Moreau remained in the hands of the "promoters of the faith" (the Devil's Advocates) for more than twelve years, from 1961 to 1974, only to be rejected and referred to the historical section. We need to be clear about the fact that we did not have to start from scratch except for the most important study of the virtues of the founder. The other stages of the process remained valid and still are: i.e., the first steps made at Le Mans between 1947 and 1950; the information of non-cultic nature; the approbation in Rome, in 1955, of the writings of Fr. Moreau as being without error, either dogmatic or moral; the approbation by the Holy See in 1957 of the "non-cultic proceeding" initiated at Le Mans; and the Roman decree on the validity of the steps taken at Le Mans up 'till 1957. What needed to be redone, and from another perspective, was the work of the church lawyer from Rome who had drawn up, from the steps taken at Le Mans, a study and a plea on the heroicity of the virtues of Fr. Moreau (a work completed in 1961).

At present, let us consider in greater detail a few of the historical circumstances of the cause which show the speed with which it was carried out and the efficiency of the persons who promoted it.

From the time of his nomination as Superior General in 1938, Fr. Albert Cousineau spoke of working toward the beatification of our founder, but he had to proceed with caution. In December, 1940, he recalled simply,

and in passing, in a circular letter: "I profit by this occasion . . . to remind you of the following decree, approved successively by our General Chapters since 1926: 'the Procurator General is authorized, should the occasion present itself, to take an active part in the introduction of the causes of The Most Reverend Fathers Moreau and Dujarie.'" "It is thus a duty for us," Fr. Cousineau added, "to become interested and involved, in whatever way possible, in this double cause."⁷ Fr. Cousineau also encouraged Fr. Phileas Vanier, a priest from the Canadian Province, who had already been collecting any materials he could find on the life of Fr. Moreau, to continue his research. It was Fr. Vanier who discovered, in 1943, thanks to Fr. Thomas McAvoy, in the archives of the University of Notre Dame, the famous "Perche papers," which clarified precisely the complicated question of the correspondence between Fr. Moreau and Saint Euphrasia Pelletier, the latter having been canonized in 1940. Fr. Cousineau, when writing to Fr. Vanier, spoke openly of the canonization of Fr. Moreau. He wrote in 1943: "Once again, organize your work according to the needs of the cause. I am so convinced that we are on the right track, that your current research is such that it will advance the cause of the Most Rev. Fr. Moreau by leaps and bounds . . . I approve, in advance, whatever you determine to do in this area."⁸

But two years later, in 1945, Fr. Cousineau had to recant somewhat. He wrote once again to Fr. Vanier, who had said that many of his confreres were considering Fr. Dujarie as the true founder of Holy Cross, "I had hoped," says Fr. Cousineau, "to introduce the cause of canonization of Fr. Moreau during my time in office."⁹ "I see that this will be difficult . . . But, let us not despair, but rather work with fervor. Others will complete the project."¹⁰ A point well taken. The General Chapter of 1945 officially recognized Fr. Moreau as the founder of the Congregation of Holy Cross at the same time as it established the autonomy of the provinces. Two months later, on Oct. 19, 1945, Fr. Cousineau, during an audience with Pius XII, at which time he had brought up the subject of our founder, received these words from the pontiff: "Introduce the cause of your founder as soon as possible."¹¹ Fr. Cousineau did not wait to be coaxed. He wrote to Fr. Vanier: "The Holy Father insisted that we go ahead with this." And he added: "At Le Mans, I asked His Excellency, Mgr. Grente, what he thought . . . He reacted favorably and assured me that it would be a great honor for him to work towards this end." And Fr. Cousineau concluded: "You understand that I wish to do all I can for this cause, both with prudence and zeal."¹² There was no longer any question of the need to receive official approval. Three weeks later, on February 22, 1946, the Superior General could write: "I submitted the project . . . of introducing the cause of Fr. Moreau to the General Council. The proposal was accepted unanimously."¹³

Meanwhile, Fr. Cousineau was quite conscious of the fact that "the cause of Fr. Moreau was a difficult one." He wrote to Fr. Vanier: "I myself wanted to have a perfectly objective documentary of Fr. Moreau's life written." He also added: "Steps in this direction have already been taken." We see here the degree to which Fr. Cousineau was "a man of action" who got down to the task quickly! "We must profit," he said, "from the positive disposition of the present bishop of Le Mans . . . It is up to us to prepare ourselves. . . ." And he concluded: "During my stay

in France I gave \$100 to Mgr. Grente." "It would be wise," he wrote in another letter to Fr. Vanier, "to put aside, from the amount of money you will carry (to France) alms substantial enough for his Greatness . . ."¹⁴ Throughout the entire history of this cause, we disbursed alms liberally, especially in the form of Mass stipends, to all the non-Holy Cross collaborators in the cause. The latter effort certainly did not hurt the advancement of this cause!

Fr. Cousineau, however, had not acted without asking for the cooperation of the leadership of the three branches of Sisters of Holy Cross. The three Superiors General, meeting at the generalate of the Marianites at Precigne on June 29, 1946, decided to join Fr. Cousineau in requesting of Mgr. Grente that he introduce the cause of Fr. Moreau. Hence, the Sisters spoke of "the many signal favors in these latter years attributed to Fr. Moreau."¹⁵ Mgr. Grente wrote immediately (in July, 1946) to Rome for permission to introduce the cause. This letter was taken to Rome by Fr. Cousineau himself.¹⁶ In return, Fr. Cousineau received the collaboration of Mgr. Fontenelle, a confessor from St. Peter's basilica in Rome. Mgr. Fontenelle became postulator of the cause of Fr. Moreau. He had already successfully championed several other causes. He turned his attention, with just as much enthusiasm, to reading the life of Fr. Moreau.¹⁷

On May 27, 1947, Mgr. Grente promulgated the decree which constituted the diocesan tribunal and which commissioned the research on all the writings of Fr. Moreau.¹⁸ It was expected that the cause would be "historic."¹⁹ But Mgr. Fontenelle, who was more experienced with contemporary causes, i.e., with those which still have eyewitnesses, preferred "to avoid the historical method because it is a longer and less precise procedure,"²⁰ even if this meant setting up a kind of juridical fiction by using eyewitnesses who were eighty years old or more and who had seen Fr. Moreau at one time or another when they were young.²¹

Quickly, Mgr. Fontenelle published (it was actually Fr. Herve Morin, Assistant General, who did this writing, working practically day and night at it)²² "Articles" on the virtues of Fr. Moreau. The tribunal at Le Mans then held sessions beginning on May 1, 1948 to question the witnesses who had been gathered.²³ The entire matter proceeded smoothly and speedily. The witnesses from Canada and the United States traveled to Le Mans, though they could have given their testimony to the bishop of their respective dioceses. But, as Fr. Cousineau said: "If I judge from the case of Brother Andre, the proceedings in Montreal are very slow. We must not delay the workings of the tribunal at Le Mans and thus put a damper on the good will and enthusiasm of Mgr. Grente."²⁴

Meanwhile, eyewitnesses were becoming increasingly difficult to find. One Sister and one Brother of Holy Cross who had known Fr. Moreau, had recently died. But Mgr. Fontenelle decided to continue the process in what is known as "the normal way," i.e., by avoiding the historical method. He consulted the Promoter of the Faith (Natucci) who had encouraged him to follow the former process. He admitted that "the number of eyewitnesses is diminishing drastically, to a very small number." Nevertheless, he "believed that the number of eyewitnesses they did have would be sufficient to keep the process going according to the 'normal way', at least for the

moment, without having recourse to the 'historical' way." Mgr. Fontenelle said: "This is what resulted from a lengthy conference which I attended this morning." And he added, "The historical method is merely in its early stages, having been initiated practically only in 1939. It does not yet have a stable enough jurisprudence and the insecurities are many, while the normal or ordinary way, which has been trusted since Benedict XIV,²⁵ offers no element of surprise and a great deal more security."²⁶

Meanwhile, Canon Catta was engaged in writing a biography of Fr. Moreau. He collaborated with the postulator, helping him understand, ahead of time, the possible objections against the virtues of the founder.²⁷ In this way, Mgr. Fontenelle became aware of the fact that the life of Fr. Moreau was beset by many conflicts and difficulties. He said, "I read a section of the dossier on Fr. Moreau which does not cast him in a favorable light. This is not to say that I am totally discouraged. Evidently, the cause is a very difficult one . . . much more so than I had anticipated at first. Moreover, it seems clear that Fr. Moreau won't be a 'sugar-coated' saint! But, his good deeds are too glorious for the dark clouds to discourage us."²⁸

Begun on the first of May, 1948, the diocesan proceedings were taken to Rome in the month of June, 1950.²⁹ The members of the tribunal had listened to twenty-one witnesses, only two of whom (elderly ladies) had actually "seen" Fr. Moreau. The cures attributed to Fr. Moreau had been considered.³⁰ Everyone believed that "within five or six years (either by 1955 or 1956), the 'heroic quality of Fr. Moreau's virtues' would be proclaimed!"³¹

After the election of Fr. O'Toole as Superior General in 1950, and the presentation of the canonization proceedings in the court of Rome, Fr. Heston played an increasingly important role. He supported Mgr. Fontenelle and pressed for the advancement of the cause. Fr. Heston wrote, on Nov. 4, 1950: "I went to see Mgr. Fontenelle about the choice of a lawyer for the cause. As soon as the completion of the 'copia publica' (i.e., the official copy of the proceedings at Le Mans) is a fait accompli, we must put a lawyer to work at once to summarize the diocesan proceedings in order to convince the Sacred Congregation of Rites that it should undertake the study of the cause."³² Soon afterwards, in 1951, the first volume of the life of Fr. Moreau by Canon Catta was published in French (English translation was completed in 1955 by Fr. Heston).³³

In this same year, on June 23, 1951, Fr. Heston could write: ". . . the first censor of the Sacred Congregation of Rites has completed his examination of the writings of Fr. Moreau. The chancellor (Cocchetti) showed me the report . . . The censor seemed profoundly impressed by the earnestness of Fr. Moreau . . . his devotion to the Holy See . . ." Fr. Heston added: "We (the Chancellor and I) have become very friendly."³⁴ But the chancellor admitted to Fr. Heston that, among all the witnesses questioned at Le Mans, the testimony of Fr. Vanier was the most important. "It was so solid historically," reported Fr. Heston, "that he thought he would be able to omit certain formalities which would have retarded the cause." We are also told that the advocate of the cause, Mgr. Vitale, as well as other officials of the Sacred Congregation were equally impressed

by the testimony of Fr. Vanier. "They went so far," wrote Fr. Heston, "as to say that practically the whole cause of Fr. Moreau rests on the work of Fr. Vanier."³⁵

Notice well the contradiction. We are told that the entire cause rests on the testimony of an archivist-historian, and yet no one speaks of sending the cause back to the historical section. Fr. Heston, after a meeting with Mgr. Fontenelle and the lawyer for the cause, wrote several months later, on Jan. 25, 1952: "We have only two eyewitnesses. It is true that they are sufficient to keep the cause out of the hands of the Historical Commission."³⁶ Always this fear of the Historical Section, and that accounts for the pursuit of the "voie normale," thanks to a kind of juridical fiction.

A few months later, in May of 1952, a little more than a year after having the cause in hand, the lawyer, Mgr. Vitale, presented his summary of the cause to the devil's advocate so that the latter could offer his critique to which the lawyer would then respond. Mgr. Fontenelle hoped, in this way, to obtain the official introduction to the cause in the court of Rome before the end of the year 1952.³⁷ Six months later, in Nov., 1952, the lawyer's counsel, attempting to demonstrate that the cause of Fr. Moreau was worthy of being accepted by Rome, was ready to put his stamp of approval upon it. The cause was published along with the resumé which had already been written by the counsel as well as with certain specially chosen documents and the reports of two theologians on the writings of Fr. Moreau. There were, also, 152 letters "postulatoires," letters from bishops and other influential personalities demanding that Fr. Moreau be beatified. All this formed a compendium of 745 pages.³⁸ Later, the objections of the devil's advocate and responses to these objections were added to the dossier.³⁹

A year and a half later, in March, 1954, the objections of the Defender of the Faith (i.e., objections to the introduction of the cause) were finished. They were ready for the printer. But Fr. Heston learned that the printer had as yet received no information. Fr. Heston wrote to Fr. O'Toole, indicating once more how closely he was following the cause of Fr. Moreau: "After all the assurances given us by Mons. Romani, the vice-promoter, this was more than surprising. But yesterday I went to see Mons. Romani . . . he showed me the text ready for the printer, waiting only for the signature of the Promoter Fidei. . ."⁴⁰ As we see, Fr. Heston used all his influence, which was quite significant. He adds, "It looks as though we have finally gotten action in that sector. Introduction of the cause by Easter (1954) is out of the question, but Mgr. Fontenelle . . . hopes for . . . May or June."⁴¹

Ten days later, Heston was able to send to O'Toole a copy of the objections of the Promoter of the Faith. But, the latter, Mgr. Natucci, had warned that the introduction of the cause could not be done before the end of the year (1954). Mgr. Fontenelle insisted, "just as earnestly" (as I), said Fr. Heston, (and) "Mons. Natucci (the promoter) agreed . . . provided Cardinal Grente wrote a letter to Card. Cicognani (the new Prefect of the Sacred Congregation), asking for special handling." Cardinal Grente did that immediately, yet Fr. Heston still couldn't be sure of obtaining

the introduction to the cause by the summer of 1954. He concluded: "These Romani are at times impossible."⁴²

Meanwhile, the advocate, encouraged again by Fr. Heston, set himself to the task of responding to the promoter of the faith. "(He is) cooperating splendidly," said Fr. Heston, "with our earnest desire to obtain the introduction . . . before the summer vacation (of August)."⁴³ The advocate of the cause would have completed his response only two months after the issuance of the objections of the promoter of the faith.⁴⁴ And as Fr. Heston had heard that a certain precedence was given to the causes of founders of large communities, he tried another strategy. He wrote: "When Archbishop Cicognani (the Apostolic Delegate in Washington) is here (in Rome) I shall ask him to talk to his brother . . . who is now Prefect of the S. C. of Rites," (in favor of the cause of Fr. Moreau).⁴⁵ But one month later Fr. Heston would become disenchanted. The introduction of the cause was postponed until autumn (1954) at the earliest. "After the intervention of the Apostolic Delegate," wrote Fr. Heston, "I spoke . . . with Cardinal Cicognani. He told me that it was merely a question of time. He is going away from Rome in July."⁴⁶

Finally, it was at the outset of 1955, in February, that Fr. O'Toole announced to Card. Grente that the cause . . . will be introduced officially on March 15th." And he could add immediately "The Rev. Fr. Gagnon (provincial of France) reported that Your Eminence was thinking of beginning (after Easter) the apostolic process at the diocesan level in Le Mans and proceeding to the identification of the remains of Fr. Moreau in July, 1955."⁴⁷ The process was opened at Le Mans on July 20, by the identification of the remains of the founder. It was made the occasion of a feast which gathered together all the leaders in the great family of Holy Cross.⁴⁸

At this time, in July, 1955, the expenses incurred for the cause of Fr. Moreau are estimated at around \$10,000.⁴⁹ This amount does not include the numerous mass stipends given to the various collaborators.

The apostolic process, begun in July, 1955, would also come to an end very quickly, within less than 2 years, on March 9, 1957,⁵⁰ and this despite the fact that the postulator, Mgr. Fontenelle was gravely ill. He died from this illness a few weeks after the closing of the process at Le Mans.⁵¹ It was believed, at this time (in 1957) that the beatification would follow within a short time.

The acts of the process were brought to Rome by Fr. O'Toole who made a special trip to Le Mans to get them and to speak with Mgr. Fontenelle as well.⁵² It was Fr. Heston who assumed from this point on, the function of postulator.⁵³ Everyone wondered what he could possibly do that he hadn't done already! Having reached Rome, the proceedings were copied by hand, according to tradition. This copy was completed in the Fall of the same year, 1957; next it had to be verified, which brings us to mid-March, 1958. At last, all this--i.e., 3 huge volumes--was sent to the advocate, Mons. Vitale, on March 25, 1958.⁵⁴ This last had to prove the validity of all that had occurred at Le Mans. At this point, a speech for the defense of the virtues of Fr. Moreau had to be drawn up. Since this "defense of the virtues" is the most important aspect of the proceedings, an entire

year was allotted to Mgr. Vitale for the completion of his work.⁵⁵ He actually spent nearly two years at it. On Nov. 3, 1959, Fr. Heston wrote: "... the other day I withdrew from the Sacred Congregation of Rites the actual decree which confirms the validity of the Informative and Apostolic Processes in the cause of ... Fr. Moreau. [] Mons. Vitale tells me that he is coming to the end of his presentation of the Brief for the Heroicity of Virtues."⁵⁶

This brings us to the dawn of 1960, the time of preparation for the Council which began to sap the energies of most members of the Roman congregations. In Dec. 1961, Fr. Heston summed up the situation: "(the advocate) gathered together, in one volume of 500 typed pages ... the apostolic proceedings. He added a brief of 75 typewritten pages. These documents are now in the hands of the promoter of the faith ... who will draw up his objections ... Our advocate will then refute these. Thus, we will be ready for the official study of the heroicity of Fr. Moreau's virtues ... we hope to have reached this point by next summer (1962)."⁵⁷

For 15 years the entire family of Holy Cross had been able to hear of the process of the cause at least every six months, through circular letters and during Canonical visitations by superiors general. From 1961 on, the whole process slowed down, not only because of the Council, but also because of the promoters of the faith, themselves. As I noted at the outset, according to Fr. Mitri, there existed both during the period of the Council and afterwards, i.e., from 1961-1970, three successive devil's advocates, the second of which hardly did anything. Moreover, another reason for the delay on the cause indicated by Fr. Mitri which I have failed to mention, is that the last promoter of the faith was scandalized and angry over the fact that the testimony of one witness, a supposed eyewitness, introduced into the proceedings at the last minute, was invalid because he hadn't even been born by the time of Fr. Moreau's death. The purported witness had only known Fr. Moreau through hearsay.⁵⁸ With this fear of the Historical Section which prevailed from the beginning and despite the death of several eyewitnesses, we continued to push the cause as a contemporary cause and the anomaly of this juridical fiction had to explode one day. We had come to consider as witnesses, as alleged eyewitnesses, persons who had known the founder only by hearsay. One can imagine the impression that the latter fact gave to the new promoter of the faith. This new promoter considered the situation as a kind of fraud, rendering unacceptable the entire proceeding on the virtues.

We spent time trying to learn precisely what, in addition to the Council, delayed the publication of the promoter's objections. "I can assure you" said Fr. Lalande, in March of 1963, "that our postulator, Fr. Heston is following matters closely and that everything possible is being done to advance the cause," yet he added also: "But ... all causes (of this type) necessarily take time."⁵⁹ Two years later, he realized that "after a delay of at least three years, the study of the document of the apostolic proceeding was begun by the Sacred Congregation of Rites." It was finally begun though it was thought that the objections of the promoter had already been drawn up! Fr. Lalande added philosophically: "Let us not lose hope despite the prolonged delays which we've been told

are inevitable."⁶⁰ Two years later the superior general announced, "that after a long delay, from May, 1961, to September, 1966 (five and one-half years!), the study of the cause of Fr. Moreau, interrupted by the Council and by other circumstances independent of the cause (that's what we were led to believe, but there were also reasons internal to the cause) had been taken up by the Sacred Congregation of Rites. In fact, on September 21, 1966, after the insistence of the Postulator General (Fr. Heston), the complete dossier was finally handed in to the new promoter of the faith, in order to allow him to formulate his objections . . ."⁶¹

Two years later, we still didn't know anything further about the cause. Meanwhile, Fr. Heston, had become secretary of the Sacred Congregation for Religious and it was necessary to find a new postulator. Fr. Lalande met the Cardinal Prefect of the Sacred Congregation (which had become the Sacred Congregation for the Causes of the Saints). He wrote: "I told the Cardinal how much we were hoping for the beatification of Fr. Moreau for 1973 (the 100th anniversary of his death)." But, added Fr. Lalande, the Cardinal had "no reaction."⁶² It was the secretary of the same Sacred Congregation, Mgr. Antonelli, who suggested the name of Fr. Mitri as the best postulator that we could choose.⁶³ The Superior General of the Oblates gave his approval and the General Counsel of the Congregation of Holy Cross officially named Fr. Angelo Mitri as postulator on February 4, 1970.⁶⁴

One of the first steps Fr. Mitri took was to find "the public copy of the proceeding on Fr. Moreau which was thought to be lost."⁶⁵ This indicates to what extent the Sacred Congregation had forgotten the cause of Fr. Moreau. Fr. Lalande acknowledged, in a circular written one month later, on May 1, 1970, that "despite the repeated insistence of Fr. Heston it seemed that the cause of Fr. Moreau had hardly made any progress since 1961"⁶⁶--for nearly ten years! And Fr. Mitri explained: "We are still waiting for the publication of the Animadversiones (or objections of the promoter of the faith)."⁶⁷ Finally, two years later, in 1973, the proceeding on the virtues was declared unacceptable and was sent back to the Historical Section, the section which Fr. Heston and Mgr. Fontenelle so dreaded. Yet, Fr. Mitri saw in this a guarantee of success for the cause of Fr. Moreau.⁶⁸

At the outset of 1974, it was learned that a study of Fr. Moreau from an historical perspective had to be made. It was at this point that I was offered the task of historical investigation, a task which I accepted, while asking for five years in which to complete it, with the possibility of working in Canada and traveling to Rome periodically for verification of my text. I spent six years on this project, but when I presented to the Sacred Congregation the whole work which they had approved chapter by chapter, they began to ask for much more than what had been agreed upon originally--so much so that I nearly had to start the whole study over again. To date, I have re-done the first three chapters.

It has been ten years since I began this work. Just as for ten years the proceeding on the virtues remained on the desk of three successive promoters, so I, too, had to deal with three directors from the

Sacred Congregation for the Causes of Saints. The third director has recently been assigned to me, in January of this year, after more than a year's wait. The first director gave me general guidelines: I was asked to write a biography of Fr. Moreau, insisting on his virtues and quoting liberally from documents, without hiding any difficulties. I was able to use Catta's book, but the director did not want me to use this biography directly, even if it was well done. All biographies were regarded as interpretations and what was required was a simple resume of Moreau's life, along with documentation.

Thus, I tried to fulfill these requirements, and the second director who was named at the end of my first two years of work, simply told me to continue as I had begun. This latter, Fr. Agostino Amore, O.F.M., was a very intelligent person and I had enjoyable dialogues with him. He approved my chapters, indicated a few corrections here and there and encouraged me to continue. Yet, it is he who, once I had handed in all of my work in 1980, told me that I had to develop things even further, that I had to go back to each archives where papers of Fr. Moreau could be found, that there was no longer any limit to the number of pages in my report, even if I already had accumulated over 4,000. I no longer understood anything and I had the feeling of having fallen into a trap.

What I learned later, thanks to Fr. Mitri, is that Fr. Amore, during all those years, was preparing a reform of the Sacred Congregation for the Causes of Saints, that he himself favored more scientific studies, along with exhaustive research on all the documents as well as consultation of all the recent historical and scientific works which relate to the cause. Even if this reform was not yet effective, in 1980, at the time when I presented the results of my work, Fr. Amore seems to have been sure enough of winning approval for his ideas to begin requiring what he was planning. Up until then he had allowed me to proceed with the method of his predecessor and, since he was so preoccupied with the preparation of this reform, it seems that he did not correct my chapters very seriously and I found myself the victim of this period of transition and change.

In 1981, when I had redone my first chapter, with two times the pages of my original copy, and Fr. Amore had told me that it was much improved and that I should continue in this way, he fell gravely ill, underwent surgery for intestinal cancer, had difficulty recuperating and, after further surgery (three months later), he remained partially paralyzed. He had difficulty speaking and could barely be understood. Yet, he gave no thought to resigning. In fact, he hoped to take up his responsibilities once again. He did return to his office for a few days, but was soon back in his sickbed and finally died in December of 1982. He was not replaced immediately, for the Pope had announced a reform of the Sacred Congregation for the Causes of Saints. This reform was made public in January, 1983, but it took about one year to organize its operation.

As far as the cause of Fr. Moreau is concerned, the reform did not carry many advantages. All causes from now on would have to be presented according to the historico-scientific method; even the contemporary witnesses became living documents which had to pass through the

crucible of criticism. We needed to find seven new directors to guide the work or proceedings on the virtues, like the one I had directed. This work would continue to be done, either by the postulators themselves or by collaborators, like myself. It was thus confirmed that we were to conform to their plan for research and for the scientific presentation of the work. This certainly will not speed up the cause. The only advantage left for me was to find a director with whom I could work without too much difficulty. Through Fr. Mitri, I met Fr. Yvon Beaudoin, O.M.I., a French Canadian doctor of history who was the archivist in the Sacred Congregation for the Causes of the Saints. He thus had a certain amount of experience in this area, in addition to knowing the ropes and the personnel of the Sacred Congregation. I met him once and showed him the revised draft of my first chapters.

I met him again at the beginning of March. He had read my first five chapters. I can say now that he is dropping the excessive exigencies of his predecessor, especially concerning the number of pages. The new policy of the Sacred Congregation is that the whole work on the virtues should not exceed one large volume of between 1,000 and 1,500 pages. I now have to cut about half of what I have already written. This means giving only the abstracts or a short quotation rather than citing the documents in their entirety. Nevertheless, this will naturally involve much work. Fr. Beaudoin's other requests are quite reasonable.

Meanwhile, Fr. Mitri had invited me to a meeting of postulators (at the end of November, 1983), where the leaders of the Sacred Congregation were to clarify the situation. I learned there that there are 65 causes ahead of Fr. Moreau's. There are 70 others, for which the heroicity of the virtues has already been declared but, because there are no miracles, they have not progressed for quite a while. A few of these causes could proceed if miracles were obtained and could pass before that of Fr. Moreau. Finally, among those cases which are at about the same stage as that of the founder, there are those which will pass ahead, either because they are less complicated or because they originate in countries the pope is scheduled to visit, or because a cause already has so many well established miracles that it attracts the favor of the Sacred Congregation. Hence, it is important to realize that at least 100 cases will pass before that of Fr. Moreau. And since there are no more than 10 or 12 "servants of God" beatified per year, it will take about ten more years before our founder will be recognized officially by the Church as "blessed". This is because the Sacred Congregation does not want a beatification to take place once a week lest beatifications lose their impact and signification.

What is left to us is only one way to advance the cause. It is to spread the devotion to Fr. Moreau and to request prayers for cures. What is needed are physical healings, easily verified. Preferably, cases declared "incurable" upon medical examination. We must pray for the intercession of Fr. Moreau and for his intercession alone. We must request prayers by several persons at the same time, in such a manner that there will be witnesses. Reports of cures must then be sent to the Generalate in Rome or to the major Superiors of our different congregations. The leaders of the Sacred Congregation have said explicitly that they will

give preference to causes for which there are already well established miracles: they are not very interested in working for a cause which will remain blocked for lack of miracles.

Let us pray that the Lord may call from among us people who have enough faith to obtain through the intercession of the founder, the signs from heaven which are required for the cause. It suffices that one or several persons in Holy Cross, or even outside of Holy Cross, are so inspired as to have recourse to the founder or encourage others to do so. The cures studied in 1950, at the time of the first proceeding in Le Mans are now considered too old to be verifiable. How can inquiries to physicians be made in cases that are already just as old?

But finally, with this new perspective which I propose to you, it is perhaps a bit vain to ask why the cause has not advanced further. Perhaps we have not prayed enough. Perhaps we don't desire enough this beatification and we do not envision what that would mean to us.

Fr. Mitri assures us that the beatification of his founder, Msgr. de Mazenod, brought to his congregation a great renewal of religious fervor. This alone should suffice to make us desire the beatification of Fr. Moreau. But despite all our possible inadequacies, there is the mystery of "God's hour". Fr. Joseph Higgins, Assistant-General, said recently, that it is only when we have realized the vision of Fr. Moreau, i.e., of a closer collaboration between the Fathers, Brothers and Sisters of Holy Cross, that our founder will obtain for us from heaven his beatification. Who knows? According to the new perspective which I have just presented, we might as well say that the situation of the cause is simply normal, that it has not yet been 40 years since the cause was begun, that we are still below the average time for such cases, and that even if we have passed the 40 year span by the time Fr. Moreau is beatified it will still be simply "normal," considering that his cause is somewhat difficult, and that there was a special delay of at least five years caused by the Council.

It is simply a question of time . . . but this does not deny the fact that the beatification of our founder remains a grace which brings us much, that we must continue to ask by our prayers and believe through faith in the divine intercession of our founder.

NOTES

1. Official nomination by Very Rev. Germaine-Marie Lalande and his council (in Latin), Feb. 4, 1970. General Archives of the Congregation of Holy Cross (hereafter cited as GA), 133.8.
2. A. Mitri, O.M.I. (Notes pour conférence au Mans), Jan. 20, 1973, GA, 133.8.
3. Lalande, Circular Letter (hereafter cited as CL) 11 (Jan. 20, 1973), pp. 50-52.
4. Vanier to Donahue, Nov. 26, 1933, GA 001.3.
5. Vanier to Donahue, Oct. 21, 1933, GA 001.3 (V); Donahue to Sauvage, Oct. 30, 1933; see also Cousineau to Vanier, Feb. 3, 1948, GA 001.3(V).
6. Heston to O'Toole, March 15, 1953, GA 132.
7. Cousineau, CL 7 (Dec. 21, 1940), pp. 7-9.
8. Cousineau to Vanier, June 2, 1943, GA 001.3(V).
9. He had been Superior General from 1938 to 1950.
10. Cousineau to Vanier, July 14, 1945, GA 001.3(V). See also: Cousineau, CL 20 (Aug. 22, 1945), p.1; Cousineau to Vanier, Aug. 27, 1945. GA 001.3(V).
11. J. Gibbons, C.S.C., "The Story of Fr. Moreau's Cause." In Bulletin of the Educational Conference of the Priests of Holy Cross, Dec. 1955, p. 107.
12. Cousineau to Vanier, Feb. 2, 1946, GA 001.3(V).
13. Cousineau to Vanier, Feb. 26, 1946, GA 001.3(V).
14. Cousineau to Vanier, April 4, 1946, GA 001.3(V). On Feb. 2, the Superior General informed Father Vanier: "...vous seriez plus que mon guide (pour la cause), car je m'en reporterez a vous en tout", GA 001.3(V).
15. See Gibbons, "The Story...", p. 107.
16. Semaine du Fidèle (bulletin of the Diocese of Le Mans), July 21, 1946, p. 292.
17. (Cousineau), "Preliminaria", (c1950), GA 132, p.3.
18. Ibid.
19. Cousineau to Vanier, Feb. 2, 1946, GA 001.3(V).
20. (Cousineau), "Preliminaria", p. 3.

21. Fontenelle to Cousineau, Jan. 13, 1948, GA 133.2: "... la cause suit la voie normale... voie plus connue, plus pratique, plus traditionnelle, et tout bien considéré, plus sûre, ménageant moins de surprises..."
22. Ibid.
23. Ibid.
24. Cousineau to Vanier, Feb. 3, 1948, GA 001.3(V). See also: Cousineau, CL 29 (Oct. 11, 1948), p. 3 and (Cousineau ?), Notes, GA 132, p.3.
25. Pope from 1740 to 1758.
26. Fontenelle to Cousineau, Feb. 4, 1948, GA 133.2. Six months later, when Mgr. Fontenelle learned that the two eyewitnesses had testified in Le Mans, he declared: " Quel soulagement j'éprouve de voir ainsi la cause échapper aux investigations hypercritiques de la Section Historique!", Fontenelle to Cousineau, July 23, 1948, GA 133.2.
27. Cousineau to Fontenelle, Feb. 24, 1948, GA 133.2.
28. Fontenelle to Cousineau, March 28, 1948, GA 133.2.
29. Bulletin paroissial de Notre-Dame de Sainte-Croix, avril 1957, pp. 8-10. See also A. Melancon, "La cause du Père Moreau", Analecta, juin 1953, p. 318s.
30. Cousineau, CL 30, p. 56.
31. Cousineau to Fontenelle, Oct. 14, 1949.
32. Heston to O'Toole, Nov. 14, 1950, GA 132, doss. 2.
33. O'Toole to Fontenelle, Jan. 22, 1951, GA 133.2.
34. Heston to O'Toole, June 23, 1951.
35. Gibbons, "The Story...", p. 119. See also: Heston to O'Toole, Nov. 2, 1951, GA 132, doss. 2, and Heston to O'Toole, Dec. 27, 1951, GA 132: "After reading the Cause of Fr. Moreau, he (Cocchetti) observed that the testimony of the witnesses is in itself of not very much value, since the vast majority are not eye-witnesses. But he continued, the documentation is nothing less than formidable."
36. Heston to O'Toole, Jan. 25, 1952, GA 132, doss. 2.
37. Heston to O'Toole, May 13, 1952, GA 132, doss. 2. The introduction of the cause would not, in fact, be achieved until 1955. What had been sent on to the Promoter of the Faith contained the "Summarium" of the cause and selected documents. The "Informatio", or argument, of the lawyer, Mgr. Vitale, would not be furnished until October of the same year, 1952.
38. Osservatore romano, July 25, 1952. To this collection of 745 pages was finally to be added the approbation of writings for which a meeting of the cardinals of the Sacred Congregation had been announced for the end of July.

39. A. Melancon, "La cause...", p. 320s.
40. Heston to O'Toole, March 16, 1954, GA 132.
41. Ibid.
42. Heston to O'Toole, March 27, 1954, GA 132.
43. Heston to O'Toole, May 26, 1954, GA 132.
44. Ibid.
45. Ibid.
46. Heston to O'Toole, June 23, 1954, GA 132.
47. O'Toole to Card. Grente, Feb. 19, 1955, GA 132.
48. All the seminarians in theology in Rome, the author among them, were present.
49. Exactly \$9,144.04.
50. Bulletin paroissial de Notre-Dame de Sainte-Croix, avril 1957, p. 8.
51. Heston to Charbonneau, Feb. 22, 1956, GA 133.2; Fontenelle to O'Toole, Jan. 24, 1957, GA 133.2. See also: Hardouin to O'Toole, March 26, 1957. Mgr. René Fontenelle died in Le Mans on March 28, 1957, at the age of 62.
52. O'Toole to Card. Grente, March 29, 1957, GA 132; O'Toole to Card. Grente, April 12, 1957, GA 132.
53. Ibid. See also: L'Oratoire, June 1958.
54. O'Toole, CL 16 (April 27, 1958), pp. 18-19.
55. Ibid.
56. Heston to O'Toole, Nov. 3, 1959, GA 267.7.
57. O'Toole, CL 26 (Dec. 8, 1961), pp. 6 and 22.
58. A. Mitri, "Notes...", Jan. 19, 1973, GA 133.8.
59. Lalande, CL 1 (March 19, 1963), p. 50.
60. Lalande, CL 3 (Jan. 20, 1965), p. 45.
61. Lalande, CL 5 (March 19, 1967), p. 263.
62. G-M. Lalande, (Notes sur l'état de la cause du Père Moreau), GA 133.8.
63. Ibid.

64. General Counsel, Feb. 4, 1970, GA 133.8.
65. Mitri to Lalande, March 5, 1970, GA 133.8.
66. Lalande, CL 8 (May 1, 1970), P. 54.
67. A. Mitri, (Rapport sur l'état de la cause du Père Moreau), Nov. 1971, GA 133.8.
68. A. Mitri, O.M.I., "L'état actuel et l'avenir de la cause du Père Moreau." GA 133.8: "L'intervention de l'Office Historique est d'ordinaire garantie de succès... Il est... à regretter qu'on n'ait pas traité la cause historiquement (dès le début)."