

**FATHER OTTO HOPFENMÜLLER**  
**OF THE SOCIETY OF THE DIVINE SAVIOUR**  
**A German Pioneer in an Indian Mission**



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by

**Fr. Dr. C. Becker, SDS**



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## Foreword

"I confirm that the report which is contained in this book is the truth. ... The biography mentioned above is the best introduction for a beatification cause for Fr. Otto."

*(1948 Letter of Fr. Angelus Münzloher, SDS)*

It is a special honour and joy for me to introduce this volume of the Salvatorian Spirituality & Charism Series. We are now able to present in English a full and detailed biography of the first missionary for the Society of the Divine Saviour. This book was written in German more than 80 years ago by the second successor to Fr. Otto Hopfenmüller as the leader of the Assam Mission, then Apostolic Prefect Fr. Christophorus Becker, SDS. It is a valuable source on the beginnings of the Catholic Church in North-East India.

But this book represents much more than that. It describes in detail the life, the apostolic zeal, and the sacrifice of one of the first companions of Fr. Francis Mary of the Cross Jordan, Founder of the Salvatorians. It presents to us, and especially to present-day Indian Salvatorians, the enormous love for the Society and for missionary activity that was alive in the early days of our community. It connects us with the roots of our spirituality since in the person of Fr. Otto it deals with the very first apostolate the Society initiated after its foundation. Even after such a long period of time it is moving to read about the zeal of the first confreres, the love they expressed for their highly revered Founder, and their dedication to the country they were sent to serve and to its inhabitants. More than other kinds of documents on the identity of the Society, the lived example of confreres like Fr. Otto shows us the qualities of a Salvatorian apostle and missionary. It is my great hope, therefore, that the young Indian and Asian confreres will find in this book their missionary identity, and that they will follow this example with great dedication and enthusiasm.

The author, Fr. Becker, chose to describe the entire life of Fr. Otto, including the period he was active as a diocesan priest in the Archdiocese of Bamberg, Germany. As a consequence, the chapters covering the trials Fr. Otto endured during the *Kulturkampf* are very detailed. Although some of this might be rather

dull or even incomprehensible for non-German readers, we have decided to keep the entire text as originally written since it constitutes a unique source on Fr. Otto's life. We took the liberty, however, to exchange some of the original photographs with new ones.

We are grateful to *Missio Aachen*, the legal successor to the Francis Xavier Missionary Society, for their kind permission to translate and reprint the original text.

While preparing this translation for publication, we discovered an interesting historical document: a letter from Fr. Angelus Münzloher, SDS, the immediate successor to Fr. Otto as superior of the Assam Mission. It was his response to an inquiry from one of the general consultants, Fr. Vincent Hirschle, SDS, who had written to Fr. Angelus on February 27, 1948, requesting him to write down his memories of Fr. Otto to be used in any future beatification process. Fr. Angelus answered:

Beatification Hopfenmüller

Manitowoc, April 3, 1948

... I have reflected a long time [on your request] and thought again and again what could be a worthwhile contribution to positively influence a beatification process. I am now nearly 82 years old and I had to dig deeply into my memory. Then I remembered that Fr. Becker had published a biography of Fr. Otto. I went to St. Nazianz and took the book. I read and read and compared the facts with the things I saw in those years with my own eyes and with what I heard other confreres say. I can witness in front of any ecclesiastical authority that Fr. Becker painted a truthful picture of Fr. Otto. I am the only Salvatorian the good Lord has kept alive, the only direct witness that can say: *ipsissimis oculis meis vidi eum* – I saw him with my own eyes. As far as I am aware concerning beatification processes – and this counts for any kind of process – it is of the highest value to have a witness that can confirm what another witness has stated. In this case, the first witness is the book [of Fr. Becker]. The crown witness is I. Even with the best of good will, I would not be able to add anything new. ... I am the only Salvatorian priest that has seen the pious and holy life, the fiery missionary zeal with his own eyes. ... I confirm that the report which is contained in this book is the truth. I would only like to add that Fr.



Hoffmann is saying nothing new, when he writes you that Dr. Hopfenmüller is regarded as a saint in the Archdiocese of Bamberg. ... I am convinced that this letter is all you need from me. The biography mentioned above is the best introduction for a beatification cause for Fr. Otto. (*Letter in the Salvatorian General Archives*)

In our days the Society is becoming increasingly aware of the holiness of a number of the first confreres. I truly hope that one day a beatification process for Fr. Otto will be started. With the eyes of faith, through the sacrifice of his life, the church in North-East India has been established. He is an excellent example for any missionary, priest, religious, Salvatorian, or lay person. Surely from heaven he continues to implore God's blessings on the mission of the Catholic Church in North-East India.

**Fr. Piet Cuijpers, SDS**  
*Vicar General / Mission Secretary*

# 1. Youth and Early Training

There is a peaceful village on the northern edge of “Frankish” Switzerland. A two-hour train ride from Nuremberg leads to Burkundstadt. From there you can reach Weismain by coach or on foot in one hour. Centuries ago the city belonged to the Duke of Meran, and then to the prince-bishops of Bamberg. It had a town charter as early as 1313. Today [1923] the picturesque village in upper Franconia has a population of around 1,000, and boasts a municipal court, a notary, and a tax office.

In an age when a city’s significance was not measured by whether railroads led to it, Weismain was once an important place. But that was when the archbishops of Bamberg were also global monarchs.

The terror of large-scale wars of centuries past reached even this remote village. Several parts of the old city wall still remain intact. The canons taken from the Swedes during the 30 Years War bear witness in the town hall to its citizens’ bravery. The town also commemorates soldiers mustered by the Swedes to help liberate Kronarch, and lift the city’s occupation during the Seven-Year’s War.

An enormous 5,000-acre forest sits at the edge of the village while a beautiful mountain range surrounds it. The clean air, idyllic calm, magnificent views and wide variety of possibilities for daytrips make this place a convenient holiday destination for visitors.

A few famous people have come from this delightful spot. The high number of religious vocations bears witness to the Catholic core of the population. Abbot Knauer von Langheim, who drafted of the 100-year calendar, and von Rudhardt, minister president of King Otto of Greece, were both born here. Also, Friedrich Hopfenmüller and his wife Marianna Jakob gave birth to their son Lorenz here in 1844. All together, their family numbered 12 children: four boys and eight girls. In such a large family it was necessary to keep on a tight budget. The youngest daughter recounts:

Even though our blessed parents were not aristocratic or wealthy, through their diligence and cleverness they managed to feed and dress us sufficiently. We did not have sumptuous food, but simple nourishing farm food, of which we could eat our fill without starving. We always had enough bread. Even in bad years when my father could only buy



View of Weismain with the parish church



The young priest Lorenz Hopfenmüller

bread for 100 fl., we could always eat as much as we wanted. We were never allowed to dishonour our bount.

Their mother often told her other children how from childhood little Lorenz had always been quiet and had kept out of mischief. An accident almost brought his life to an early end. The Weismain River flowed behind their home. As a three-year old boy, while trying to fetch water he fell in. Without anyone noticing, the current swept him about 20 meters downstream until finally a neighbour saw him, jumped in and saved the child. She brought the unconscious boy to his weeping mother but all their attempts at resuscitation were in vain. They called a doctor who after many efforts managed to bring Lorenz back to life.

Due to his extraordinary talent the boy went to the local school beginning at the age of five. In addition, he helped at home especially by guarding the cattle and geese, as many boys do in the country. This was something Lorenz always enjoyed. He was especially happy to become an altar boy. Due to his good manners, he was allowed to receive his First Communion at the age of eleven – which at that time was regarded as particularly early. After that, Fr. Bartheimmüller [the local pastor] asked Lorenz's father whether he would permit his talented boy to study further. His father responded very sceptically at the beginning, since his eldest son was studying to become a teacher, and their large household already caused him enough headaches and money. But after several more inquiries Lorenz's father gave his permission. Chaplain Friedrich Reubel tutored the eleven-year-old Lorenz for free, after which he was able to enter third grade at the gymnasium in Bamberg on October 1, 1856. Fr. Bartheimmüller tried to alleviate the family's burden by finding kind people to feed Lorenz.

His initial studies were not too brilliant. The good-natured lad from the country let himself be distracted by the other boys. Games and silly jokes were much more attractive than serious study. He returned home for holidays with bad grades. His father, a kind but diligent man, gave the rueful boy a serious reprimand and punishment. Soon after, Lorenz's efforts were met with success and in the following year, 1857, he was accepted to study at the seminary in Bamberg. This school had been founded by Baron von Aufsee, and so was called the Aufseesianum. This was a turning point in the young boy's life.

In Bamberg the boys attended the public gymnasium. But once again, the sociability of the young farm boy was to be exploited. A large orchard belonged to the Aufseesianum in which the students were allowed to take walks and pick the fallen fruit off the ground. But this was not enough for a few of the older

boys. They pressured little “Höpfle” to climb the tree and shake down the better fruit. Lorenz agreed. But just as the misdeed was about to take place the rector appeared. While the other plotters ran away, a shame-faced Lorenz climbed down the tree. They were all punished with a day of fasting. When his father came to Bamberg a little later to ask about the behaviour of his son, the rector expressed his satisfaction with him, saying that Lorenz was one of the best pupils. He also told the father about the incident in the orchard and said that even though Lorenz was one of the youngest students, he didn't need to do everything the older boys told him. His father repeated this to Lorenz with the necessary emphasis.

Apart from this, Lorenz's years of arduous study passed untroubled. He always spent his holidays back home where he set an example for his siblings. On his own he attended Mass every day. His grades at the gymnasium in Bamberg demonstrated fine progress. He had excellent grades in religious education, Latin, Greek, German, French, mathematics and history. In his second to last year of study there, Lorenz took second place among 23 other pupils. In his last year, he placed third. By 1862, he had finished his gymnasium studies in a brilliant manner.

Even after graduation he remained committed to his youthful dream of dedicating himself to God and becoming a priest. Another year of philosophical studies followed at the lyceum where he was first in his class. Afterwards he attended the seminary in Bamberg for three years to study theology.

One story shared by his siblings shows how seriously he applied himself to his studies, being always keen on self-improvement. Lorenz's parents had always maintained that no exceptions were to be made when it came to what was served at table – everybody had to eat what was served. Lorenz, who had always been the pride of his parents, did not eat beans. His mother always made an exception for him, giving him something else to eat when there were beans. As a young theologian, one day he returned home from his seminary for a visit. The dish of the day was beans. His mother excused herself and told him to wait a little while until she prepared another dish. But to the amazement of his parents and siblings, Lorenz ate the beans. When they asked him how this had come about he replied: “Everyone else ate beans in the seminary and I thought that if others could do it, I should be able to do it too. So I ate the beans, threw up, and ate them again – and now I can eat beans.”

On March 13, 1864, he took his first step towards holiness when he received the tonsure and the four minor orders. On December 21 of the following year he

was made subdeacon. He was ordained a deacon on August 15, 1861, and then ordained to the priesthood the same year on October 6 by the archbishop of Bamberg, Michael von Deinlein. The happiness of his parents was complete when he celebrated his First Mass in the local church of Weismain, where he had often prayed as a boy and where his pious diligence had attracted the attention of others.

Despite his ordination, his studies were not yet over. The archbishop expressed his wish that Lorenz earn a doctorate in theology. So he studied theology for another year at the University of Würzburg. With all his zeal and talent it was not difficult for him to realize the archbishop's wish. For his dissertation he chose the topic St. Irenaeus' teachings on the Eucharist.<sup>1</sup> In the introduction he clarified his point of departure:

If all Fathers of the Church are of high importance, as they are unanimously praised in the testimonies of the church, this is especially true of the Fathers who lived close to the age of the apostles. They are the oldest witnesses to the faith preached by our Lord Jesus Christ, which had been carried in the churches established by the apostles. Not even our adversaries doubt their testimonies. Their importance grows due to the fact that the adversaries of the Church often maintain that the transmission of the Gospels were corrupted in later times and hence does not coincide with the original teachings.—an argument they make to justify their own doctrinal dissent.

From this point of view, said the young doctor, St. Irenaeus, the bishop of Lyon, gains special importance as one of the oldest witnesses of the early Church. Everyone tries to deduce his favourite point of view from the writings of this disputed figure.

Lorenz gave himself the task of discovering the saint's doctrine on the Eucharist. He dealt particularly with St. Irenaeus's view of the Eucharist as a sacrament and how he taught the real presence of Christ's body and blood in the Blessed Sacrament, its transubstantiation. Additionally, he deals with St. Irenaeus's teaching on the Eucharist as the sacrifice of the new covenant, which includes sacrifice, consecration and communion.

His work, written in Latin, is composed in a clear and exemplary way, mirroring not only the thorough knowledge of the young theologian but also his deep piety. A priest later recounted the humility of Lorenz, then Dr. Hopfenmüller:

On the deathbed of the professor, Dr. Denzinger, I asked him for a donation for the construction of our church. He asked about the clerics of Bamberg who had received their doctorate with him in Würzburg. How is N.? What is Hopfenmüller doing? He was most capable, and above all, the most humble. I wanted certain points of his dissertation to go in another direction and he willingly reworked his extraordinary thesis into the direction I had given him.

The first assignment given to the promising new priest by his bishop on October 1, 1867, was the chaplaincy of St. Martin in Bamberg. At that time, Fr. Andreas Reding from Lichtenfels was its pastor. It had been a particular wish of the bishop to appoint Hopfenmüller to such an important place of pastoral ministry immediately. In Bamberg, where he spent his long years of study, he was now about to start his pastoral work in the beautiful church of St. Martin built by the Jesuits in 1691. The graceful painting of Mary, Comforter of the Afflicted which drew to the church many souls in need of consolation would also become a refuge for him in difficult times.

**(Endnotes)**

- <sup>1</sup> St. Irenaeus De Eucharistia. Dissertatio inauguralis quam scripsit Laurentius Hopfenmueller, Archidioeceseos Bambergensis presbyter. Bambergae, Typis Ottonis Reindl, 1867; 103 pp. in Quart.

## 2. The Founding and Spirit of *Bamberger Volksblatt*

Hopfenmüller's first years as chaplain meant arduous work and endless official and volunteer duties. In addition, the Franco-Prussian War (1870-71) broke out, demanding more from those serving on the front and from the homeland. At the end of this victorious war an extremely difficult period began for the Catholic Church in Germany.

Aware of the seriousness of the times and convinced of the damage caused by the unbelieving liberalized press, Hopfenmüller was invited by the diocesan vicar general, Dr. Thumann and encouraged by Archbishop von Deinlein to work as a journalist in addition to his pastoral duties. In this way, using the same weapons as the enemy, he was to fight for the endangered rights of the Church. To this end Hopfenmüller founded and led the *Bamberger Volksblatt* (BV) as editor-in-chief, the first issue of which was published January 3, 1872. The spirit of the paper could be seen even in its first issues. An article by Hopfenmüller "God's Politics" appeared on page one:

God used Germany to chastise France for its excessive godlessness and immorality. Admittedly, Germany has had surprising victories, making the country unified and powerful. But well-being will only come to this unified and powerful state if it recognizes the task God has assigned to it. The task is to promote fear of God and Christian justice, to grant every Christian denomination tolerance and justice, and to uphold law and justice in all public relations. Woe to the state if its victories made it arrogant like Assyria elevating itself against Zion, against the Church. The honourable Mr. von Gerlach, a Protestant, warns against this possibility in his brochure about the last war, but many fears about it exist. "Our hereditary enemy," he said, "is not France but Satan who's clearest characteristic is precisely egotism."

It appears as if the leader of the new state wants to rise just like Assyria against Zion and Jerusalem, against God's sanctuary – against the Catholic Church. Oh, if only one had the power to stop the German Reich from taking this false path! Oh, if only one could open the eyes of all the princes and ministers in the German Reich! If we Catholics can find benevolence and justice for our Church within the German





The parish church of St. Martin at Bamberg

Reich – and we ask for nothing more – then we too would be looking joyfully forward to the development of the German Reich.

But if Germany, in its imitation of French Liberalism, lets itself be forced onto these false paths against Christ and his Church, then it will surely not be the Church that will be the first to be destroyed.<sup>1</sup>

In the next issue Hopfenmüller described the critical factors to be found in “The Malicious Press,” explaining them in the words of the recently published pastoral letter by the bishop of Regensburg, Ignatius von Senestrey:

In our country, as in many other places, an unmistakable plan has been circulating through many daily newspapers: the plan is to find Catholic readers and confront them in their Catholic faith, to feed them with doubt, suspicion, even disrespect and hatred of the Catholic Church, its teachings, institutions and leaders. In a true fanaticism of unfaithfulness, these newspapers attack the believing mind of the Catholic people to destroy it; cowardly and vicious, they attack the hardest where they see no threat of punishment, since no earthly power protects the Catholic Church and its doctrine.<sup>2</sup>

Later, Hopfenmüller fully described the tumultuous atmosphere of the time.<sup>3</sup>

Without looking to the right or left, the Catholic clergy will bravely march forward on the steep path of conscience and the *Via Crucis* of its holy duty. No fear will frighten them and no flattering promise will make them disloyal. A priest full of faith cannot turn into a Judas; he dies for the One who has died for him. Under the pagan emperor’s bloody sceptre, young Christianity blossomed so beautifully that one excellent Church Father wrote these marvellous words: “Indeed we have wooden chalices but we have golden priests.” If there had been no tyrants then the Church would not have had so many holy martyrs. Perhaps they will take our silver and golden chalices, just as they did in revolutionary France, and remake them into golden priests. The Church would only gain more from this tyranny.

In addition to international political and ecclesiastical news *Bamberger Volksblatt* had no lack of solid and popular articles explaining the situation of the Church in that critical time. These articles had titles such as “The Religious-Political Relationships in Bavaria,” “The Church’s Position Towards the State,” “The Catholic Church and its Enemies,” “The Expulsion of the Jesuits,” “Liberalism’s

Fight against the Church,” “The Papal States,” “The Persecution of Churches and Monasteries in Italy,” “Keeping Sunday Holy,” “The Vatican Council,” “Döllinger’s Catholicism,” “Christian Marriage,” “Church Laws in Prussia.” Titles such as these chosen at random from the first year sufficiently recall the Church’s difficulties during the period while also bearing testimony to *Bamberger Volksblatt’s* brave attitude.

Hopfenmüller’s time as editor was entirely taken up with that moment in the German Church which continues to live on in the minds of Catholics today as the *Kulturkampf*. Although it was a harsh and troubled period, it will always remain a highlight in German Catholic history due to the faithfulness of laity and clergy, their willingness to sacrifice, and their devotion to the pope and bishops. After the glorious victory of the Franco-Prussian War, the author of this so-called *Kulturkampf*, Prince Otto von Bismarck, was not satisfied with simply unifying the state externally. He wanted to unify it internally, to unify the populace.

To this end he tried to create a German national church. Catholic regions were to disappear to pave the way for a common Protestant national church. As a result, the Catholic section in the Prussian Ministry for Education was dissolved in July 1871. In December of the same year, a law was designed to muzzle the clergy politically – the so-called Pulpit Clause.<sup>4</sup> The next year a school supervisory law was introduced in Prussia, as well as a law for the expulsion of Jesuits and Jesuit-like orders and congregations throughout the German Reich. In 1873, the famous “May Laws” were passed. These included more laws designed to subjugate and gag the Catholic Church to various degrees of intensity, some applied only in Prussia, while others applied to all Germany. The climax came in June 1876, when the state assumed the right to administer the Church’s patrimony. At this point the suppression of the Catholic Church in Prussia and Germany, which had been the aim of the entire *Kulturkampf*, reached a standstill.

The situation in the country was dismal. It seems almost unbelievable when one reads the article “Horror at the Devastation of the Holy Place” published in the New Year 1876 Issue of *Germania*. It assessed the “victories” of the Prussian *Kulturkampf* in previous years:

What do we see in our poor fatherland? If the history of the past four years were laid before our shattered contemporaries, each scene hurriedly explained, people would think they were looking into a lying magic mirror. That is how fast and extensive the devastation occurred.

The article continued:

What do we see? Churches, parishes, seminaries and other buildings dedicated to the faith, established by donations and bequests of pious souls, are closed and sealed by state authorities. Churches from whose altars the divine blessing of the Holy Sacrifice is no longer conveyed to a devout community, from whose pulpits the proclamation of the joyful message no longer sounds—the invitation to follow the Divine Shepherd and an appeal to practice spiritual virtues, and in whose confessionals the heartsick no longer find comfort or forgiveness.

What do we see? Newborns rushed over fields underneath the burning sun or stormy rain to receive holy baptism in some other place since priests at home can no longer perform it; sick people driven for hours to find a priest, the dying longing in vain for the Holy Viaticum; and on feast days, large numbers of people wander the streets where the solemn processions of the Most Holy Eucharist usually passed.

What do we see? Monasteries and religious houses have been emptied of their residents, made silent and dead; the pious, models of Christian life, patrons of the poor, ill, and lonely are displaced from their homes unable to extend their sanctifying activity, their love and their example to happy people. What they can't take with them stays behind to be destroyed by the merciless fist of the *Kulturkampf* – this affects especially those monasteries already on the edge of existence or soon to be so, with nothing left to replace them. Orphanages, charity schools, shelters for the wounded, institutions for the mentally ill, educational centres of every kind, which had been led by friars or nuns – all have been turned to ruins; they have become memorials of past spiritual ennoblement while at the same time terrible witnesses to a deep spiritual confusion.

What do we see? Bishops and other priests of all orders are declared “suspended” by the state, impeded from exercising their official and priestly duties, are now behind prison bars, snatched away from their communities, banned from staying in foreign places on pain of being expelled from their fatherland. Heavy penalties have stripped others of all their goods, leaving them only with the barest necessities; they no longer receive their official income and all they can count on is the kindness of the faithful.

What do we see? The servants of the Church are banned from their favourite creation –schools– where they are no longer permitted to bring wonder to young minds with the love of our Saviour and the truth of His most holy doctrine. These delicate plants are now to grow up in institutions estranged from the Church, these young souls destined to be in God’s kingdom, about whom the Master said: “Let the little children come to me, do not hinder them.”

It is a heartrending sight. Yes, the *Kulturkampf* has managed to devastate and destroy many splendid things. In vain we look for replacements of all that has been destroyed. “Liberalism” managed to turn into ruins what the Church had built, but it is incapable of replacing it. It is good at demolishing but poor in rebuilding. Where are the orphanages where the Liberal intends to shelter the unfortunate children who have become homeless by abolishing Church institutions?

We do not see any of these institutions being reconstructed. We do not include the immense building on Lake Plötzen near Berlin, where some hundred young criminals are to be accommodated, and the new institution, estranged from the Church, will insure they will not be lacking inmates. Where are the hospitals, in which the failing and miserable can receive the kind of care they have until now received from merciful Sisters? And if Liberalism could manage to reach its aim and destroy the Church, which it cannot, what will come in its place? One wants to build a national church; but where are the bricks?

Destruction without reconstruction – these are the shackles used by Liberalism to fetter the Church. But we seek comfort in the indestructible vitality of the Church, which outlasts every persecution and continues always to send forth new shoots of blessings from the unreachable root. The firm confidence of the faithful sons of the Catholic Church in Germany was not to be disappointed. Even the great Bismarck, once he recognized that his attempts to destroy the Catholic Church were in vain, was not afraid to undertake the difficult journey to Canossa. Soon after, in order to restore peace to the country, Bismarck opened a dialogue with Pope Leo XIII who had been raised to the papal throne in 1878.

So it is understandable that in its first years the pages of *Bamberger Volksblatt* were filled with news about “The Victims of the *Kulturkampf*,” “Reports of Persecution,” “Scenes from the *Kulturkampf*,” “Stories from Prussia” and “Contributions to the *Kulturkampf*.” Those who were unwilling to submit to

unjust laws endured them with great cruelty. Bishops and priests were declared “suspended,” dragged into courts and thrown into jails. Seminaries were closed. Diocesan administrators, advisors to bishops, priests and chaplains were punished for fulfilling their religious duties. Punishments were imposed for saying Mass, hearing Confessions, preaching against civil matrimony, etc. There were numerous house searches, fines, income cancellations, jail sentences and exiles. Men who had served their fatherland with all their strength during the difficult war years and had been highly honoured with the Iron Cross, were now banished from their country as dangers to the state. Women who had dedicated themselves to aiding the wounded on the battlefields were now sent into exile.

Not surprisingly, during these times Catholic editors had a difficult task. Many lawsuits were brought against them to intimidate them and wear down their efforts. Hopfenmüller was not the kind to let himself be dissuaded from fighting for the Church’s rights. With intrepid courage he advocated for those persecuted for conscience sake. He did this not only in his articles, but also through his continuous reporting of events. In this way he kept up his condemnation of the state. Let us take just a few examples from *Bamberger Volksblatt*. On February 5, 1875, the following article appeared under the headline “A Victim of the *Kulturkampf*.”

The mother of “suspended” Chaplain Stölben of Bernkastel passed away in Koblenz. After suffering for a long time, the sad fate of her son completely broke her heart. God only knows what it did to her son! After having been “suspended” earlier, Chaplain Stölben was banished from the District of Treves in the fall. Not wanting to leave voluntarily, a policeman transported him over the border of Treves into Cologne. In saying goodbye to his prisoner, the policemen said: “You are now free to go wherever you want apart from returning to Treves.” Believing this, Chaplain Stölben travelled outside the district of Treves to Koblenz to visit his ailing mother. But he was not allowed to stay with his sick mother for long. He was soon sent back to jail. And this was not the end of the story. Even his poor mother was persecuted because of her contact with her son. A complaint was made about her and she had to pay a fine for hosting her son without notifying the police. This incident and the treatment of her son accelerated her death. Oh, how many more mothers’ hearts will be broken due to this reign of terror and tyranny of conscience, as it is practiced in Prussia under the name of the majesty of law.

Hopfenmüller wrote forcefully about the “Fate of Religious Orders” on September 16, 1874:

The devil’s rage is notoriously worst against the most zealous servants of God. Religious orders have always been hated by the Liberals as they continually try to figure out how to suppress them. Violence and malice conspire to achieve this. Jesuits, Redemptorists, Lazarists, Brothers of the Holy Spirit, Madams of the Sacred Heart of Jesus have all been forced into exile. What can be done about the remaining ones? It would be too spectacular to send them all away at once. So, modern hypocrisy uses a slower more refined form of manslaughter. In Hesse, all religious orders are set for extinction according to the latest draft church law! This means that they cannot accept new members. Only teaching sisters who work in private institutions can request new members as needed from the Ministry, which then either permits it or not. Nurses are also allowed to accept new members and found new establishments when public institutions are insufficient; this means that if there are enough public nurses, then one could be forced to leave the order. New orders can no longer be founded. In case the existing orders, condemned to die out, do not obey the civil authorities who poke their noses into everything and want to have the monasteries controlled by the police, then their light will be extinguished sooner and more brutally – they will be dissolved or closed. This is about to happen in Hesse. This will also happen in Prussia. And what about Bavaria? Alas, poor Bavaria will have to endure this fate as well, whether it wants to or not.

Issue 80 from April 12, 1875, reported in “An example of How Hessians Treat Cultures.”

The Liberal, Hessian ministry has recently done something about which it can be extremely proud. It expressed gratitude and appreciation to the English Ladies in Rüdeshheim for their laudable work in the schools. Soon after, the Ministry demonstrated its gratitude by dismissing them beginning in April! Doubtless this is no bad Hessian skit! This is called Liberal gratitude!

Issue 103 from May 10, 1875, reported next:

The English Ladies in Rüdeshheim followed those from Diesburg. Their Reverend Mother who had led the order for 17 years had become so ill

she was unable to travel. At the eviction on April 30, she was housed by Baron von Fechbach's family who had provided a few rooms for the order. The other sisters took a train to Mainz. The evening before their departure, almost all the residents gathered beneath the Sisters' apartment in a long torchlight procession to pay them homage. One representative expressed the gratitude of all the citizens. On the morning of the 30<sup>th</sup>, the entire town council, apart from the Burgermeister, went there for the same purpose. The departure was like a procession with flags being carried ahead of them. Ecclesiastical associations, students in white dresses, and parents all participated in the long procession which brought the sisters to the train. Those who could not come along stood in crowds along the streets or waved from windows to shout one last goodbye. Flags were waved aloft all over the place, in Hessian or papal colours, but the black ribbons were a reminder that this was no celebration. At the departure all the sisters received precious gifts: the teachers received photographs of all of their students, and the Reverend Mother received a well-deserved laurel wreath. For now the sisters are gone, but this is only one of those "Liberal" victories for which the Reich will have to pay the cost in the final reckoning.

The editor of *Bamberger Volksblatt* also knew how to write of the true devotion of the people towards the clergy. In Issue 109 of November 7, 1874, Hopfenmüller depicted a scene of the *Kulturkampf*, which ridicules nicely the ludicrous procedures of the powerful:

On October 24<sup>th</sup> in Rurup, Westphalia, a calf was auctioned off. It had belonged to the local priest being punished by the May Laws. The auction price amounted to nine thalers, including all expenses. One parishioner offered nine thalers; once, twice, sold! The sum was paid and the priest's misdeed forgiven. Next the calf was to go to the priest's house, but the people began to say: "Let us garland the calf." Immediately all hands were busy. Flowers were plucked from gardens to the right and left. One garland was linked to the next and soon the calf looked like a flower bed. A garland of roses was placed upon its head, interlaced with forget-me-nots. Artificial flowers added to the effect while a pink ribbon decorated its head. But there was more. The people said: "Music must accompany it!" After a few minutes one man brought out a violin, and another a dusty clarinet – because during the *Kulturkampf* instruments were not to be used. He placed the clarinet to his lips and



managed a warble. The violin was also tuned up. It worked. With a deep bow towards the audience, the violinist made a deep sound, the clarinet swung gracefully, and the theme of a popular dance began to sound. Two strong, young men led the garlanded calf and the entire crowd. Not one old woman stayed in her home, nor one housewife at the oven as the cheering crowd moved toward the rectory.

Nor did Hopfenmüller lack bitter sarcasm. In Issue 89 of October 15, 1874, he wrote from Berlin:

Exile, the sword of Damocles which had threatened the Dominican Prior of Moabit, Fr. Aquilanti, has now fallen. Tomorrow he will leave Berlin with its inhabitants breathing a sigh of relief as they are happy to keep their thousands of pimps, prostitutes, cut throats, tie dyers and other Jewish leeches, happy to have one less monk praying in a lonely cell, while all are convinced to abandon their daughters to the muses and theatres. What a great national policy! But how much longer?

Obviously not every phase of the *Kulturkampf* can be highlighted here. These examples merely illustrate the *Bamberger Volksblatt's* style of reporting and show how their editor feared nothing as he spoke plainly about the state authorities while standing up for the victims of anticlerical policies.

Even though the abuses of the *Kulturkampf* were not as severe in Bavaria as in Prussia, given that some of the clergy were able to find refuge there, still conditions in Bavaria were very sad. The *Kulturkampf* in Bavaria is closely linked to Minister Johann Lutz, who led the Ministry of Education at that time, and initiated of a number of hostile measures against the Church. Under him, the buds of Liberalism blossomed, disguised as freethinking and enlightenment. But in the end it only restricted and gagged the freedom and rights of the church. Hopfenmüller sharply condemned the way Minister Lutz favoured Old-Catholicism that spread even to Bavaria after the First Vatican Council's statement regarding papal infallibility in matters of doctrine. This movement was heavily promoted by the head of canons at St. Cajetan's in Munich, Dr. Ignaz von Döllinger, who was also a professor and president of the University of Munich. The government protected him and other clergy who had sought refuge in Old Catholicism even though they had been expelled from the Catholic Church.

In 1873, Minister Lutz introduced nondenominational schools to Bavaria; in 1871 and 1873, he lifted by decree all the concessions which had been given to the

church by the concordat with the Holy See. Already in 1870, he had forbidden all Bavarian bishops from promulgating the decrees of Vatican I in the absence of a royal *placet*. When Archbishop Deinlein of Bamberg tried to obtain a royal *placet*, it was denied. Nonetheless, the Bavarian bishops published the decrees of the council whereupon Lutz accused them of “violating of the state constitution.” After having already voiced their common concern regarding nondenominational schools, the Bavarian bishops and archbishops outlined their greatest fears in a letter to His Majesty, the King of Bavaria in October 1875.<sup>5</sup>

It is an undeniable fact, as has been proven to the world via a number of public acts and notifications, that a movement hostile to the Catholic Church is asserting itself in our German fatherland right now. Many different names are used to describe what is being fought for and persecuted. The strikes and injuries which this is causing, always hit the Catholic Church and the most holy interests of the Catholic people.

This trend has unfortunately not stopped at the borders of Bavaria; even within Bavaria the Catholic Church and its people suffer bitterly from the current hostility, and the reverend signatories are deeply saddened by the justifiable thought that this current situation may only be the beginning of an even more depressing future as Bavaria is pulled into an even deeper circle of authorities hostile to the Church and to religion.

Your Royal Majesty may therefore not be cross with the reverend signing archbishops and bishops of the Kingdom, remembering the almost 1,000-year-old tradition of the royal house’s inseparable link to the blossoming and thriving of the Catholic Church and to the well-being of the Catholic people as they ask your royal majesty to intervene for an end to such treatment. Already these measures have so damaged our well-being, and further developments in this direction would harm it in the most sensitive way. With the permission of Your Royal Majesty, from now on we shall limit ourselves to three subjects.

In the first place, the Bavarian bishops highlighted the relationship of the “Old Catholics” to the Catholic Church, a relationship which up till now had only been evaluated in a deceptive and unjust manner by the Royal Bavarian Ministry of State. Despite the fact that these priests and laity had openly dissociated themselves from the solemnly proclaimed doctrine of the Catholic Church and their obedience to it and had started to establish their own sect under the

misleading name of Old-Catholics, the government continued to view and treat them as members of the Catholic Church and to recognize rights which they should no longer have enjoyed after separating from the Church. Hence, the bishops asked the King to have the Bavarian State government differentiate between the sect of Old-Catholics and the Catholic Church, and to treat the former differently especially when it came to the rights and property of the Church.

Another issue the Bavarian bishops lamented was the education system. The Bavarian government often disregarded the church's right to its own schools, and increasingly suppressed its justifiable influence upon them. Religious school inspectors were often removed; elementary schools were withdrawn from the religious influence of the Church; the character of the gymnasia, which until then had been primarily church institutions, had been almost completely altered. Church authorities and religious instruction were being removed from final examinations, which no longer included religion. At the universities, modern sciences were directing the students in quantum leaps toward irreligious and materialism. The destruction of the highest concept of morality and moral duty brought about sad consequences for the well-being of the state, first in the upper classes and then in the masses.

The bishops' last point of interest concerned the remaining religious orders and congregations in Bavaria. They emphasized their necessity for the church and for the Catholic people, and the injustice of expelling members from their orders. The bishops pleaded urgently with the King to use all means to counter any further expansion of the law of July 4, 1872, regarding the Society of Jesus, and to block any type of laws similar to the Prussian Monastery Law of May 31, 1875.

The Bavarian episcopate limited its comments to these main points, which, despite being quite serious, demonstrated that the open persecution of the church in Bavaria had not reached the same level as in Prussia. Nonetheless, many years passed before a even a few of the bishops' concerns were even partially addressed.

Hopfenmüller was untiring in his efforts to combat the spreading Liberalism. With his newspaper he fought a decisive battle from the beginning. In the first year of the paper he published a series of articles clarifying the nature of Liberalism:<sup>6</sup>

Normally, Liberalism described an attitude with which only the noblest people identified; now the meaning of the word has become just the opposite. Nowadays, a Liberal is far from liberal-minded, which is actually what the word means. One who is truly liberal-minded wants liberty not only for himself but also for all others. Instead, the Liberal claims liberty only for himself. The liberal-minded believes that he can err in his political views; the Liberal believes his views are infallible. The liberal-minded is careful not to violate God's commandments through his actions and wants to reach his goals with a clear conscience. The Liberal only cares whether he is able to do what he has in mind, no matter whether it is just or bad; just like his Grandmaster, for him violence comes before justice. The liberal-minded protects the rights of people who think differently; the Liberal hates every positive religion, especially Catholic Christianity. Here, Liberalism plays the innocent always and everywhere; the Liberal switches his narrow views between Catholics who always balance the Church's positions, calling 5 an even number, and the ultramontane, who, as he believes, carries everything to the extreme and wants to be more church-y than the church itself. I am also a Catholic, says the Catholic baptized Liberal, but I am not an ultramontane! For these people, ultramontane is a catchword they use every chance they get, a word whose meaning they do not even know and which they emphasize only for its spiteful significance. In German, ultramontane means "beyond the mountains" and for us Catholics, no foreign monarch lives beyond these hills but the head of the holy Church, the common father of Christianity, whom we honour and must obey in all spiritual matters according to Christ's command. Hence, whoever wants to be a true and authentic Catholic needs to be ultramontane – otherwise he does not belong to God's family.

Again and again the editor of *Volksblatt* pointed out that Liberals, whose newspapers were still avidly read by many Catholics, were particularly keen to wear them down internally and to make Christianity unpopular. To achieve this, the institutions of the church, their bishops and priests, needed to be persecuted, pelted with dirt and ridiculed. They hoped the desired effect would come about on its own.

Because of this it was obvious that Hopfenmüller could never enjoy the friendship of Liberals or their newspapers. A number of copies of the first issue which he distributed to announce the launch of *Bamberger Volksblatt* were sent back to

him by “learned” gentlemen with the most unflattering comments in the paper’s margins. The editor responded to them with due respect.<sup>7</sup> Fourteen Liberal newspapers existed in Upper Franconia. As *Bamberger Volksblatt* was the only Catholic one, it comes as no surprise that the yapping pack attacked it from all sides. The way Hopfenmüller handled one of them, *The Lichtenfelser Daily*, can be seen in Issue 10 of March 8, 1872.

Of course, we would have expected something different, something a bit more decent from this daily. Well, first of all is it a “Liberal” newspaper and can naturally only take education in instalments. Secondly, it is published in Lichtenfels, “The little Paris” of which Goethe always said, “this educated people.” Finally, it is also the official gazette for two royal districts, hence it is an official newspaper closely linked to the upper classes. From that, one would all the more expect to find quality in this paper. But instead — nothing. It only rants like an angry market woman. In proof, a summary of this article shall be published here.

In that article *Bamberger Volksblatt* is called: “That nice, pious so-called popular newspaper,” “the cheeky newspaper,” “the clean paper with sooty goods,” “the envious, superfine, arrogant paper,” “a cloven-hoofed Jesuit paper,” “an ultramontane blowfly.” It was said to: “eagerly conduct dupery,” and “irritate the Liberal newspapers of Upper Franconia with its exorbitant brashness and boldness.” It does so “in order to attract attention to its dubious existence.” But it has also been, as *The Lichtenfelser Daily* assures us, “chastised, punished and stretched full of bruises upon its diaper.” (What exquisite old images: a newspaper stretched on a diaper full of bruises!! Old Homer, what are your metaphors by comparison!). It is a pity that some of these bruises were not selected from the *Bavarian Daily*, who called it a “newborn piglet, a sanctimonious paper, a feudal sanctimonious paper.” It started this “dupery” as soon as it was born. Yes, that is terrible; so young and already so conniving that it dares to attack these honourable Liberal newspapers, which had existed “already for decades,” telling their readership that they are Liberal and hostile to the Church. (Ah, perhaps the editor of the newspaper will some day catch all of these authors to stew them; as the smell from the flesh of such victims is a lovely fragrance for the paper’s editor, as the *Bavarian Daily* – a close friend of *The Lichtenfelser Daily* – claims). But this does not help the paper, it continued, because “its blather” only causes a “pitiful smile . . . with such a sugarplum one could only lure the most stupid bumpkin.” Excerpted from the honourable Liberal

*Lichtenfelser Daily*, also official gazette for the royal districts of Lichtenfels and Staffelstein.

“Nonetheless” wrote Hopfenmüller,

. . . the “little paper” threatened “to show the right way” to those who would attempt to convert it; despite this danger we still want to try. It would be of great use for the writer of the article to sit through a lecture about style so he will become a bit more articulate and not so clumsy; nor would a future reading from the “Liberal insult dictionary” hurt him; then he would no longer need to take his swear words from the *Bayreuther Daily*; repeating some prepositions (to, behind, next, in, etc.) would also be of good use. But let us follow the advice of “Mephisto” who has been so wittily discovered by him. Here Goethe said: “Most of all I recommend *Collegium Logicum* to you” (lessons in reasoning). Yes, the author of the article from *The Lichtenfelser Daily* is not on good terms with logic.

From here Hopfenmüller proceeds to the objective side of the attack and ends his article. This example demonstrates that he knew how to fend off his adversaries. Let this suffice for now. We will hear of further clashes in the course of the account.

### **(Endnotes)**

- <sup>1</sup> BV, January 3, 1872, No. 1.
- <sup>2</sup> BV, January 12, 1872, No. 2.
- <sup>3</sup> BV, March 1, 1872, No. 9.
- <sup>4</sup> The Pulpit Clause, also called Lex Lutziana, was the statutory penal provision against the “abuse of the pulpit” or priestly functions to curb their political influence. It was introduced in the German penal code as §130a in a bill by the Bavarian Minister von Lutz on December 10, 1871. According to the bill, clergymen and other religious were to be imprisoned for up to two years for abusing the pulpit by discussing state affairs in their public profession in a manner endangering the public peace. In 1876, the bill was extended to include similar printed statements. The paragraph was designed to be very elastic. For example it was enough that a minister preached against civil matrimony or in some other way commented on the anti-Church measures of the authorities, for him to be in violation of the law.
- <sup>5</sup> BV, November 8, 1875 ff.
- <sup>6</sup> BV, August 23, 1872, No. 34.
- <sup>7</sup> BV, No. 1 of January 3, 1872; January 10, 1873, No 3.

### 3. The Development of the Newspaper

*Bamberger Volksblatt* developed and grew despite difficulties. At the end of its first quarter the editorial office wrote: “The ‘newborn piglet’ has grown nicely in its brief existence and has become fat; it has managed to find a considerable number of new friends:”<sup>1</sup> After the first half year the paper reported:

In the second quarter we have been able regularly to publish the newspaper. Our friends know that we are not out to make money. Everything the newspaper receives in terms of support or subscriptions, etc. is destined to serve the continued development of the paper. Therefore, we repeatedly ask our like-minded friends in the region and elsewhere, especially our honourable confreres, to support the newspaper with collaboration, distribution and subscriptions, so it can better compete with the newspapers of our adversaries in the visual appeal of its layout. We stand for a holy and just cause. Even though it is now being suppressed by the current authorities, this will only strengthen our courage and energy.<sup>2</sup>

At the end of the first year of the newspaper’s existence the editor wrote:

The editorial office already sends out their New Years greetings to the Franconian districts with the brotherly Catholic salute: “Praised be Jesus Christ! Praised be Christ in everything, may He be praised in the New Year!” This wish shall be realized when everyone is Christian in the houses, in the community, in the state, and in the church. And once this has been realized, then everyone shall be cheered by salvation.

*Volksblatt* will assist a bit in realizing this. With God’s backing it has survived one year, and God will take care of the second. Of course, it is less than a fly in a cathedral, but even flies have their purpose in the world despite their smallness. The newspaper does not want to make much publicity, current times are screaming loud enough. That is why, Christian people, you should adopt this newspaper as your new housemate in the New Year. It will surely bring more blessings into your home than a red [i.e., Socialist] comrade.<sup>3</sup>

Hopfenmüller described the difficulties he faced at the newspaper:

On October 1, the newspaper will begin its fourth quarter of the second year. There is no need to waste words on the need for this little Catholic

paper opposed by about 15 or more Liberal newspapers in Upper Franconia. While we face our opponents in a humble and quiet way, we should tell our readership one thing confidentially: the production costs of this newspaper have risen about 50% since our founding. So, if the paper continues to be sold for the old price, each one of our friends needs to win another friend for the paper. With good will, this will be no difficult task.<sup>4</sup>

The number of subscriptions constantly increased thanks to Hopfenmüller's wonderful work. During the first years, the paper appeared once a week on Fridays, but it was his ardent desire to publish it daily. He wrote about this in Issue 13 on March 27, 1874:

Unfortunately the newspaper must again enter the second quarter in a tight financial situation. Existing difficulties have prevented it from spending more liberally. So the authors seek subscriptions for their new little child.

As the *Kulturkampf* gained strength, raging with hostility against the Church, it became more urgent for the newspaper to appear more frequently. "Instead of printing many words," Hopfenmüller continued,

I shall just name some names: I submit to the grace of the church Ledochowski and Eberhard, ten priests in jail in Treves, 13 in Koblenz and more who have been imprisoned in other places, and to all the Catholic communities who have been deprived of celebrating Mass. The newspaper wants to assist in fending off this tyranny or at least to reveal and expose them in their ugly guise.

The clergy referred to above were Archbishop of Gnesen-Posen Ledochowski and Bishop Eberhard of Treves. Archbishop Ledochowski was the first Catholic bishop they dared to throw into jail on February 3, 1874. Prussia's bishops protested in a long, joint letter in February 1874,<sup>5</sup> in which they solemnly objected to the accusation of being revolutionaries, rebels against the secular authorities, and that their unscrupulous and heartless actions had brought the clergy and people of the German Catholic Church grave distress and danger. About Archbishop Ledochowski, the bishops said: "His misdeed is none other than having loyally followed the duties of the pastorate confided to him by God and not abandoning God's church or denying the Catholic truth, which our Saviour sealed with his precious blood."



The fellow sufferer, Bishop Eberhard of Treves, was arrested March 6, 1874, and sentenced to a two-year prison term. Other measures instituted against the bishops included fines, wage garnishments, dungeon, degradation and expulsion. It is no surprise that the Catholic people and the paper's editorial staff were compelled by this loud uproar to continue to raise their voices all the more against such cruelty and tyranny.

On July 1, 1874, Hopfenmüller's wish was finally fulfilled. From then on, *Bamberger Volksblatt* was published daily except Sundays and feast days, though the paper's size was a bit smaller than the previous weekly edition. Published in quarto-format, the experiment succeeded. With great satisfaction the publisher was able to write in Issue 66 of September 18, 1874:

The success of the last quarter shows that a Catholic newspaper is greatly needed by the Catholics of Upper Franconia. The initial print run of 2,600 copies continues to rise and with some good will we will get up to 4,000 or 5,000 copies. What we are really lacking is advertising. In this regard, our friends could do much more if they had a better grasp of the needs of the press, were more professional, and weren't stuck in such a rut. After the *Bamberger Tagblatt*, the *Bamberger Volksblatt* has a wider circulation than the other papers in the province; so advertising in our newspaper is also in the interest to those who place them.

In his eagerness the editor pushed for continued improvement and better equipment for his problematic child. Even though it had been an achievement to publish it daily, there was still potential for growth in strength and scope. On December 30, 1875, Hopfenmüller wrote:

The year is drawing to a close. In a few days we will write 1876 A.D. The year also brings with it the introduction of a new currency into our country.<sup>6</sup> This year shall also see something new for our newspaper, as it will put on a new frock. For a long time it has felt uncomfortable in its old one; our enemy's blasphemies have accelerated the decision to change our old frock for a roomier, more comfortable one. From New Year's onward, the newspaper will be published in an enlarged format. Our readers will certainly realize that an expanded publication costs more than a smaller one. So from New Year's on, the price of the paper will be 1 Mark — 20 cents more than the previous price.<sup>7</sup>

*Volksblatt* hopes that its readership will not be bothered much by the increase due to the currency change. To the contrary, we believe that our readers will gladly welcome the paper's larger size. The only Catholic paper in Upper Franconia needs to face its opponents on equal terms, so if we make sacrifices, our readers cannot lag behind. Through the new format the paper will be able to fend off more than it has until now! This can only be desired by the Catholic people. So we cordially invite our friends in the city and in the country to enrol numerous subscriptions, place advertisements, and write to us.

So the paper's original size was reintroduced with the first issue in January 1876. Hopfenmüller's last invitation to place advertisements at the beginning of the last quarter in 1876 sounded sincere and imploring:

As the third quarter of the year 1876 is dawning to a close, we kindly ask you to order your subscriptions for *Bamberger Volksblatt* at the post office in time for the fourth quarter. The newspaper has aspired to serve the Catholic people, its church and its fatherland. Its other purpose is to be a banner of truth and justice during this time of war which has broken out against the rock and pillar of truth, our church, so that the Catholic people shall identify and rise to their challenge. The enemies and traitors of the church are numerous and strong, the most dangerous are in one's own camp – amongst the children of the church. If one considers how many newspapers in the district of Upper Franconia are consciously or unconsciously writing for the enemy, while our newspaper faces up to them as the sole representation of Roman-Catholic interests, then it has a substantial claim to be supported by all good Catholics on whom it depends for its existence.

Continually striving to improve and enhance the paper, Hopfenmüller added an "Entertainment Supplement" in 1874. It was published once a week on Fridays. Reports from different missionary lands, travel sketches from Italy, funny stories and exciting narratives in colourful variations were all attempts to make the paper useful and engaging to the reader. These entertainment reports surely helped *Bamberger Volksblatt* gain more friends, though the publication naturally increased the amount of work for the tireless editor.

To aid in funding the newspaper, Hopfenmüller often reviewed and recommended good new books. The profit from the books it sold was reinvested in the paper. Initially these books were produced by the Schmidt Press but from 1875 onward they were printed by Gärtner Press in Bamberg. But Hopfenmüller's first

successor, Chaplain Th. Schmitz, managed to find *Bamberger Volksblatt* its own printer in the summer of 1877: The Catholic Association Press.

Hopfenmüller's successors steadfastly sacrificed to maintain the Catholic character of the paper. In time it developed into a much-read newspaper that today ranks as one of the most esteemed Catholic provincial newspapers and it is produced in a modern printing factory. The publishing house, now Görres Press, and a Catholic bookstore are associated with it today. The Catholic bookstore was founded by the current [1923] editor, Dr. J. Kirsch, who also relocated the paper to a new home on the city's main street. Altogether the *Bamberger Volksblatt* can look back at its glorious 50-year-past with gratification, recalling the brave fighters who, with proud satisfaction made the paper blossom and gave it significance through the difficult *Kulturkampf* days up to the present.

#### **(Endnotes)**

- <sup>1</sup> BV, March 22, 1872, No. 12.
- <sup>2</sup> BV, June 21, 1872, No. 25.
- <sup>3</sup> BV, December 27, 1872, No. 52.
- <sup>4</sup> BV, September 26, 1873, No. 39.
- <sup>5</sup> BV, March 6, 1874, No. 10.
- <sup>6</sup> The German currency at that time was still thalers and guilders; the Mark was only introduced in 1876.
- <sup>7</sup> Up until then the paper had cost 28 crowns per quarter.

## 4. The Election Campaigns

The stormy *Kulturkampf* days brought enormous importance to the elections and to the participation of the Catholic parties. Hopfenmüller never missed an opportunity to extend his efforts in this area. He started with Bamberg's local elections in November 1872. In a series of articles, as the paper's editor, he presented to the voters the qualities that a representative of a municipality should possess. He said that men of integrity were needed, men capable of forming independent judgments, and if necessary, able to explain their views. Knowledge is also required of the different branches of administration, the relevant legal regulations, good management of municipal institutions, hospitals, mental institutions, and other foundations and establishments of which many exist in Bamberg due to the sacrificial sense of the city's ancestors, caring for the poor, health care, charitable institutions, buildings, city improvement, etc. Although no one can be an expert in everything, nevertheless, the right candidate should be able to prove that he can make sound judgments in these areas. If he is not qualified, he will not be able to differentiate between modern progressive improvements and the harmful effects that flow from fanatical behaviour, and he will be reduced to a simple yes-man.

Yes-men, who say Yes and Amen to everything the chairman or experts say and nod their heads on command, do not serve the municipality. This is not supposed to mean that only windbags should be in the municipal council, because blowhards are not always the most understanding of individuals and talking alone ever helps very much. One also needs to act and know right from wrong.<sup>1</sup>

To get an effective and productive administration for the various aspects of public affairs, Hopfenmüller also advised his readers to vote for men from a broad spectrum of professions. Industrialists, community members working in the different industrial and agricultural sectors should be well represented so that at least a few experts would be available to deal with possible questions and with the tasks of administration.<sup>2</sup>

Hopfenmüller tried especially to deter Bamberg's Catholics from voting for Liberals. First, he explained, they could not be indifferent to who led the local administration. As Liberalism was trying to take over and manage all justice in the country, it would tar the community with the same brush. The educational system and its connection to religion and to the church, the spirit with which the

poor are handled, the development of foundations, the behaviour of municipal authorities toward church authorities, all these things would develop differently depending on whether Liberals or Catholics made up the council. Catholic people, therefore, needed to ensure a majority Catholic representation in the municipal elections, while allowing their opponents to possess only the number of seats corresponding to their numbers. “Because we are fair and just even towards our opponents.”<sup>3</sup> Hopfenmüller went on to explain how he viewed Catholic representatives.<sup>4</sup>

They are not Catholics if they are marred with the thought of paying homage to false unchristian Liberalism. Better a Protestant who still sets store by his religion, or an honest democrat who has not allowed Liberalism to take away his healthy common sense and did not allow people who think differently to destroy his sense for justice and liberty, than such a Liberal Catholic. If there is any doubt who to vote for, I would definitely give my vote to the first.

So no Liberal Catholics. So what kind then? Catholics who are truly Catholic, who have a heart for their religion and its concerns, who love the church and respect Christ’s chosen bearers of ecclesial authority – the pope, the bishops and priests. Catholics who joyfully and heartily participate in the life of the church and religious life, and who are not ashamed to be Catholic. Catholics who also have an understanding for the institutions of their church, for the salvation of the Christian-Catholic people now and for eternity, who will skilfully and bravely defend the church from hostile and unfounded attacks against its institutions and rights. Such Catholics who will not permit the perversion of justice, who will apply justice and fairness toward non-believers and judge themselves by the following words: “Fear God and be afraid of no one.” In short, Catholics who are Catholics entirely, fully, ardently, convincingly, understandingly and bravely.

More important than the local elections were the elections for the Reichstag, announced for the second time in January 1874. Concerning these Hopfenmüller wrote:

For once we speak no differently from the others, our newspaper also needs to join in the call: “Go and vote for the Reichstag!” We have had this German Reich for three years and nothing has changed. Yes, if only it could be that German Reich which we were enthused about in

our youth – “as far and wide as the German tongue rings and the praise of God in heaven sings” – then even we could be enthusiastic about it. “All of Germany it shall be, oh God in heaven look and see” – the poets sang full of patriotic enthusiasm. Oh, but how has this ideal turned into an ugly travesty, ruined and chopped in pieces! Germania was transformed into Prussia and she placed the ugly Prussian cuckoo upon her head; the chancellor of the country immediately announced Protestant imperial rule and has hence declared a kind of warfare on the Roman-Catholic Church with its 14 million faithful, building the new house only for the Liberal and “Protestant majority,” lawlessly excluding the Catholic minority. Oh, poor Germany, what has become of you? Instead of an airy, spacious and comfortable home for all children, you have become oppressive, filled with the stench of prison, fettered with shackles, an uncomfortable barracks, a parade ground for one party!<sup>5</sup>

Hopfenmüller wanted anything but to stand by idly, sulking. He believed all the more that Catholics should try to fight for their just place in their German homeland. In Mainz, German Catholics had united themselves as a firm and extensive organization under the election slogan “For God and the Fatherland.” The Centre Party was founded to defend the freedom and rights of the Catholic Church and to assert Christian principles through moral and legal means in all areas of public life, especially by exercising constitutionally recognized and guaranteed civil rights. Prussia’s Catholics had already set a brilliant example during the Prussian State elections, where they had unanimously voted for 89 members of the Centre Party. This was the right answer to the small-minded policies of the state. Hopfenmüller underscored this brave deed and called on everyone who wanted to serve the good and well-being of the Fatherland to vote only for the Centre Party. “Let’s start anew, oh friends in our constituency,” *Bamberger Volksblatt* wrote in Issue 49 on December 5, 1873:

. . . to vote for a member of the Centre Party who shall fight for God, religion and the Fatherland along with Windthorst, Mallinckrodt, Reichensperger, etc. And even if defeated (something I do not much fear) the elections for the Reichstag nonetheless present a good opportunity to organize the conservative Catholic party in our district and to help it get its feet on the ground. This is really a great need. I think the time is right to tear the night-caps from people’s heads, and one can hardly believe how many merry sleepers there still are. One night, when I was still in my seminary in Bamberg, a fire alarm made a

great noise. Everyone in the dormitory jumped up from their beds. Only one sleeper stayed in bed and would let no one disturb his sweet slumber. When someone finally managed to bring him to consciousness, screaming in his ears the terrifying words: “The building is on fire!” all he did was to reply indignantly, “Oh, let it burn!” roll over and continue to sleep the sleep of the just. Unfortunately, too many of these sleepers exist among us. And when they hear the building is burning and the flames are near, they continue to sleep and even get angry when others disturb their reveries. They continue sleeping even when they hear that it concerns the existence of our Catholic Church, the survival of our Christian-Catholic religion, and even when they hear that the world is playing dice with what is dearest and holiest to us – our religion and our faith.

The “Patriotic Election Committee,” in which Hopfenmüller played a decisive role, distributed from Bamberg an unsigned call for elections<sup>6</sup> from Bamberg. In it they detailed the restrictions of liberty and the persecution of the church in Prussia and throughout the country since the first elections for the Reichstag.

Herewith, we declare as decided that we recognize the country as legally established. The false accusations that we are “enemies of the state” are therefore a spiteful calumny. But we don’t withdraw our conviction that the current government of the state has not earned the trust of the Christian-conservative people in these past three years, and that we see it as our duty to fight against the governmental system with all our energy and legal means. The state’s government is personified in the person of the state’s chancellor, Prince Bismarck, but he has entirely devoted himself to Liberalism. As a result, we view his governmental system as baneful and ruinous for the German Fatherland.

Liberalism, the greatest heresy of the past century, destroys the earthly well-being of the people and withers eternal goods – the divinely revealed faith and religion. To break this tyranny and to insure that his rule shall not spread to the whole German Empire, the “Patriotic Election Committee” calls on all citizens and friends to fight the holy war for truth, faith, justice and freedom for the altar and the hearth! On January 10, 1874, no one shall vote for any other than a member of the Centre Party. No one who cares for the well-being of the Fatherland will be missed at the ballot boxes. Several trusted individuals will furthermore

be suggested as candidates for the three districts of Upper Franconia, namely Bamberg, Kronach and Forchheim.

Due to the importance of the cause, even the Bavarian archbishops and bishops in their pastoral letters did not fail to point out the moral obligation of Catholic men to participate in elections to the German Reichstag and to give their vote only to suitable men. Archbishop Deinlein of Bamberg provided an excellent example of discharging his duties. Notwithstanding his illness, he insisted on going to the ballot box himself to personally cast his vote.

Election Day in Bamberg turned into a Catholic triumph over Liberalism. The happy mood is reflected in the words of *Volksblatt*:<sup>7</sup>

*Victoria!* The honour of Bamberg has been saved! The cities of St. Henry and St. Kunigunde, that the Liberals had wanted to claim as cities of modern progress, have been recaptured for the Catholic cause. The city and country have worked hard for this devastating victory over the Liberals. Dr. Schüttinger<sup>8</sup> has been elected with 11,374 votes against Mr. Götz's 5,155. The *Münchener Neuesten* is raging; writing a receipt for the trouble they endured. We take this as evidence of our having led the electoral campaign with "glowing eagerness, indefatigable tenacity and refined cleverness." From now on they can no longer call us stupid obscurantist. We can be comforted with Goethe's verse:

May the riding crop from our stable  
Accompany us everywhere;  
Because only his loud bellowing  
Proves that we are riding.

A glorious victory was also gained in the second district of Upper Franconia, in Kronach. There the parish priest of Scheßlitz, Fr. Mathäus Kirchner, was elected to the Reichstag. He had already become famous through his apostolic work in Central-Africa.

As Hopfenmüller himself said, the results of the election campaign had made them feel once more how little Catholics were represented in the press.<sup>9</sup> He alone, however, did the work of many others. Now, after the battle, he could with relief lift the visor of his helmet. He did this in *Bamberger Volksblatt* where he wittily wrote the following about the "strange kettledrum player:"<sup>10</sup>



A college man wearing a cap saucily on his perpetual-student head, one day felt like starting a fight with a pugnacious soldier. They soon got into each other's hair. The fight escalated as each side fiercely attacked the other in their battle of words. Our colleague hurled grave insults at his military opponent – “silly man, writer of fables, it's not looking well with your love for truth and honesty; you hypocrite, I refuse to respect you as long as you conjure up lies and deception” and many more such polite words slipped through his heated lips. His opponent swallowed hard but could not manage to tell the studious colleague the stark truth and this made his sword arm quiver.

“Ah, how would it be” the soldier said, “if I were to strike you with a sharp sword!”

“Here take my glove and my card.”

“Good,” the soldier replied, “choose the day and the hour.”

The student colleague didn't seem to have expected such an answer. He measured his opponent with his eyes. “With one gash, this man could disfigure his face.” After that thought he said: “No, I shall not fight, you are way too tough for me. I don't want to have anything more to do with you.” Smiling, the soldier handed him back his glove and card.

“It's only now that you realize I am tough?”

The writer advised the committee of the Liberal Party to consider this parable. So they may know who it is that has picked up their glove, his name shall be given. His name is Hopfenmüller and he has had the honour of belonging to the “Patriotic Election Committee.”

But now a less pleasant burden than his victory remained upon the shoulders of the “pugnacious soldier.” He had to see to financial matters. Therefore, Hopfenmüller turned to the public with the following request:

The election battle has been won. As everybody knows, arms cost money. We do not have any secret funds and consequently it means that each of you must help. Voluntary contributions to cover the expense of the elections should be the most suitable way to do this. Hence, we ask friends from the priesthood and laity to handle this matter.<sup>11</sup>

Hopfenmüller had not only been busy writing to promote a good outcome to the election, he was also verbally engaged to that end. Wherever possible, he appeared as a speaker at public gatherings. Even after the victory he was not idle. What had been won needed to be consolidated and extended. On January 25, 1874, an impressive rally was held to celebrate the happy election in the town hall of Kronach. The newly elected representative, Pastor Kirchner, made a brilliant speech.

Following him, Hopfenmüller, as editor of *Bamberger Volksblatt*, spoke. He defended the rural population and industrial workers against the insulting statements of the Liberal opponent. Then he immediately developed a plan for the further organization of the Catholic populace, emphasized the duty to support Catholic newspapers. He spoke about renouncing the Liberal brewery spouting poison of which he gave several edifying examples, and the necessity to found Catholic associations in all cities and rural communities.<sup>12</sup> His remarks were met with enthusiastic approval.

Unfortunately, at that time it was not easy to prevent occasional clashes with public authorities during these public gatherings where Hopfenmüller spoke. For instance, one occurred in Forchheim<sup>13</sup> where the Catholic Association celebrated its sixth anniversary on Sunday, October 4, 1874. Shortly before, a Reichstag replacement election had taken place in Forchheim where the Liberal candidate had defeated the Catholic one. The Catholics had only loosely participated in the election. The occasion of the anniversary celebration was an effort to wake them up a bit.

Hopfenmüller had been asked to speak. Although according to the law, all citizens had the right to assemble peacefully and unarmed without needing special permission, this was not so easy for Catholic Associations at that time. A ministerial decree had simply ordered that Catholic and Social-Democratic gatherings be supervised and, if possible, impeded. The district authority of Forchheim did its best to execute this decree. But having overcome several difficulties, the meeting nonetheless took place. The district authority's civil representative Thelemann was present at the gathering as Superintendent of Police, with whom Hopfenmüller had already met several times prior to the event. Thelemann appeared punctually at 3:30 p.m. along with his secretary. The chairman and secretary of the Forchheim Association asked nicely why the district authority objected to the event; for they had made the announcement in

the same format as in the past years, giving notice of a public gathering with religious and political content.

Thelemann cited Article 4 of the regulations, which stated that where insufficient information had been provided about the nature of the event and its contents, the missing information needed to be provided before confirmation could be made. Hopfenmüller pointed out that it was impossible for the chair to provide clearer information about its content than what they had already given; as far as he knew the law did not request information about who would speak or about their topics. Thelemann simply responded: "I can't get involved in an argument over a regional decree." When asked if the chair had objections to Hopfenmüller speaking, the superintendent had none.

While Fr. Buhr was speaking about the papacy, Thelemann tried to find out from the chair which subject Hopfenmüller would speak about. Hopfenmüller explained to him that it was not the superintendent's right to inquire about this and that he himself would accept responsibility for all the consequences of his appearance; but out of courtesy he would tell him that he intended to speak about the Reichstag elections in Forchheim and the status of the Catholic parties. The superintendent, however, did not want to let him talk about this. Then the following conversation took place between him and Hopfenmüller, which the latter began with these words:

"Why would you not let me talk about this, as freedom of assembly gives me the right to do so?"

"This topic is purely political and in the announcement it was stated that the talks would be of a Church-political nature."

"I am discussing the topic from a Church-political point of view."

"That is what you say, but the topic is political."

"Isn't the expulsion of the Jesuits, civil matrimony, schools, the Church-laws which will be brought to the Reichstag, Church-political?"

"I cannot get involved in such a discussion."

"Then I shall explain to you that I will bring this unjustified attack against our freedom of assembly before the public and protest against the limitations on our civil liberties and rights."

"You can do that, but tell the truth."

“I have always only told the truth. It is the truth that our freedom of association is illegally being encroached.”

“I need to ask the chairman to protect me against these accusations.”

“This is not an accusation, it is the truth.”

“From now on, I shall only talk to the chairman.”

Thereupon the chairman ended the discussion and put an end to the gathering. Hopfenmüller finished his report on it in *Bamberger Volksblatt*, Issue 86 published October 12, 1874, with the words:

A complaint by the chair of encroachment on civil rights would get a hearing, if the ministry had not encouraged the lower-level civil servants to indulge in such behaviour through their decree calling for active supervision. Due to the fact that under such circumstances a complaint would probably be useless, this shall at least be a protest against the superintendent's illegal conduct towards the public and an attempt to provide representatives with material for a parliamentary debate. There is no need for further proof - the humiliation of a speaker in front of the people has damaged the current regime more than the most successful speech would have.

Effort and fortitude were needed once again during the election of the Bavarian Chamber of Representatives in July 1875. Hopfenmüller said:<sup>14</sup>

Hopes that the Bavarian elections will turn out well for the conservatives are justified and widely held. But this is no reason to be complacent or negligent in preparing for the upcoming elections. On the contrary, we must participate in the elections with every effort. This may be difficult for some, not only due to the material sacrifices and nasty uproar with which election campaigns are nowadays connected, but also because one is tempted to give up hope for the future of Bavaria and Germany. But if, in spite of all this, we enter the elections full of zeal, then we do so to fulfil our obligations and at the very least to protect ourselves from the coming disaster.

The Liberals attempted to bolster their swaying cause by again painting the threat of war. By spreading fear they hoped to gain voters.<sup>15</sup> A deep anxiety was felt throughout Europe in May 1875, with wild rumours of war buzzing in the air. France had extensively increased its army and this was viewed with

great unease by Germany as it was seen as an expression of an imminent craving for revenge. Another war might have broken out if England had not intervened in a conciliatory way along with Emperor Alexander of Russia during his visit to Berlin.<sup>16</sup>

Under such circumstances, the people were, of course, less fearful of the threat of war. The Liberal election agitation suggested that with an ultramontane majority in Bavaria the threat of war with France would increase by 100%. Bavaria, would switch sides to France and encourage the attack. On this the *Süd-deutsche Post* commented:

We desire neither ultramontane nor national-liberal rule, but the expressed threat is simply ridiculous. France has learned from experience and would not let an ultramontane election determine their war against Germany. Surely no one is crazy enough to assume that an ultramontane majority would manage to tear Bavaria away from its existing duties toward the Reich in times of war or to lead them into the camp of foreigners.<sup>17</sup>

This ploy was a popular election tactic, but to discuss other fighting methods of the Liberal Party at this point would be going too far.

Liberal Minister Lutz was naturally keen to remain in office and to prevent a Catholic Party victory. To this end, elections were held mid-summer when the rural population had their hands full with the harvest. Additionally, a reapportionment of the electorate, which Hopfenmüller called simply dreadful, was needed for a Liberal victory. But this is how an artificial Liberal majority came about.<sup>18</sup>

All this only encouraged the strenuous work for which the Catholics in Bamberg signed on. On June 26, 1875, *Volksblatt* published an election call to the “Citizens of Upper Franconia.” Essentially it endorsed the already published program of the Catholic-Conservative Party of Bavaria. It described its first duty as restoring peace between Church and State while protecting the constitutional rights of the Catholic Church without interfering in the freedom of other religious convictions. The appeal was signed by Hopfenmüller and six other respected men from Bamberg. In a later publication, the same men invited all friends and like-minded people in the city and the surrounding countryside to a meeting in Bamberg’s Assembly Hall on Sunday, July 4, which went very well and was attended by many.

Hopfenmüller continued to write fiery words in his newspaper to rouse the sluggish. He illustrated in a graphic and gripping way what they could expect for the church in Bavaria if the *Kulturkampf* were to continue and expand further.

“Roman-Catholic,” this is our slogan, because whoever is not Roman-Catholic is no longer a Catholic anyway. And whoever does not let us be Roman-Catholic is infringing on our faith, our religion, our conscience and our most Holy Church. Therefore, let us go into the election with the shout: “Here is a Roman-Catholic – there is the *Kulturkampf*. Here is faith and there is unbelief.” Every Catholic is protecting his most Holy Church by handing in his ballot. Oh, no one will stand back! No one will become a traitor to God and to the Church.”<sup>19</sup>

Since the state parliament at the time not only dealt with laws concerning the common good, but also intervened a great deal in the area of religion, Bavaria’s bishops felt bound to seriously suggest to the faithful the significance and importance of the elections and their duty to participate. The archbishop of Munich-Freising wrote a pastoral letter for the Feast of Sts. Peter and Paul, in which he said:

Why is there so much riding on these elections? It’s no secret that there are those who view the church founded by Christ to be the major obstacle toward Liberal development, as they say, and therefore rail against it with all possible means, while also trying to notch up another success in this direction through the elections. But what shall become of our dear Fatherland if these attempts at a breakthrough succeed with the necessary consequence of weakening the Christian faith, loosening good morals and destroying the true, inner peace and happiness of man? While the church’s enemies repeat a hundred times that they are not hatching anything against religion or the church, against faith or morals, one can surely recognize the opposite in the fruits of their achievements so far.

From here, the archbishop explained the duty to make use of the right to vote and to cast this vote in the interest of the Fatherland and of the church only for men who have proven their Christian faith in word and deed and who possessed the courage and unshakable loyalty necessary to stand up for throne and Fatherland, for religion and church, for law and public order.

Given that the archiepiscopal see was unoccupied in Bamberg at the time, the metropolitan chapter issued an exhortation about the state elections to be read from the pulpit. Following the policy of the Archbishop of Munich, Bamberg's metropolitan chapter wrote a pastoral letter emphasizing that all voters were obliged to cast their vote, regardless of short term advantages or human partiality, for the well-being of the Fatherland and of the church.

Hopfenmüller agreed with the view of church authority. Indefatigably, he employed all of his strength to achieve a successful outcome in the elections. He continued to raise his voice, admonishing, instructing, informing and castigating. Not satisfied with doing this only in *Bamberger Volksblatt*, he appeared as a speaker at numerous gatherings such as the one in the town hall of Kirchhrehnbach on July 11. A journalist reported how well it went:

The chosen room proved to be much too small. Several hundred people were still standing on the street after the hall was already completely filled. "Let's go to the courtyard of Mr. X!" someone called out and the entire crowd marched there. From the fountain, Hopfenmüller rallied the listening crowd. The meeting concluded with a triple cheer for the King and the Pope, and the audience left enthused to vote for the Fatherland and the church, and filled with disgust and loathing against Liberalism.<sup>20</sup>

The voter meeting in the little town of Marktzeuln on St. Henry's Day went just as well. The numerous attendees displayed interest in the cause of justice, religion and freedom. The crowd followed Hopfenmüller's elaborations with keen interest, satisfaction and enthusiasm. Thunderous cheers rewarded him at the end for all his work.

At the time, Bavaria's State Parliament was still elected by indirect vote. Following a first-round vote, those elected chose a smaller group of electors who then voted for the actual parliamentary representatives in another round. The first vote took place on July 15, 1875. Despite the many unlawful acts, including terror and intimidation attempts employed by the Liberal side while fiercely attacking Hopfenmüller, the preliminary vote was a brilliant victory for Bamberg. 37 Catholic-patriotic men were opposed by only 14 Liberals. This ensured the outcome of the elections for representatives on July 24, and three good Catholic men left Bamberg for the state's parliament. Hopfenmüller and his paper played no small role in the outcome.

The election results demonstrated to all of Bavaria's cities and countryside that the Catholic cause had gained strength. Following the preliminary elections, 94 Catholics were to have opposed 62 Liberals. Instead, the new state parliament had 77 Liberals and 79 Catholics— a 2-vote majority. On the day of the preliminary vote, Hopfenmüller wrote: "Newspapers of all types pretty much admit now that the Bavarian ministers did everything humanly possible in the way of electoral manipulation to maintain their seats. Hopefully, they do not persist in that dream."<sup>21</sup>

In any case, the election outcome shattered the dreams of many Liberals, like those from Würzburg<sup>22</sup> who often boasted that they would still bowl with Catholic heads. Even von Lutz slowly felt compelled to add a bit more water to his wine.

### **(Endnotes)**

- <sup>1</sup> BV, November 1, 1872, supplement No. 44.
- <sup>2</sup> BV, November 8, 1872, No. 45.
- <sup>3</sup> BV, October 18, 1872, supplement No. 42.
- <sup>4</sup> BV, October 25, 1872, supplement No. 43.
- <sup>5</sup> BV, November 28, 1873, No. 48.
- <sup>6</sup> BV, December 19, 1873, No. 51.
- <sup>7</sup> BV, January 16, 1874, supplement No. 3.
- <sup>8</sup> Dr. Jakob Schüttinger was a lawyer in Bamberg and was known as a very adroit Catholic.
- <sup>9</sup> BV, December 19, 1873, No. 51, p. 3.
- <sup>10</sup> BV, January 30, 1874, supplement No. 5.
- <sup>11</sup> BV, January 16, 1874, supplement No. 3.
- <sup>12</sup> BV, January 30, 1874, supplement No. 5.
- <sup>13</sup> BV, October 6, 10 and 12, 1874.
- <sup>14</sup> BV, June 15, 1875.
- <sup>15</sup> BV, May 31, 1875.
- <sup>16</sup> Cf., Lord Derby's speech in the British House of Lords on May 31, 1875.
- <sup>17</sup> BV, May 31, 1875, No. 119.
- <sup>18</sup> BV, June 16, 1875, No. 133.
- <sup>19</sup> BV, July 5, 1875, No. 147.
- <sup>20</sup> BV, July 13, 1875, No. 154.
- <sup>21</sup> BV, July 15, 1875, No. 156.
- <sup>22</sup> BV, July 29, 1875, No. 168.



## 5. Hostilities and Suspicions

As expected, the Liberal press felt no particular fondness for Hopfenmüller, for his shrill voice during the battle or for his far-reaching activities. Hence they set out to tarnish his reputation, but they certainly should not have stooped to this level of low insults and denigration. It is incredible what Hopfenmüller had to put up with as a result. It still sounded relatively harmless when a newspaper wrote about him: “The Blacks [i.e., Roman Catholics] have now dared to bring out a newspaper, and you, beardless stripling are the editor!” Hopfenmüller replied wittily:

That is how a Bamberger paper called you once upon a time, in noble indignation over the fact that you, beardless, talked about politics since only a full beard grants the right and qualification to do politics.<sup>1</sup>

Accusations to the effect that he was disturbing the peace, that he led the Jesuit-clerical ruling party and was the head of the clerical war and agitation party inspired from across the Alps (i.e., by Rome), epitomized the milder examples of attacks on Hopfenmüller. It was more painful for the conscientious editor that he was repeatedly presented as a liar, writing a mendacious paper filled with untruthful articles, etc. He once responded to such attacks from *Lichtenfelser Tagblatt*:

In the interest of the readership of our newspaper, we ask the editorial office and their correspondents who are brash enough to make such insults, to prove their accusations. A single case where an editor said an untruth against his better knowledge shall be enough. Otherwise, I describe *this* accusation as malicious slander. It is possible and can happen that even a thorough writer can adopt incorrect or inaccurate information from other newspapers or from reports from their correspondents. Such falsehood can be founded either on a lack of interpretation or from accepting such information on good faith, or on intentional distortion of the truth. Only in the latter case are they lies, as everybody knows from the catechism: lying means consciously and deliberately stating the untrue. It is human to err but lying is diabolic. A truth-loving editor will therefore correct the thing as soon as he hears about the inaccuracy of the information. The editor of *Volksblatt*, as this paper knows, anxiously rectifies such inaccuracies immediately. Liberal newspapers never or rarely publish corrections.

Hopfenmüller had to endure what amounted to open impertinence on the occasion of the close of the fifth Bavarian Parliament. Catholics and Liberals had tried to contribute to a successful celebration which had nothing to do with religion. Nonetheless, during the ceremonial address, the Liberal lawyer Schmitt could not forgo directing several accusations and threats in a tactless manner against the church and the internal enemies of the country. Hopfenmüller determinedly took his stand on this, albeit more courteously. Following this, the Liberal newspapers accused him of having ruined the happy feast through provocative discord. Schmitt went so far as to write about him as biased in his education, a politically immature boy who did not deserve his nurturing Fatherland. Hopfenmüller declared this insult to be “a brazen and impertinent insult which only the law courts can expiate.” The editor of *Germania* replied in a similar vein: “I would box the writer’s ears for having written these lines. If I were not a decent man, I would even challenge him if my Catholic faith did not prohibit it.” Hopfenmüller said: “I would demand satisfaction from Schmitt before a judge, if I were not an editor who cherished freedom of the press and weren’t a Catholic priest.”<sup>2</sup> But enough of this.

Naturally, the Liberal bureaucracy also kept a sharp eye on the unpalatable editor of *Bamberger Volksblatt* and tried with all its might to make his life difficult. In his call for subscriptions for the second half-year of the paper, Hopfenmüller wrote in 1873: “The last two quarters have brought the paper a significant increase in subscribers but also a confiscation and a press lawsuit due to five alleged offences. *Volksblatt* believes that it only serves as a compliment when it arouses the anger of the Liberal bureaucracy.” But the incident proceeded quite dangerously. On April 25, 1873, the paper reported:<sup>3</sup>

Near lunchtime our last issue was confiscated upon request of District Attorney Meinel, and the remaining issues on dispatch or in the post were taken away by court officials. Two terrible crimes were stated as the reason for the confiscation, which we allegedly have committed: *lèse-majesté* toward the King of Bavaria in the first paragraph in the news report under the category “Bavaria,” and offending the German Emperor on the third page under the category “Prussia.” Of course, it doesn’t make sense to our ordinary, prosaic commonsense where the insult lies, because nothing is contained in the stated paragraphs that could be interpreted as an insult. But the public prosecutor’s insight, of course, reaches further than that of an ultramontane editor. In the meantime, we have no doubt that the court will release the confiscated

issues. We await the judicial investigation with great equanimity. May the readers who have not received the last issue excuse us and be patient until the prisoners are released.

On April 30, 1873, Hopfenmüller was interrogated about the issue in question by the examining magistrate. Apart from both the alleged *lèse-majesté*, the district attorney had compiled three more insults against the German Emperor and the King of Prussia from previous issues so that the public prosecutor kept the royal district court busy with a fivefold *lèse-majesté*. But the court suspended the lawsuit, whereupon the public prosecutor filed for an appeal at the royal appeals court in Bamberg where it was again dismissed. Following this, the court officials redelivered the confiscated edition of *Volksblatt* to the editor. At the end he wrote:

Our readers, the editor, and whoever takes a calm look at the sentences of the accused have expected nothing else. *Volksblatt*'s position appears to be rather uncomfortable for the public prosecution because already last year a similar unfounded accusation was raised against the paper of having deliberately circulated incorrect facts in order to ridicule official instructions by criticizing the clear hounding by the prosecutor of Forchheim. One man in particular seems to have his finger in the pie in the measures taken against *Volksblatt*, someone who so avidly defended the honour of Döllinger and Friedrich. This side may be feeling quite awkward about the fact that in two instances the justice system has acknowledged that the editor of *Volksblatt* in no way was a fivefold offender of *lèse-majesté*, but is innocent. Anyhow, let us not become bitter. Instead let us exercise forgiveness. But we must make one more comment: We do not want favours; we are and want to be under the law. And if we have violated the law we also want to pay for it. But one should not annoy us with unfounded accusations. An editor, even if he is "black," continues to be human, and even if one does not want to recognize him as such, there are still societies for the prevention of cruelty to animals. It is no fun to be hauled before a court and the investigative judge for no reason, to lose time and to be running around and writing. I do not wish anyone to be dragged unnecessarily to the prosecutor's office. Even though the editor of *Volksblatt* is personally of a very cool nature and with steady nerves, nonetheless his relatives, parents and siblings may not enjoy such equanimity towards the baseless accusations that have caused unnecessary fear and concern. This is

not a trifle. Who compensates someone who is falsely accused and his relatives for all these troubles? No one says nice things to him; he can only be happy that his innocence has been recognized.<sup>4</sup>

In another case Hopfenmüller did not come off so well. In issue 46 of the paper from August 25, 1874, he published a correspondent's report about the unhealthy water supply in Staffelstein. Staffelstein's municipal authorities instantly filed a law suit against him. Against all expectations, Hopfenmüller was forced to pay a fine of 10 Mark plus legal fees. His legal adviser recommended an appeal against the decision but it was dismissed by the court.<sup>5</sup>

Since the Liberals were not able to harm the editor in this way, they nonetheless left no stone unturned to put an end to his work. They tried to stir up animosity directly through his higher ecclesiastical authority. The Archbishop of Bamberg came to Kronach on September 4, 1874, to administer Confirmation. High officials and the municipal council did not appear at his solemn welcome. This marked the first time Kronach, a city the old Bamberger bishops had rightly and proudly called their most loyal city and had patronized generously, had let their bishop enter the city gates without being greeted by the appointed representatives of the community. There was a common displeasure over this tactless behaviour by the still good Catholic citizenship of Kronach. For even if these Liberal councilmen may have been little inclined personally to pay their respect to the Catholic bishop, one still expected the elected representatives from a majority Catholic population to pay him the usual honours.<sup>6</sup>

Defending the municipal authorities, the *Kronacher Anzeiger* stated as the main reason: "The representatives of the community did not participate in the reception ceremony because this church dignitary seems to agree with the behaviour of the *Volksblatt*, since he would otherwise have closed it long ago or would have at least restrained its indecency." Thus Hopfenmüller was made the scapegoat. One contributor to *Volksblatt* from Kronach writes:

As one delegate of the town council explained to the parish priest of Kronach, it had been the articles against the *Anzeiger* by the *Volksblatt* that had annoyed them so much. But one needs to ask oneself, what does the town council care about the *Anzeiger* as it protects beneath its wings this paper's hostilities toward the church? Since when is *Anzeiger* an official organ of the town council of Kronach that it takes up the cause of the paper in such a way? We are well aware of the outstanding position which the current town chronicler holds amongst

the scholars of the editorial committee of the *Anzeiger*, but since when is the town chronicler the town council? And what does the editorial work of the above-mentioned man have to do with his official position in the town council such that the city fathers go through hell's fire for him? Finally, what terrible things has *Volksblatt* done that the town council believes the archbishop should intervene? We have done nothing, with the one exception that we got too close to the *Anzeiger* in a way it didn't like, when we got tired of its infamies and nastiness towards everything which is sacred and dear to Catholics. So we got under its skin, as it well deserved. Week after week and often day after day, *Anzeigen* complains about the pope and bishops, presents the "Rome-led Catholic party" as a gang of murderers, etc. And when we box the ears of this fine paper as it deserves, the archbishop should not be made to suffer for it – as the town council has done – suggesting that he should take actions against *Volksblatt* and just close it. But when the archbishop does not do that then the Kronach town council punishes him by not receiving him anymore!<sup>7</sup>

The efforts to set Archbishop Deinlein against *Volksblatt* or its editor did not work. He was well aware of what he had in the paper and in his loyal Catholic editor and how effective it was in his archdiocese. Unfortunately, he was not to survive such incidents much longer. The battles which Liberalism had brought to the church had not left him untouched and had broken his strength. Hopfenmüller loved his bishop with all his heart and reverentially celebrated his fiftieth anniversary in the priesthood with him, which took place only a few weeks before his death. On January 4, 1875, the tolling of the bronze cathedral bells announced the sad news of the passing of the aged shepherd. The vacant diocese prayed for a new shepherd who would protect Christ's flock from the invading wolves.

It took quite some time before a new archbishop was named. The royal Bavarian government was responsible for that delay. In the meantime it was impossible to look forward to the nomination by the all-powerful Minister Lutz without tension and worry. On June 2, Hopfenmüller wrote:

The newspapers already know of a few who have been nominated for bishop of Bamberg. We do not take this into account since such speculations are idle talk. But a frightening feeling overtakes the clergy and the people due to all of the secretiveness and at the thought that

the most competent and worthy person is not being sought, but instead a priest who would be most pleasing to Lutz, who lets his children be reared in Protestantism. It's a good thing that confirmation also depends on the Holy Father as head of the church.<sup>8</sup>

At last, the sought-after candidate was found in Friedrich Schreiber, a priest of Engelbrechtmünster in the District of Pfaffenhofen in Upper Bavaria. Hopfenmüller introduced him without prejudice.

Fr. Schreiber has been described to us as an incredibly talented man who enjoys the highest respect everywhere. His political position is most peaceful, his church position is correct; we have been assured explicitly that Lutz's life will gain another disappointment if he has tied any political hopes to this nomination. God only shall know.<sup>9</sup>

Minister of Education and Cultural Affairs, Lutz had personally tried to convince Fr. Schreiber to assume the archiepiscopal honour. At first he had refused. But Lutz did not give up. He won the King over for his choice and then turned back to Schreiber on behalf of the King. Thereupon, Schreiber believed he could no longer resist the wish and will of his royal sovereign.

Right from the start, the newly appointed Archbishop of Bamberg was cast in a peculiar light due to an article in *Frankfurter Zeitung*. It accused him of having gained the archiepiscopal see as a reward for having passed "secret information." In other words, that he had revealed to Lutz a decree by Bishop Senestrey of Regensburg. A fight between Senestrey and Lutz had occupied the public for quite some time. The latter had accused the bishop of having tried to influence the elections by stirring up the people and taking advantage of their unhappiness with his rulings. The bishop demanded that an inquiry be opened concerning the relevant decree issued by Lutz. Bishop Senestrey made his demand publicly without any further ado. The Education Minister was surely not pleasantly surprised by this. The bishop had pointed out to the clergy that the Liberal lack of faith and the subsequent immorality among the people were steadily increasing according to the pastoral care reports at hand, and he called on them diligently to fulfil their pastoral duties:

The sect of Liberalism is appearing ever more undisguised and naked. The glaring expressions with which they had managed to veil their poisonous hatred against the immaculate bride of the Lord, for many short-sighted people have now collapsed into nothing due to the clearly

evident facts. And among our clergy there is surely no priest left who has not realized that being Liberal and falling away from the church are exactly the same thing. The teachings and experiences of our days will strongly push pastors toward a decisive loyalty to the church and fill them with the strongest inner devotion to the successor to the man of the rock upon which His church has been built.<sup>10</sup>

It was not difficult for Bishop Senestrey to demonstrate that he had never used the word “election” in this or any other decree he had issued, and the whole controversy ended as a great flop for Lutz.

The newly elected Archbishop of Bamberg did not let the accusation of being a secret informer rest on him and he made an official statement denouncing it.<sup>11</sup> It irritated loyal Catholics that every Liberal daily paper expressed its great joy at Schreiber’s nomination. In the spirit of a loyal son of the holy church, Hopfenmüller only wrote the following:

The most varied judgments and characterizations are appearing in the papers about the person who was recommended by His Majesty the King to fill the archiepiscopal see. As we are intentionally ignoring the rumours and speculations about this person, we shall also take no notice of these particulars. At the moment the Holy See is examining the past life of the proposed candidate, as it is well known, with the precision commensurate to its importance. If the Holy See confirms the candidate following the examination, then he shall be our bishop and we shall entirely and unreservedly give him, “who has been placed by the Holy Spirit to lead his orphan flock,” our respect, our love and our obedience.<sup>12</sup>

The Holy See did confirm the choice, and on September 5, 1875, the ordination of the new archbishop took place in Bamberg. On the same day he addressed his first pastoral letter to the clergy and the people. Strangely, it was published in all the Liberal newspapers even before the clergy knew about it or the editor of the Catholic newspaper in Bamberg had received a copy.<sup>13</sup> It was supposed to have been leaked by a priest. The letter spoke of humility and faith in God, loving the church and the Fatherland, the pope and the king. Nonetheless, the Freemason paper *Die Bauhütte* managed to interpret the words of the peaceful-minded church dignitary as a profession of the spirit and principles of Freemasonry, and to claim him as one of their own.<sup>14</sup>

On September 11, the residents of Bamberg organized a glorious celebration in tribute to the new archbishop. This gave *Bamberger Volksblatt* reason to complain:

Again we experienced an example of real tact. Reich Representative Fritz Schneider has informed the town committees, the choral societies, and all the citizens of Bamberg of his gratitude for the brilliant reception given to the Very Reverend Archbishop. This was published in *Tagblatt* as well as *Neuesten Nachrichten*. But Schneider did not see the need of also using *Bamberger Volksblatt* for this purpose. We do not know why this happened. The smart gentlemen perhaps assumed that *Neuesten Nachrichten's* audience has a greater devotion and loyalty to the Reverend Archbishop and the Catholic Church than the readership of *Volksblatt*. Or perhaps he thought that the gratitude would be greater in an issue of *Neuesten* where Freemasonry is praised as a blessing for Bamberg, being the silent (this should probably mean secret) work for the moral perfection of humanity, instead of giving it to the "brainwashing" *Volksblatt*.<sup>15</sup>

With the new archbishop, the old smear campaign against the editor of *Bamberger Volksblatt* was to be stirred up again. The Liberal papers hoped that the irenic and forthcoming shepherd would soon pull the plug on the annoying editor. The rumours were already being circulated in specific reports. Hopfenmüller dealt wittily with this in the following article:<sup>16</sup>

Last Day of the Third Quarter.

Dear Liberal gentlemen! I have the honour of informing you that the last day of the third quarter is not my dying day. Thank God, my days are not yet numbered. You have written my obituary too early and are now incredibly disappointed. The one presumed dead is alive; indeed the one believed to be dead intends to live for quite some time. If you are awaiting my death, you will still need to empty many more glasses of beer until your wish will be fulfilled. I plan to annoy you with my existence for quite some time, and your manifest malicious glee over my supposed death shall not deter me in this. By annoying you in this way I do not mean to cause you trouble but to do you a good deed. Perhaps this will worry or frighten one or another's conscience and that would be very good. Gentlemen, you have built a castle in the air in your pubs and in the *Nürnbergischer Presse*. You were dreaming and



your dream has vanished. Which fool has led you to believe that His Excellency Archbishop Friedrich von Schreiber would cut the thread of my life? Do you honestly believe that the Most Reverend would exercise on me the office of the three Fates for your sake? You might have thought the Reverend to be an educated peace-loving man who would transfer a rude and hot-headed editor who is also a chaplain to Windheim so he could do penance there or to forbid him his journalistic profession. But no, you did not think so, you could not have thought so; because you should have known that the Reverend Archbishop is not a Liberal Party follower but instead a Catholic bishop. But you have had a double purpose with your sensationalism: to temporarily delight yourselves with this amusing delusion and to discredit the honourable archbishop among the Catholic population, arousing mistrust against him. The disappointment is even crueller since the Catholic people would never believe a Catholic bishop to be capable of doing such a favour for the Liberal Party: not for a second were they confused about their bishop. But furthermore, you acted quite clumsily. Did you believe that my editing would be irreplaceable? No, it is not. If the archbishop were to fall, enough fighters would stand behind him to step into the breach and my life would be saved. It is still on the right track. Although he has been complaining to me for some time that I cause him much trouble, that already he has sacrificed his health in other pastoral works, and that I should look for another editor. But as I heard that you are letting the above-mentioned duck fly, I begged him to give me his love a little longer until the miserable cow was to be killed again. I believe he will do me this favour, even if he would do it only to annoy you gentlemen. Because he always tells me that he would care the best for me by being unpleasant to the Liberals and that it would be my death if he or another fighter would merit the enemy's praise. So my editor and I confidently pass into the fourth quarter and leave it up to God to continue to care for us. *Bamberger Volksblatt*

Hopfenmüller was still to endure much more before his editorial work ended. Though he was not at all attached to his work (on the contrary, he viewed it as a type of martyrdom) he would have been just as happy to see the work being done by competent lay people. Golden are the words which Hopfenmüller wrote about the task of a Catholic publicist in his article "The Catholic Priest and the Press," which shows how he viewed his work from an apostolic perspective:

The Apostles did not write in newspapers because they did not exist at that time. Nonetheless they wrote, even though the Divine Saviour had initially only asked them to teach. They wrote letters. They used all the means of their time to promulgate the truth. And if the holy Apostles were alive today, they would equally use all means to spread the divine truth. They would not go on foot on their missionary journeys but would use trains and ships just like our missionary priests, and they would certainly also use the press to its fullest extent.

*Tempora mutantur* – times change. The old battle between the truth and lies, Christianity and anti-Christianity is very different in the 19<sup>th</sup> century and is conducted with different weapons than in the first Christian centuries. If Sts. Paul, Augustine, Jerome or Chrysostom were alive today, their powerful voices would surely be heard in the daily press.

Of course, it would be most welcome if the entire bulk of Catholic publicists were made up solely of laymen. No one would prefer this more than the priests themselves if they could safely leave the press battle to the Catholic laity and could themselves work on the Kingdom of God in the silence of the sanctuary, instead of having to step down into the arena (the battlefield) of public and political life. This would be highly desirable and also much more comfortable than the thorny, — yes we can say torturous task — of a Catholic publicist. But the great need of our times has imperiously called priests to work in this area and forces a pen into the hand of the most diligent and thorough priest no matter how many sacrifices it will cost him or how many troubles it will bring him from all sides. “These days,” writes *Postzeitung*, “where the great world battle concerns first of all the Catholic Church and the truth of divine revelation, where the entire world, princes and governments, deputies and lawyers, Jews and atheists, young and old, all classes of humanity are theologizing and passing judgment on Catholic doctrine, — here the Catholic priest has the right and duty to mix in the battle and to lead it in the field which he occupies.” The battlefield is the press. The Catholic press would hardly be up to its huge task without priestly collaborators. Nowadays, priests stand on the floor of the Catholic pressroom with the same right and duty as they stand in the church and in the schools.

That is why one has every right to speak about the Apostolate of the Press and its mission. Yes, participating in the Catholic press is apostolic and missionary work. Just as the apostolic missionary follows the wild pagans, priests must pursue the modern pagans in the press, which has nearly become the one place where he can still reach and find them.

**(Endnotes)**

- <sup>1</sup> BV, January 19, 1875, No. 3.
- <sup>2</sup> BV, August 7, 1872, No. 32.
- <sup>3</sup> BV, Supplement, No. 17.
- <sup>4</sup> BV, June 27, 1873, supplement No. 26.
- <sup>5</sup> BV, February 19, 1875.
- <sup>6</sup> BV, September 14, 1874, No. 62.
- <sup>7</sup> BV, September 23, 1874, No. 70.
- <sup>8</sup> BV, June 2, 1875, No. 121.
- <sup>9</sup> BV, June 4, 1875, No. 123.
- <sup>10</sup> BV, December 22, 1875, No. 290.
- <sup>11</sup> BV, December 29, 1875, No. 295.
- <sup>12</sup> BV, June 10, 1875, No. 128.
- <sup>13</sup> BV, September 6, 1875, No 201; September 13, 1875, No. 206.
- <sup>14</sup> Die Bauhütte, September 25, 1875.
- <sup>15</sup> BV, Sept. 25, 1875, No. 201.
- <sup>16</sup> BV, Sept. 30, 1875, No. 221.

## 6. The Jury Trial

The activities of the brave and enthusiastic fighter for the well-being of the church gave his opponents no quarter. For a long time they had been waiting for an opportunity to bring him down. Such an opportunity was to present itself soon. *Bamberger Volksblatt* reported in Issue 259 from November 15, 1875:

Yesterday at 11 o'clock a.m., Issues 240, 241, 252 and 255 were belatedly confiscated upon request of the royal examining magistrate. As reported, the investigation and confiscation were ordered via telegraph from Munich. For all four issues we have been accused of having insulted His Majesty. Issue 254 contains a report critical of the famous voter meeting in Munich; Issue 255 contains a citation from *Germania*, which we only printed after it had not drawn complaints in *Bavaria*, in *Fränkische Volksblatt* or elsewhere. It's a complete mystery to us what His Majesty would find insulting in the other two issues, one of which contains a citation from *Bayer. Kurier*, and the other a note on the decision about the address [from Parliament to the King, see below]. At any rate, the public prosecutor's office came to realize this crime rather late since 14 days had past since the issue had been published. We calmly await the judicial decision.

Two days later the editorial office was forced to add the following official correction due to §11 of the Press Law:

Regarding the publication by the editor of this newspaper, Issue 259, I herewith declare that I have decided to order a judicial investigation of Issues 254 and 255 in my own capacity as public prosecutor and my own legally recognized competence and not due to a telegraphic instruction or for any other reason. Issues 240 and 241 of the newspaper are now no longer under confiscation. Bamberg, November 16, 1875, His Royal Examining Magistrate Reiß.<sup>1</sup>

Hopfenmüller commented on this "correction" in the next issue of the paper: "The examining magistrate corrected that he had received no orders from Munich. We never specifically claimed that he had. This order could also have been directed at someone else, for instance, at the public prosecutors."<sup>2</sup>

Issues 240 and 241 were therefore released from custody by the examining magistrate and the investigation now concerned only Issues 254 and 255 for

which Hopfenmüller was accused of *lèse-majesté*, insulting the king. To understand this matter we shall briefly explain what it is about. In the previous chapter concerning the election campaigns we emphasized the tricks Lutz' ministry had used in dividing up electoral constituencies to ensure a happy outcome for the Liberal Party in the 1875 Bavarian State Parliament elections. The Parliament which emerged from these elections was opened by Prince Luitpold following Mass in all of Munich's parish churches on September 28, 1875.

Dr. Kurz, a delegate, immediately proposed to turn to the king in an address. In a parliamentary session on October 2, he gave his reasons for this:

The Bavarian people want to assure the king of their loyalty and steadfast love as they have always done, but they also want to express their wishes and requests about the situation in the country. The chamber is not only entitled to lay such an explanation before the throne but since the extensive changes in 1871, it is a duty of the chamber.

The Liberals were against this address, but Kurz's motion passed 79 to 76. A committee created to give advice on the address was composed of eight Patriots and seven Liberals. Dr. Jörg<sup>3</sup> was made the mediator. As it was being composed, heated exchanges were witnessed in committee. But Catholic delegates remained steadfast.

A proposal was then submitted to Parliament, which pointed out to the King how the government had used all possible unlawful means to prevent impartial elections from determining the formation of the Chamber of Delegates. Even after these procedures were unable to achieve the desired success of convincing the Ministry to resign, the Chamber requested from the king's throne a government that would make law and justice its solemn guiding star, one that would not have to fear the Bavarian people's expression of their real desires. During this restless time plaguing and frightening the country, they hoped once more to hear the royal words from the king: "I want to be at peace with my people."<sup>4</sup>

The debate in Parliament over such an address naturally led to passionate clashes with the government and the Liberals. But the Catholic Patriots bravely resisted and their opponents were unable to assert themselves against them even though the Catholics majority was very slim.

The matter then took an unexpected turn. On October 20, the newspapers published a telegram by King Ludwig of Hohenschwangau addressed to the Bavarian minister-president, Mr. von Pfrezschner, stating: "I will not accept the delegation. I have already read the address. The ministers enjoy my full trust. They are to remain." Thereupon the State Parliament was adjourned.

Thus the Ministry, whose soul was Education Minister, Lutz, had triumphed over the much greater majority of the Bavarian people. Ignoring all constitutional objections, he remained in office. Everywhere the Liberals staged noisy cheering scenes. Thank-you notes were sent to the king, who by his decision had liberated his country from the worry of creeping encroachment of Ultramontane efforts, clerical greed for power and intolerance. In the cities the words of the royal decision were to be read out during public sessions of the town councils, and in the countryside at special community gatherings to be held after Mass on Sunday. The royal decision was a slap in the face of the Patriotic Catholic population and represented a bitter disappointment for them.

It was under these circumstances that *Bamberger Volksblatt* wrote the following in Issue 254 on November 9, 1875:

On Sunday, November 7, the delegates, Dr. Schüttinger and Henning, gave a report [in Bamberg] on the past parliamentary session. We regret that we cannot elaborate further about it due to a lack of space. It shall only be emphasized that our delegates remained unflappable after the well-known outcome of the address-debate. They regret that His Majesty, the King, has not done justice to the complaints of the majority of his people, but this shall not change anything about the justifiably expressed mistrust of the Ministry. The Patriotic delegates had pledged their word to each other at their departure that they are unshakable and would remain unshakable. Regarding further procedures, some have suggested a boycott of taxes. But such important objections underlie a complete tax boycott that Patriotic delegates would need to refrain from participating in it. Stalling less urgent demands by the government would be enough to show the Ministry their continued mistrust. In any case, the people will follow their representatives in their loyalty to the ill-advised king. The Patriotic delegates have fulfilled their obligation; they deserve the voters' thanks. May His Majesty soon listen to reason and grant these rights according to the wishes and complaints of the Catholic people! God shall prevail!

So this was the terrible article for which Hopfenmüller was supposed to be guilty of *lèse-majesté*. The second report was included in Issue 255 of November 10, 1875, regarding the same matter. It said:

From Lower Bavaria someone wrote in *Germania*: “Bavaria’s evil genie<sup>5</sup> relies on several notorious persons at his disposal through whom he contacts the Crown of Wittelsbach in every decisive hour when the loyal people feel in need of their king. This is our secret story from October 19, and among these certain personalities we count in the first place General von der Tann, as he is known in every hut here. When the representatives of the Bavarian people wished to see the king, General von der Tann was already at his side – and with this single piece of news our people know everything. One shrugs his shoulders with frosty regret and says: “The king has put himself on the side of the Liberals.” Our people know the Liberals better than the king does. Men who have been proven to be good patriots such as Jörg and Haneberg<sup>6</sup> have been labelled as enemies of the Bavarian throne – in this sense all the past is upside down. The political readings of our monarch are entirely dominated by Liberalism. The king does not hear about what should be unmasked. Everybody knows of the plans for the Bavarian people and for their lord, but no one says a word. Furthermore, in the eyes of Ludwig II, our Patriotic faction has been branded as a choice for treason and ignorance.

Because of these two articles, Hopfenmüller had to appear before the examining magistrate at a hearing on November 16. A public inquiry was also initiated against delegates Dr. Schüttinger and Henning, but upon Hopfenmüller’s testimony, their cases were dropped because they had not used the objectionable expression. Around Christmas, the Liberal *Nürnbergischer Presse* was the first to report to its readership with great satisfaction that the “editor, gunpowder-, kerosene-chaplain” Hopfenmüller had been indicted for *lèse-majesté*. This was to be the beginning of Hopfenmüller’s long ordeal, which many other Catholic editors were forced to endure during the *Kulturkampf*.

The day of the hearing had not yet arrived when the editor of *Bamberger Volksblatt*’s list of “crimes” again increased. In Issue 44 of *Bamberger Volksblatt* from February 24, 1876, we read:

This morning we received another summons to appear in front of the examining magistrate. We still have no idea which article of the law we have violated or what crime we have committed, but the examining magistrate will reveal this tomorrow morning at 11 o'clock, so that we will come to realize our wrongdoing.

It turned out that the latest suit centred on article in *Bamberger Volksblatt* Issue 14, January 19, 1876, concerning Bavaria:

When an organism in nature begins edging toward extinction it begins to show little life, and signs of decay begin to appear. This is what is happening now in the Kingdom of Bavaria. Since this empire seems to be approaching its end as an independent state, the politicians no longer know how to report anything fresh or vital about it; it increasingly shows signs of rot and decomposition. Soon one hears complaints about stagnant businesses, about public auctions, then about murders and thefts, and one gets especially alarmed hearing all the time about counterfeiting. What has our public life come to? How shattered is loyalty and probity! And it doesn't look any rosier among the upper classes. After conscientiousness, respectability had always been a quality of those men who assumed higher posts in society and held the highest offices. But these areas too show a worrisome moral decay. It's not enough, for instance, that a Minister makes false accusations against a church dignitary in front of the entire country, while in addition semi-official papers now write that, notwithstanding promises given, the Minister refuses to revoke these accusations, and in order to cover up such conduct ever more scandalous stories are being reported.

To demonstrate that this is not an isolated case of such questionable behaviour from one Minister, we point to the year 1869. At that time a vote of no-confidence had been passed by the Reichstag concerning the existing Ministry with which one of its members, then Minister and now district president of Swabia, was publicly branded a liar in front of the country. What kind of consequences and thoughts are offered to the intellect here? Are these not worrisome signs of a decline and fall?

This Minister who never got around to taking back his false accusations against a bishop made in a public parliamentary session, even after these were proven to be untrue, refers to none other than von Lutz. This refers to the decree by Bishop Senestrey of Regensburg, mentioned in the previous chapter. The other



Minister who was publicly branded a liar is former district president of Swabia, von Hörmann.

While Lutz coolly let the blow he received run like water off a duck's back, Hörmann started a legal proceeding in Augsburg against *Volksblatt* for calumnious allegations, bringing the editor again before the examining magistrate. Nonetheless, the paper defended its statement and rejected the libel claim in Issue 45 of February 25, 1876:

We will prove the truth with the help of stenographic reports from the parliamentary session and if necessary through testimony, such as by our delegate Mr. Westermayer. The widely known proceedings are causing quite a stir in the country, and will cost Mr. von Hörmann his Minister's portfolio. This is why he is now starting legal proceedings against us. Dr. Westermayer had hinted at the fact that there exists a decree directed to the officials, which renews an even stronger system of influence than the Reigersberg Decree. Mr. von Hörmann argued to the contrary that apart from one decree, from which he read several parts, no others exist with the purpose of influencing the elections by state officials. In regard to this, delegate Dr. Westermayer produced a confidential decree directed to the district presidents, which Mr. von Hörmann grudgingly had to admit to be true. Mr. von Hörmann must have known that such a decree existed – and has hence deliberately spoken untruthfully. What was claimed in *Volksblatt* (we didn't write the article ourselves) was therefore the truth, the full truth. The author only committed one small error regarding the year. The unforgettable session of the chamber was not in 1869, but on February 16, 1870. So we optimistically look forward to the judicial ruling. Mr. von Hörmann will surely not be so easily bested.

But the vigilant judicial authorities in no way approved of the way *Volksblatt* treated the matter. A few days later *Volksblatt* again reported:

Saturday morning we were once again honoured with a confiscation. The last copies of Issues 14 and 15 discussing the Hörmann-affair were dragged to jail. We cannot refrain from advising the lawyers to study the law just a bit more because this confiscation is illegal. The first time we did not say a word because we do not care about this *post festum* confiscation. But in the interest of freedom of the press we must point out to these gentlemen that according to §23, paragraph 3 of

the country's press law, a confiscation is only permitted for violating §§85, 95, 111, 130 and 184 of the nation's penal law. These gentlemen are defending Mr. Hörmann's honour too much and this therefore is against the law because the libel clause is not included in the articles above.<sup>7</sup>

Later in the same issue *Volksblatt* added:

We have been informed that the repeated confiscation is legally admissible as it was not ordered by the public prosecutor but instead by the examining magistrate, and that the nation's press law permits confiscation upon judicial request in any case.<sup>8</sup>

Hopfenmüller's jury trial was to take place March 20 on the first count of *lèse-majesté*. The accused petitioned for an adjournment on the grounds that the new case with Mr. von Hörmann was still in pre-trial hearings and that a simultaneous treatment of all accusations would seem suitable. The delegates, Dr. Schüttinger and Henning, were called to testify at the hearing. They attempted to obtain an adjournment or to be released from testifying, as they could not miss the Parliamentary sessions. The court dismissed their petition. After that, they handed in a certificate from the chamber president that confirmed that they could not get a leave and could therefore not attend the hearings. So the trial was postponed to July 17 due to the indispensability of the two witnesses.

In the meantime, the editor of *Volksblatt* received a reprimand from the appeals court in Bamberg, summing him to another court for calumny against District President von Hörmann. Since the sessions in Parliament continued, impeding witnesses from appearing, the date for the trial was postponed again. Finally, on October 11, 1876, the trial was heard in front of the court of assizes in Bayreuth. The court was composed of the following: appeal councillor Meinelt from Bamberg was chairman, with councilors Bayerlein, von Kirschbaum, Mattenheimer and assistant judge Mettenheimer. Mr. von Pforten held the office of public prosecutor. The names of twelve jurors were randomly chosen from an urn. *Bamberger Volksblatt* gave their names and commented on them: "As far as we know, all jurors are Protestants and belong to the Liberal Party. The accused did not reject any of the jurors."<sup>9</sup> The prosecutor rejected one of them.

Hopfenmüller appeared without a defence attorney, trusting in his clean conscience. The prosecutor explained the charges and read the offending articles from Issues 254 and 255 of *Bamberger Volksblatt* for alleged *lèse-majesté*,

and those in Issues 14 and 15 for slanderous accusations against District President von Hörmann. The hearing lasted the entire morning until 12:30, breaking for lunch until 3 o'clock. Hopfenmüller replied to all the questions in a calm, certain and skilful manner, so much so that even his opponents and the Liberal newspapers had to admit it.

Concerning the article from Issue 254 of November 9, 1875, which included the statements from the two delegates, Dr. Schüttinger and Henning, Hopfenmüller admitted that the phrase: "His Majesty the King has not done justice to the complaints of his people," was not necessary. He had explained this immediately after the text had been denounced. It had been reported to him that the two delegates expressed regret in their speech (he himself had not personally witnessed the speech) that the King had rejected and not accepted an address formulated by the majority of the chamber, which included justified complaints by the Patriotic Delegates. This is the idea he had sought to explain with the incriminating phrase. This is the sense it was supposed to have had, and while writing it down he did not notice any contradiction which would mean something else apart from: "The delegates regret that His Majesty the King has not granted, complied with or conceded to the complaints of the majority of his people." In German parlance this is the common sense of such an expression and no different sense could even be connected to the phrase as it deals with a complaint brought to the throne in an address in the form of pleas and wishes.

When he was asked whether the expression blamed the king for being unjust, the accused responded: "Not at all. If the king does not concede that we are right because he does not see or believe that we are right, then this does not accuse him of practicing injustice or being unjust." On the question as to whether the sentence, "May His Majesty soon listen to reason and acknowledge the wishes and complaints of the Catholic people," accused the king of a lack of understanding and reason in fulfilling his royal duties, the accused replied:

The prosecution is interpreting this as something that is not stated, nor implied according to the laws of logic or grammar. This does not generally deny the king the ability of understanding and reasoning in his royal duties, but instead it is being wished that he would change his current conviction in this particular regard and adopt another one. But it is not an insult if I wish for someone to change his political point of view. Even a king can change his political convictions due to arguments and counterarguments or to the logic of the facts. Even the most

understanding can change his point of view; even the most intelligent can give up one political conviction and take on another one if he has good reasons for it.<sup>10</sup>

Next, the article from Issue 255 from November 10, 1875 was called into question. Hopfenmüller noted that he had taken this article from *Germania* in Berlin, after it had already been published four days prior in two other Bavarian papers, *Frankischen Volksblatt* and *Bavaria*, the distribution of which had not been impeded by the authorities guarding the press. If these authorities could not detect anything punishable in the article (and if they had found something they would surely have confiscated it already in their great zeal) what should have impeded him from printing the article? Four days after the publication of *Volksblatt* he encountered objections to it from Bamberg and later from Würzburg. Nonetheless, Hopfenmüller was still convinced that the article included nothing insulting the king or offending the respect due to him. The chairman asked the accused:

When you stated in your article: “Bavaria’s evil genie has several notorious people at his disposal through whom he contacts the Crown of Wittelsbach at every decisive hour, when the loyal people feel in need of their king. This is our secret story from October 19, and among these we number in the first place, General ‘von der Tann,’ as such he is known in every hut here. When the representatives of the Bavarian people wished to see the king, General von der Tann is already inside – and with this single piece of news our people know everything.” Do you not mean to say by this: the king never acts independently in his decisions, that he only does what his advisors tell him to do? He only lends his ear to evil advisors? When General von der Tann went to see the king, was it already known what his decision would be?

Hopfenmüller replied:

The aim of this article and this paragraph is certainly not directed against the king but against his advisors. If someone is reproached here, it is His Majesty’s advisors. It is undoubtedly a misfortune for the king if he has bad advisors. This was said openly when the Ministers had sent General von der Tann and the cabinet secretary to the king to influence him in their favour through the advice offered by the advisors. Everybody, even the king, needs advice on important matters. Yes, our constitution is based on the principle that the king has responsible advisors by his

side. There is nothing offensive about the claim that the king receives advice that does not promote the well-being of the country and to assume that the type of advice given may be due to the nature of the advisor.

When asked whether the phrase: “One shrugs his shoulders with frosty regret and says: ‘The king has put himself on the side of the Liberals,’” ascribes to the King an unjust siding with the Liberals, the accused answered:

This states nothing else than what was written in all the Liberal papers at the time and what was said to the whole world in thank-you addresses, congratulations telegraphs and celebrations by the Liberals. And if the king believes Liberal principles are right, what should be unjust about him siding with them? Doesn’t every party want its principles to be recognized as right at important levels?

To the accusation that the paragraph: “The political readings of our monarch are entirely dominated by Liberalism. The king does not hear about what should be made clear. Everybody knows of the plans for the Bavarian people and their Lord, but no one says a word. Furthermore, has our Patriotic faction been blackened by Ludwig II as the choice of treason and ignorance?” accuses the king of choosing his readings partially, and hence insufficiently to be informed about the condition of the country, Hopfenmüller said:

Again, this is only criticizing the environment around the king. This does not deny the king the right to read whatever he wants; but it also does not state that the king should exclusively chose Liberal papers to read. The king cannot read all the newspapers being printed in the country. That is why institutions are established at court, which highlight or summarize the necessary information for the king. At the Prussian Parliament it is the explicit task of the press office to give newspaper clippings to the Minister and to the king. Does the king feel insulted if someone claims that the people carrying out this task work only in favour of the Liberals, highlighting only things favouring the Liberals and discrediting the Patriots? This only reproaches the cabinet secretary or whoever else is carrying out this work. In this way, those surrounding the king, or his advisors, try to present the Patriots (who have always been supporters and friends of the throne) to the king as hostile towards the country and to the king.

Following this, a series of issues were presented to the accused meant to prove that he himself was hostile towards the government and the king. In this regard *Bamberger Volksblatt* wrote:

We admit that the prosecutors in Bamberg and Bayreuth have diligently studied our paper. Issues 242, 244, 247, 250, 253, 260 and numerous other issues were cited. However, we would not have expected that such trifles would be used as evidence because in those particular issues the discussion was either about how the Ministry misused the king's decree from October 19, 1875, read in all communities, or how it dealt with the government's measures. The accused tried to explain to the gentlemen that he did not deny being in opposition, or even that he was hostile toward the government. But opposing the ruling Ministry did not mean being hostile to the monarch. Such an interpretation would be against constitutional concepts. We regret that the prosecutor seriously held this position. One article from *Volksblatt* which talked about the fact that the Catholic Church is compatible with every constitution, and that the leaders of the Bavarian State should be careful as the day will arrive when patriotic people could no longer swim against the current, was used to cast suspicion on Hopfenmüller's being hostile towards the monarchical state structure. So he was forced to protest even against such accusations. The article specifically stated that he fundamentally defended the monarchical constitution especially on historical legal grounds, but if the present leaders of the state persecute those who fundamentally and reliably support the monarchy and instead pamper parties given to manipulation and palace intrigues, then we could all arrive at the point where the monarchy no longer exists and patriotic people will no longer be able to halt the process.<sup>11</sup>

After a short break the trial resumed. The second part of the accusations began: those claiming slanderous calumny against the district president of Swabia, Baron von Hörmann.

From the beginning, Hopfenmüller expressed his regret that his remarks had involved such a high personage. Believing that he could not do otherwise, he needed to insist on providing the evidence. He had not written the article in Issue 14, but would not name the author, as the editor should take responsibility for it. The second article in Issue 15, written by him, which confirmed the statement in Issue 14 as the truth and nothing but the whole truth, only proved

that he had believed it to be true and continued to do so. Otherwise, he could have hardly written this article since the legal proceedings had already begun over the first article. So even if he were not able to prove the truth, he could never be condemned for slanderous calumny; no one could prove that he made the statements in question against his better knowledge, but he hoped that he would manage to provide clear proof for the truth of the statement.

According to the stenographer's report, Hopfenmüller gave a brief explanation of the bizarre Parliamentary session of February 16, 1870. It dealt with the popular elections in Jettingen, an election whose annulment Westermayer supported. The election commissioner's irregularities were raised in connection with the fact that, like the Reigersberg Ministry in 1859, officials were put under intense pressure to run the elections in the spirit of the ruling party.

The Reigersberg Decree was read out in court, explaining the instructions to civil servants to work in favour of Liberals during the elections. Hopfenmüller then continued:

After several interruptions by the chamber president who said the Reigersberg story had nothing to do with the popular elections in Jettingen, Westermayer explained that a ministerial rescript and a recent decree to the civil servants had only reinforced the Reigersberg system. Westermayer found that Reigersberg had influenced unofficial conduct while Mr. von Hörmann had influenced official conduct. After all, Westermayer had tried to prove that the official behaviour of the election commissioner had been influenced. In the course of the session, Delegate Baron von Hörmann began to speak in order to weaken Westermayer's accusations against his former Ministry. According to the stenographic report he said:

I permit myself to point out that the prerequisite upon which Delegate Westermayer is basing his argument, namely the fact that the royal government gave directives to its officials to be personally active in the elections, is completely insane. I am able to announce the major points of the report to the president of the government. The report mentions the conduct of officials in two ways, both official and "unofficial."

Mr. von Hörmann then read the report [continued Hopfenmüller] which gave four directives regarding the official, and three regarding the unofficial conduct of the officials. At the end of every paragraph he

asked whether the officials were requested to do something incorrect. At the end, he added: “these, gentlemen, are the only directives which went out to the officials concerning their personal behaviour during the elections.”

Minister von Pretzschnier, [Hopfenmüller continued] gave the same assurance, confirming that neither written nor oral requests, orders or implications, were made to the officials of his department that they should represent any party interest in the elections. Westermayer then stood up and said:

The files Mr. von Hörmann read are of such an innocuous, harmless and innocent nature that one needs to reply with yes to every question he asked. But now allow me, gentlemen, to read to you a document for which I will ask clarification in the end and will ask whether this document is authentic or false, which I hope it is false, because if it is real, the explanations made by the two Ministers are completely contradictory to the truth.

Westermayer now read the document. This, as well as the stenographer’s report of the Parliamentary session in question was read aloud to all in the courtroom. The decree was directed to the president of the government calling on him to secretly to instruct the men working for the constituencies under no condition, to favour the extreme Patriotic Party. Instead they were to carry out the reapportionment of the popular election constituencies in the interest of the government. The president of the government was urged to make a precise check in this regard and to threaten disobedient men, of whom one was named in particular, with disciplinary action. The document continued:

I may assume here that neither you nor the royal government view a predominant extreme party in the chamber as being compatible with the interests of the throne and the country and see it as absolutely necessary that all the legal influence of the government and its organs be used to prevent the extreme “Patriotic Party” from again gaining even a small majority in the next chamber.

After the reading, Westermayer added: “I now ask the former Minister Mr. von Hörmann to kindly give us some insight into whether this decree is real or not.” Von Hörmann replied: ‘Gentlemen! The decree is entirely



real [commotion], the decree is real and I believe to have acted within the boundaries of the law in writing it" [commotion].

Hopfenmüller concluded the presentation of the matter with the following words:

The hearing, Westermayer's explanation, the uproar and surprise in Parliament combine to prove that Mr. von Hörmann's testimony is contrary to the truth. He must have been aware of this and therefore both articles in *Volksblatt* have not said anything that would justify prosecution.

To the accusation that Mr. von Hörmann had asserted that the second decree, read by Westermayer, was not in contradiction with the first decree read by him (since one spoke of the unofficial behaviour of the officials while Westermayer's spoke of official conduct) or that he had never denied the existence of instructions regarding the official behaviour, Hopfenmüller replied:

This is an excuse by Mr. von Hörmann, which is not included in the stenographer's report. Westermayer had wanted to be informed about official as well as unofficial influence. When Mr. von Hörmann read the decree to the president of the government, he contested that the officials were not influenced in official or unofficial ways, and expressly said that these were the only existing directives. Westermayer likewise interpreted von Hörmann's objection against the accusation of having exercised influence in the sense that he had denied any type of influence – otherwise he could not have spoken the way he did.

And even if it is assumed, but not admitted, that Mr. von Hörmann really only wanted to deny the pressure exercised on officials in their unofficial duty (something he could not have done without being seriously mentally restricted) nonetheless he would still be found guilty of having spoken falsely. Westermayer's secret decree regarding influencing all officials, without any distinction between official and unofficial duty, stating that everything should be done for the legal influence of the government or its organs so that no majority of Catholic Patriots would come about again, this explicitly excludes any type of restriction and gives the instruction to impede the election of Catholic Patriots as far as the influence of the official's reach and hence, no matter whether it was within their duty or not.

With this, Hopfenmüller believed he had proven the truth of *Volksblatt's* writings in every respect. He also denied the accusation of slander since he had not intended to insult Mr. von Hörmann, whom he did not even know and was neither his friend nor enemy. His example had only been the explanation of a commonly expressed perception and therefore lacked any insulting character.

A lunch break followed after the accused had been heard. The trial resumed again at 3 o'clock for the testimonies. Regarding an article from Issue 254 about the electoral meeting, the two witnesses Henning and Schüttinger were called to the witness box, having been summoned by the civil authorities. Both of them only repeated what Hopfenmüller had said before and that the phrase "His Majesty the King has not done justice to the complaints of his people" had not been opportune. The accused then asked Henning whether he had intended to speak about the matter in the sense that the rejection of the address had touched him negatively. Thereupon the witness declared: "Yes, that is correct."

Dr. Schüttinger explained that he had only said: "Since the king's decree on October 19, for me, the whole issue is no longer up for discussion." Hopfenmüller wanted to ask him further questions to find out whether he had also reported the king's action in the sense of regretting it. The president did not seem pleased with the questions put by the accused and told him: "Put your questions to me." The following dialogue ensued:

**Hopfenmüller:** I ask you to ask the witness whether he did not intend with the expression "The issue is no longer a matter of discussion for me" – to express a type of regret, a not particularly pleasant feeling.

**President:** I will not ask this question.

**Hopfenmüller:** But Mr. President, this question is of great importance to me.

**President:** I shall not put it to him because it concerns only a vain inner point of view and not a fact.

**Hopfenmüller:** I wish to have noted the fact that the president has not put my question to the witness.

**Schüttinger:** I wish to remark that I have only used this expression and nothing else.

The last witness to be interrogated was the police officer, Schmitt, who had supervised the electoral meeting. He referred to his written reports and said that he had found nothing punishable or risky in the speeches by the two delegates. The question whether the two speakers had in a regrettable manner talked about the king for not having received the address by the chamber's majority, he replied that he could not remember very well but believed they did not.

Mr. Henning and Dr. Schüttinger were also questioned regarding the libel suit by Baron von Hörmann, as they had attended the session in question on February 16, 1870. Both of their testimonies entirely corresponded to the statements made in *Bamberger Volksblatt* and confirmed that the chamber had been of the impression in the rising commotion that Mr. von Hörmann had spoken falsely and that he had done so intentionally. A dialogue developed between cathedral capitular Henning and the prosecutor whether any type of influence on the official was inadmissible on the occasion of elections and hence also in their official duty. The capitular believed any influence for or against a certain party to be inadmissible while the prosecutor held the opposing point of view.

On a different matter, Baron von Hörmann, who was also present to give testimony, explained that he had known of the Reigersberg Decree and that he had interpreted Westermayer's accusation that influence had been exerted in such a way that he had been accused of influencing the unofficial behaviour of government officials. He said he also still believed in official influence, and only wanted to deny having influenced unofficial behaviour by reading the decree to the president of the government. Therefore, Westermayer's Decree did not conflict with the first one. He added that he had not been aware of having given a false explanation.

When the president asked him about the newspaper reports stating that he had become embarrassed and had blushed, the witness explained that his embarrassment can be explained by the surprise he felt when a confidential decree was suddenly held before him and that the situation had made him seem to have spoken untruthfully.

Hopfenmüller then had von Hörmann asked if he did not interpret Westermayer's accusations to mean that he did not want a rebuke for both the official and unofficial influence on officials, since he wanted to prove that at the elections in Jettingen the official and unofficial conduct of the election commissioner had been influenced. Von Hörmann thereupon explained that Westermayer's expositions had not been made in connection with the day's agenda (i.e., the

popular elections in Jettingen) and that was why the president had referred him back to the day's agenda.

Earlier the accused had already commented on the prosecutor's objection that this was not a matter of whether the president of the chamber had viewed it to be in connection with the day's agenda, but that Westermayer had wanted to bring up the Hörmann Decree in connection with these elections.

Upon Hopfenmüller's further questions as to whether the testimony had not intended to deny any influence on the officials in their official and unofficial duty by reading the innocuous decree (including the four paragraphs about the official and three about the unofficial conduct of the officials and the concluding words "These are the only existing directives") the president declared again: "I shall not answer this question. This has been made evident by what we have heard from the stenographer's report." Furthermore, he heatedly rebuked the accused for having dared to slanderously insult this dignitary and that enough of his sophistry had been heard.

**Hopfenmüller:** "This is not sophistry. I did not want to insult the president of the government. Since what I have said is true, then this is not an insult."

**President:** "But it is not true."

**Hopfenmüller:** "The jurors will have to decide about that!"

**President:** "You do not need to inform me about that."

With the explanation that the issue had been sufficiently clarified, the accused was cut short from asking further questions, such as whether Mr. von Hörmann would have spoken with equal confidence about the "only existing directives" if he had known that Westermayer had the critical decree in his bag.

As witness for the prosecution, the Liberal Major Fischer of Augsburg and Professor Dr. Marquardsen now had their say. Both believed that Mr. von Hörmann had only denied unofficial influence on the officials and that Westermayer's Decree did not therefore contradict the first one. The Liberal side had not believed in it. The noise following Hörmann's explanation came only from the right side of the house, the Catholic Patriots.

Finally it was time for the defence witness, Westermayer, to appear. He testified entirely in favour of the accused. To the latter's question whether he wanted to

point out any type of influence, no matter if it was regarded as official or unofficial conduct and whether the Reigersberg system had been enforced by Hörmann, and whether Reigersberg influenced not only the unofficial but also official conduct, he answered: "Certainly." Furthermore, on whether he had perceived the reading of the harmless decree in the sense that Hörmann had wanted to deny any influence on the officials – official and unofficial – he replied: "Yes, but I knew that the contrary was true as I had the other decree already in my bag."

On another question of whether he had the impression that the noise in the courthouse was due to Mr. von Hörmann's falsehood, his answer was: "Yes." And if he continued to be of this impression: "Yes."

In this way the strange examination of the witnesses came to an end. After another short break, the prosecutor began his half-hour summation. The way in which the prosecution tried to justify their accusations against Hopfenmüller was of such bizarre flimsiness that their exposition should not even be repeated here. He believed, he said, that the jurors should declare the accused guilty. It is his job to prove, first regarding the articles from Issue 254 and 255, that they objectively include an insult toward the king, and also subjectively include the accused's intention to insult, or the awareness that the articles in question were insulting. To insult the king, it was sufficient not to pay respect to the king.

In order to appreciate the two articles it was necessary to be informed about the situation. The Chamber only associates directly with the king when it delivers a salutation. In such a greeting, requests were put directly before the throne and in this particular salutation, the king was asked to dismiss his Ministry and give peace to the country. In this case, the king became judge over the Ministry and the Chamber. When the accused stated that His Majesty had not granted justice to their complaints, he accused the king of being unjust towards the majority and of having carried out his judicial duty unjustly. The expression could also mean that His Majesty had not granted, complied with, or conceded justice, but the readers of *Volksblatt* would not have interpreted it this way. So the expression from the mouth of the accused remained a grave insult. Even the concluding sentence could be interpreted in a tolerable manner, but after the precedents it is assumed here that the king does not possess the necessary understanding and reason, and was thus unable to carry out his royal duties. This would be harmless if it was only a change in his political conviction, but this was meant very differently here.

Passing on to the article from Issue 255, the prosecutor commented: the accused may well claim that this article was directed against the advisors of the king, but if one looks a bit closer one can see that the king is being accused of a lack of independent character and willpower. The king is being presented as a scarecrow with whom one could do whatever one wanted and who would do everything his advisors told him to do. When the article states “the king has put himself on the side of the Liberals,” it contemptuously implies that the king has unjustly put himself on the side of the Liberals. This is an insult. The accused had declared in the morning that the king could not read all newspapers and that the necessary information was highlighted or clipped from the newspapers for him. This is nothing unjust, but if the article continues that the king’s reading was entirely dominated by Liberalism then this accuses the king of wanting to read only Liberal papers, papers from a certain party, and that he was hence biased and did not know what was happening in the country. Such a thing cannot be said without offending respect for the king.

The objective insults against the sovereign, as well as the subjective intention to insult, need to be accepted, or at least the awareness that the expressions were insulting. Though he had denied being hostile-minded against the king, he did openly admit that he was in opposition or enmity against the current Ministry. Being opposed and hostile toward the Ministry which enjoys the trust of the king includes indirect hostility against the throne and monarch and against his advisors, the Ministers. Likewise, he had come up with the expression in Issue 254 “to grant justice,” and evidently invented it only to insult the king. The accused should have been aware of this, and hence the subjective moment of the insult existed. Therefore, he requested a “guilty verdict” for the charges of two crimes of insulting the king in Issues 254 and 255.

Regarding the second group of accusations, the prosecutor stated that the witnesses could not remember the incident well enough since it had occurred long ago. Therefore, it was safest to use the stenographer’s report as the basis for judgment. In the meantime, the three witnesses for the prosecution, Mr. von Hörmann, Mr. Fischer and Dr. Marquardsen, made the best impression on him. He would leave it up to the jury what impression the witnesses for the accused made.

Then he attempted to prove Baron von Hörmann’s opinion was unfounded. Westermayer’s accusation that the Reigersberg system had been reinforced could only be interpreted in the sense that it only regarded the unofficial influence

of the officials. The charge of official influence was not admissible. Mr. von Hörmann had only denied the existence of directives aimed at personal and hence unofficial conduct. Westermayer, therefore, erred when he accused von Hörmann of not having spoken truthfully. The witnesses confirmed that the Liberal delegates had not found untruth in Hörmann's explanations. The accused went even further than Mr. Westermayer as he consciously accused Mr. Hörmann of not speaking the truth. Henceforth, §187 of the penal law should be applied.

Against his better knowledge, the accused had claimed an untrue fact regarding someone else, which was aimed at running the latter down and degrading him before public opinion. The prosecutor did not even allow extenuating circumstances, but if the jurors did not believe that §187 was applicable, then they should recognize that §186 was also appropriate. According to this, the accused had claimed and diffused a presumed fact, which ran someone down and degraded him in public opinion, and this fact could not be proven as being true. He should therefore be punished for libel because he was only out to cause a scandal. Also for the last two crimes he appealed for a "guilty verdict."

Since, as mentioned, the accused had appeared without a lawyer, he now stood up to give his own speech for the defence. The prosecutor had to admit that it was quite clever, while even the Liberal reporters could not deny his agility in expression, logic and clarity. Essentially he stated:<sup>12</sup>

Distinguished court of justice, distinguished jurors!

Today, I stand before you as the accused, indicted for fourfold libel. I am supposed to be guilty of two crimes of slander against the king, as well as slanderous libel against his Excellency, Mr. Councillor of State and President of the Government, Baron von Hörmann. I have thoroughly examined my conscience and it has entirely exonerated me from any blame. So when I ask myself, gentlemen, how I have ended up in this courtroom, it is completely incomprehensible to me. Gentlemen, I believe I should speak out: I would not be standing in this room if I were not on the side of the opposition against the current government.

At this point, the speaker was interrupted by the president's comment that he was describing the trial as biased, which should not be part of the defence.

**Hopfenmüller:** "I regret, Mr. President, that you restrict my defence from the beginning. Biased trials are quite frequent in political life. Look,

the article from Issue 254 for which I stand here was published in several other papers – Catholic and Liberal ones. None of the Liberal papers were bothered about it.”

**President:** interrupting: “This is an attack on the independence of the courts and I cannot tolerate this.”

**Hopfenmüller:** “This is absolutely no attack on the independence of the courts, but on the prosecution.”

**President:** “I do not tolerate that you continue to speak about it.”

**Hopfenmüller:** “Then I shall submit to it.”

As *Bamberger Volksblatt* commented, the appeal against the unequal treatment of what is Catholic and what is Liberal, necessary to undermine the prosecution in its accusations against the press, was thereby cut short. Furthermore, said appeal was not allowed to use as examples the infamies levelled against the Bavarian King in *Kladderadatsch und Ulk* or the nastiness against the same in *Nürnberg Anzeiger*, as these papers had never been accused of anything while trivial matters in Catholic papers were exaggerated as being *lèse-majesté*. The defence then continued:

I have told you, gentlemen jurors, that I am innocent. And I believe that I shall manage to convince you of my innocence without major difficulties. I can bring in the big guns for the refutation of the accusation.

First of all, I shall present you with official reasons, as the juridical authorities did not discover any *lèse-majesté* in the accused articles. The article in Issue 254 was already published on November 9, the one in Issue 259 on November 10, 1875, and it wasn't until noon on November 14 that *Volksblatt* was confiscated and an inquiry initiated upon instructions from Munich, as I have been reliably informed. In the meantime, the article had hence passed by Bamberg's press police officials and the prosecutor's office; no one had found anything punishable in them, otherwise they would have intervened immediately.

2. The article from Issue 255, which had been taken from *Germania*, had already been published in *Fränkischen Volksblatt* and *Bavaria* on November 6 without any complaint being made. I allowed it to be printed on November 10. Wouldn't the press police authorities have immediately intervened interrupting its circulation if the article had contained something punishable?



3. *Bayerische Vaterland* was likewise investigated for their article about the Bamberg electoral meeting in Issue 254, but the district court, the court of appeals and the supreme court of appeals in Munich decided to suspend the proceedings, as they did not find anything insulting against the king in it. Hence, three respected judicial panels could not find anything punishable in it.
4. The seventh delegation of the royal city court in Berlin acquitted the editor of *Germania* who was also on trial for the article in Issue 255. So the judges of Berlin did not find anything insulting the king – and, as many convictions show, they are not particularly forbearing or gentle towards *Germania*.
5. The royal district court in Bamberg decided to suspend the proceedings against the *Bamberger Volksblatt* regarding Issue 254 and 255. Even this court did not consider the article punishable. I shall permit myself, with the permission of Mr. President, to read their document stating the discontinuance of the proceedings. [The speaker read it.]

Now, when so many excellent and respected lawyers and entire judicial panels have not found an insult against His Majesty the King in these articles, then you, gentlemen jurors, must at least admit that these accusations are dubious. An ancient juridical principal states: *In dubio pro reo* – If doubts exist, judgment is to be made in favour of the accused. Gentlemen jurors, you must at least view the accusation as dubious and hence cannot pronounce me “guilty.”

Meanwhile, I believe I shall certainly be able to prove with clear evidence that both articles in Issue 254 and 255 objectively do not contain anything slanderous, or even anything offending the respect of the king. I shall also prove that subjectively there was not and there could not be the intention on my part to insult, nor even the awareness that the respective articles could be slanderous. The prosecutor attempted to prove to you, using the commentary to the penal law from Oppenhof, that in order to violate §95 it is sufficient to “offend the respect” of the sovereign. I may not be a lawyer, but as an editor I know a little bit about the subject. I believe by that using Oppenhof, the exact opposite can be proven.

The speaker then gave an exposition on how a mere offence of respect, for instance denying a greeting, etc., was sufficient for *lèse-majesté* in the old penal law, while more is required in the new penal law for a violation of §95, despite the fact that the king is more easily slandered than a private individual due to his high position. He then continued:

I have shown that more than a mere offence against respect is needed to violate §95 of our country's penal law. But even given this, not even one thing is contained in the articles which would have offended the respect due the king. Gentlemen jurors, let us call to mind the situation in which both articles came about. The majority of the people's representation had decided on an address to the king in which, as the prosecutor told you, they asked for the dismissal of the Ministry and begged for peace in the country. The address was answered with a vote of confidence to the Ministers. Remember the uproar caused by the event and remember especially how this incident affected the Patriotic majority of the Bavarian people. The harsh words used by the paper should therefore not be taken so seriously.

Indeed, in regard to the situation back then, one needs to admit that I used moderate, cool and prudent words. Imagine the opposite, gentlemen jurors. If the Liberal Party had been in the majority and their wishes and their address had been turned down in this way – would the Liberal papers not have spoken out just as sharply if not more so?

Passing on to the article from Issue 254, I need to add that I intended to tell what a third person reported to me about the Bamberg electoral meeting. I'm not aware of any contradiction to this, as I would not report it otherwise. The prosecutor referred to the fact that the witnesses not only deny the expression but, as Dr. Schüttinger categorically explained, they also express regret in this regard. When you look at what Dr. Schüttinger had to say, "Since the king's decree on October 19 the whole issue is no longer up for discussion with me," you should detect in it that the whole issue was uncomfortable for them, and you must see certain regret in it. So when the article says: "They [the delegates] regret that His Majesty the King has not done justice to the complaints of the majority of his people," this could, as it is stated in the document from the district proceedings, mean nothing else but: "They regret that His Majesty did not comply with their requests and did not agree with them."

One needs to bypass all rules of logic in order to discover an accusation of injustice in this. Let's assume it would really be, as the prosecutor said, a situation where the king exercises his judicial office; but even if justice is taken in its most rigid and real sense of the word, this expression still does not contain the accusation of being unjust. There is an enormous difference between being not just or not right, and injustice or being wrong. The logicians call the first one a contradictory, and the second one a contrary opposite. I cannot do justice to someone because I see and recognize his right, and I cannot nearly commit an injustice, I am not almost unjust. To use an example: when a judge passes a sentence in a civil action in which the plaintiff is not granted his right because the judge assesses his case differently or errs in his judgment – can I say because of this: The judge is unjust? Certainly not! Just as here, even when the expression is taken literally, his Majesty the King cannot be accused of exercising injustice.

Meanwhile, this expression cannot be meant here in this sense. The prosecutor himself said that the address contained a plea to the throne. This can only be about the fulfilment, grant or compliance of the plea. The prosecutor admitted that his could be the sense of the expression. Why should it not be the sense it has in *my* mouth? I refer to *Adelung: Dictionary of the German Language*, page 1313. There it says: “‘Right’ means to do justice to a wish or desire, depending on the meaning it generally has in ordinary life, i.e. to give rightly to someone, to let someone be right, keep right.” Haven't you yourself heard the expression, gentlemen jurors: “He has not conceded justice to his wishes or pleas, did he not do right?” How can there be talk of injustice if I do not concede to someone's pleas or complaints?

As you see, one can twist the expression in all kinds of directions, but one cannot make it produce the accusation of injustice. The public authorities may well say that the readership of *Volksblatt* did not grasp this expression due to their level of education. I do not believe that the readership of *Volksblatt* is any different than those of any other provincial paper. I know not whether all the readers have gone to school, but I certainly know that no one read from the article an accusation of injustice against His Majesty the King.

I am even more surprised how one could find slander in the concluding sentence: “May His Majesty” etc. Even here, one needs to force all

rules of grammar and logic in order to make it signify that His Majesty is being accused of a lack of understanding and reason in his fulfilment of his royal duties. The prosecution completely overlooks the idea that His Majesty is not generally being denied all reason, but that simply the wish is being expressed that His Majesty may acquire a different conviction in a particular matter; that he may come to realize that the pleas and complaints of the Patriotic people are well founded, that we want the best for the country and that our complaints deserve remedy. Is this insulting? Must not every political party of the country wish that their efforts are recognized and accepted in their place as being the right ones and beneficial for the well-being of the country? Given the case that you, gentlemen jurors, would have let yourself be convinced by the prosecutor's exposition that I am guilty, I would say: "May I only succeed in convincing them that I am not guilty." Would you feel insulted by this? Certainly not! Even His Majesty the King would not be affected by such a change in his political conviction. If you want to find *lèse-majesté* in the given phrase, then you would make up a sentence judged by history that a king has never changed and cannot change his opinion or point of view in political matters. How often do we see such a change in convictions particularly in constitutional states? Oh how often does the monarch try first with one Ministry, and then with another!

The expression and the context do not permit another meaning than that of a wish that His Majesty would change his opinion in favour of the Patriotic Party. The article from Issue 254, therefore, does not contain the least iota of what could slander or offend the king's respect.

I now pass onto the article from Issue 255. As stated before, it was taken from *Germania* and is a so-called mood-report, a report about how the situation at the time was being perceived. *Germania*, as you have heard, has been acquitted of any wrongdoings. Should I now be punished for having published it without any approving comment, when the actual author is to remain unpunished?

Meanwhile, I believe that the article does not contain anything punishable. Yes, I speak boldly in it but it is more of an apology for the king than an accusation against the king. Its aim is not directed against the king but against his advisors. One of these advisors who advised the king regarding the address is generally known as General von der Tann. If someone should feel offended then it should be General von

der Tann, but that His Majesty should here be accused of a lack of independent character and will is against all human experience; yes, against the constitution of human nature. Everyone except God needs advice in important and decisive matters – even the king. An old aphorism says: “Luck for the sovereign is to have good and wise advisors.” Our entire Constitution is based on this principle. Since the burdens of government are too heavy for just the king’s shoulders, he is given responsible advisors. And the Constitution allows the Ministers to be held responsible in case they give harmful advice to the king.

If *lèse-majesté* should therefore lie in the claim that the king had been badly advised in this matter, then this implies that the king has ceased to be generally human, and in need of advice. Then our Constitution becomes a *lèse-majesté* and the wise old saying becomes a folly.

Or should it be an insult that the article states: “The king has put himself on the side of the Liberals?” This says nothing else than what was written in the Liberal papers, and what was documented in front of the whole world in congratulatory telegrams, addresses of gratitude, and joyful feasts for the Liberal party. If this is slander, then all Liberal papers should be prosecuted for libel against the sovereign; Mayor Fischer of Augsburg should be sued for *lèse-majesté* as he stated shortly after October 19 during a gymnast festival: “We have a leader against slavery of the spirit and he is our beloved king.” The town councillor of Augsburg should also be taken to court who said in his thank-you salutation to the king for the decree of October 19: “By his decision, the king has freed the country once and forever from anxiety over a further encroachment by ultramontane efforts and clerical desire for power and intolerance.”

If the claim that the king has put himself on the side of the Liberals is *lèse-majesté*, then the Liberal Party is terribly compromised. Why should the king not put himself on the side of a party if he views their principles as good and beneficial? Of course, you can then not blame the opposition when they are not thrilled about it and do not just shrug their shoulders. This claim is not an insult, just as the last paragraph is not: “The political readings of the king are dominated by Liberalism.” My dear gentlemen jurors, are many people not proud about only reading Liberal papers and not *Germania* or my *Volksblatt*? This does not even state that the king may not have wanted to choose different reading

materials or would not have had the freedom to do so. As the district court's recognition rightfully emphasizes, it is not the monarch who is being rebuked but his advisors who do not sufficiently inform the king.

This morning, I already said that His Majesty could not read all papers and that the necessary information needed to be given to him. The article neither claims that only Liberal materials are handed to the king, as the prosecutor believes. No, this would be too obvious. But writings favourable to the Liberals and unfavourable to the Patriots are submitted to him from different sources. Is it an insult to His Majesty when the people in charge of providing information to the king are being told that they exercise their office with some bias against the Liberal Party?<sup>13</sup>

I believe to have adequately proven that both articles contain nothing that slanders the king or offends the respect of the sovereign, but even if it were only a given and not proven that the articles' wordings are not really insulting, you would still have to find me "not guilty" since the second meaning necessary to have libel is lacking. It is *dolus*, as the lawyers call it, the intention to insult?

Now the speaker gave a juridical exposition that even for *lèse-majesté* the intention to insult was necessary and not just the mere awareness that the words used could be slanderous. He then continued:

While publishing the article, I was not once aware that they could insult His Majesty. I believe that you will give credence to the words of an honest man and I will assure you as an honest man that I was not conscious of it. But if you chose not to believe my words, then you should recognize from the circumstances that I could not have been of such a mind. Dear gentlemen jurors, I would have been a fool to have published an article knowing that it insults the king, especially because the press police are so doggedly on our heels and let nothing punishable slip through. Malicious intention, furthermore, requires certain hostility, but we are on principle pioneers for the monarchy and especially for the House of Wittelsbach. Our past and present is unimpeachable in this regard. We have always held up the blue and white flag, and in 1848 we put our loyalty to the test. The Honourable King Max II has repeatedly recognized that the Catholic faithful were the most loyal friends of the monarchy back then. How could we become enemies to His Majesty all of the sudden? We are supposed to have intentionally

slandered His Majesty, but just so you believe that I am not making an exception of being the only democrat, I point out to you the expression of devotion and loyalty contained in the article from Issue 254: “The Patriotic people,” it says there, “follow their representatives in their loyalty towards its king, although the latter was advised poorly.” Can you expect more than such an expression of faithfulness and loyalty in such circumstances? Can there be talk of maliciousness?”

After defeating the prosecutor’s bizarre exposition that had described opposition to the Ministry as indirect hostility to the throne, Hopfenmüller ended the first group of accusations with the words:

I have now proven with all obviousness and certainty that neither an objective nor a subjective insult against His Majesty can be found in either article; yes, not even an offence against respect. Therefore, I ask for a “not guilty” on this point.

Regarding the second group of accusations, after what had already been said, it will be sufficient to merely give the main points of Hopfenmüller’s defence. Based on the stenographer’s report and the testimony, it was proven that Mr. von Hörmann did indeed speak untruthfully in the critical Chamber session of February 16, 1870, and must have been aware of it. Regarding the criticism of the witnesses of the defence, the speaker said that, to the contrary, it was Mr. von Hörmann who had given the impression of being embarrassed. Not only the witnesses for the defence, but the entire courthouse and thousands, even millions from all kinds of parties outside the courthouse had been of the impression that Mr. von Hörmann had not spoken truthfully. To prove this, Hopfenmüller cited an article from *Corr. V. u. f. D.* [*Courier from and for Germany*] which was highly respected by all parties. At the end of the article, it said: “We wish to talk no further about the unprecedented disclaimer, which Mr. von Hörmann exposed himself to in the Chamber, because even for the uninvolved it is embarrassing to think of a man in such a position in such a situation.”

Considering this, there could not possibly be talk of applying §187 from the country’s penal law nor §186, since the facts claimed had not been proven to be true. The incident was not mentioned in order to make a scandal but to set an example. Thus, the defence also asked for a “not guilty” regarding the last two accusations. With these words, Hopfenmüller ended his masterly and convincing speech.

After a short instruction to the jurors, the president then posed the questions to them. The first one read: Is Hopfenmüller, as the responsible editor of *Bamberger Volksblatt*, guilty of having published an article in Issue 254 regarding His Majesty's governmental actions, conscious of the insulting content of the article and therefore having slandered the sovereign? The answer of the jurors was: "Yes."

The second question: Is the same Hopfenmüller, as the responsible editor of Issue 255, guilty of having published an article from *Germania* knowing that its content was offending the respect and therefore slandering the sovereign? The answer of the jurors was: "No."

Likewise, the jurors answered "No" to a further question: Is the same Hopfenmüller guilty of having published an untrue fact about Mr. von Hörmann against his better knowledge, which was used to run down the latter? Thus, the accused was not convicted of slanderous libel according to §187 of the penal law.

Finally, the last question: Is the same Hopfenmüller guilty of having claimed an unverifiable fact regarding Mr. von Hörmann, aimed at running him down? The jurors again replied with "Yes." Therefore, §186 of the penal law came into consideration for simple slander.

For the first case of *lèse-majesté*, the prosecutor asked for five months of fortress detention, while regarding the insult against Mr. von Hörmann for a prison sentence of only 2 months.

The accused explained that he would, of course, accept the sentence of the jury, but he applied for a maximum penalty of two months of fortress detention, asking particularly for fortress detention since imprisonment was not appropriate for political offences according to many lawyers. Regarding the Hörmann case, he said that §186 could be satisfied with money, but he had no money to pay the fine. And since he would already be locked up anyway, ten days of imprisonment would be sufficient to atone for his offence.

At 11 o'clock at night the verdict was read, according to which Hopfenmüller was sentenced to three month of fortress detention for *lèse-majesté*, and 14 days in prison for insulting Mr. Hörmann. Conscious of being innocent, Hopfenmüller left the courtroom in equanimity and a serene mood. After such a



hearing, he could retreat with all honour. The Liberal court had not managed to do justice to its detested opponent and brave fighter.

On this occasion one can see again what bizarre cases of jurisprudence came about in that period, for the same article from *Germania* for which Hopfenmüller received three months of fortress detention; *Bayerische Vaterland* was acquitted on all counts in Munich. For the same article from *Germania* for which Hopfenmüller was acquitted, just a day later the editor of the Catholic *Fränkischen Volksblatt*, Dr. Rittler was condemned to six months in prison in Würzburg!

The legal conception on which it was based can be read in numerous Liberal papers. A report from the Liberal *Kölner Zeitung*, for instance, written by their correspondent in Munich praises the sentences from the Lower Frankish and Upper Frankish courts regarding the two editors, Drs. Rittler and Hopfenmüller. It writes:

I cannot repeat often enough that the Bavarian jurors have successfully proven themselves in their trials of press offences. Popular justice, if I may use this expression, has rightfully given the freedom of speech quiet elbowroom. But where a mentality hostile to the Fatherland and clerical hatred break through, the Bavarian jurors cannot tolerate jokes, and Jesuitical attempts at excuses do not go down well with them. The latest condemnations are extraordinarily instructive in this regard.

This sounds no different from the case where the jurors in Bayreuth and Würzburg decided the issue not on *lèse-majesté* but on “a mentality hostile to the Fatherland” and “clerical hatred” – in other words the “general detriment of Ultramontanism.” The correspondent from *Kölner Zeitung* must have known this because according to other newspaper reports he was no other than Dr. Marquardsen, who participated in the hearing against Hopfenmüller as a witness for von Hörmann. Fatally, his praise came a bit too early because the two sentences in Bayreuth and Würzburg did not coincide in the least bit. As has already said, they stood in the starkest contrast to each other. Nonetheless, the jurors clearly proved themselves to be worthy! In order to solve the riddle, the professor probably needed to use the “Jesuit casuistry.”

### **(Endnotes)**

<sup>1</sup> BV, November 17, 1875, No. 261.

<sup>2</sup> BV, November 18, 1875, No. 262.

- <sup>3</sup> Dr. Jos. Edmund Jörg was the meritorious editor of the “Historical-political Papers.” From 1869 onwards, he led the Patriotic Party in Bavaria. He was a noble character and an intrepid, profound and selfless pioneer for church and Fatherland.
- <sup>4</sup> This expression comes from King Max II who first used it in a similar situation before the government in 1859.
- <sup>5</sup> I.e., Minister Lutz.
- <sup>6</sup> Daniel Bonifatius von Haneberg, abbot of St. Boniface in Munich and bishop of Speyer since 1872, outstanding for his piety and erudition.
- <sup>7</sup> BV, February 28, 1876, No. 47.
- <sup>8</sup> BV, March 13, 1876, No. 58.
- <sup>9</sup> BV, October 13, 1876, No. 232.
- <sup>10</sup> BV, October 14, 1876, No. 233.
- <sup>11</sup> BV, October 14, 1875, No. 233
- <sup>12</sup> BV, October 19, No. 237; October 20, 1876, No. 238
- <sup>13</sup> Earlier that morning, the accused had already pointed out that several writings by Treischke undermining the monarchy had not been brought to His Majesty’s attention for good reasons.

## 7. Farewell from *Bamberger Volksblatt* – Fortress and Prison Detention

Hopfenmüller filed a nullity action against the sentence by the jury court from Bayreuth. He did so on the grounds of §164 of the criminal procedural law from November 10, 1848, which prescribes that if the president rejects a question and the accused appeals, the court of justice would decide it. Over his protest, this happened often with many questions necessary for the defence which Hopfenmüller had wanted to put to the witnesses. The court of justice was never consulted.

Hopfenmüller assumed the appeal would be useless. Concerning this, he wrote with a certain moody sarcasm in Issue 245 of *Volksblatt* on October 28, 1876:

Mr. Rittler [from Würzburg] has received marching orders. Within eight days, to avoid being taken by force, he is to turn up for his six-month-term in Oberhaus [near Passau] to serve his sentence for *lèse-majesté*, which is no *lèse-majesté* according to the sentence from the jurors of Bayreuth. Have a good journey! We shall soon follow Mr. Rittler and keep him company over a three-month-term, which is likewise no *lèse-majesté* according to the ruling by the Bamberger district court, appeal's court, and supreme-court of appeal in Munich.

On November 9, the convicted editor also received the order to appear within three days for his three-month's fortress detention in Oberhaus near Passau according to the jury sentence from October 11, and after having served the sentence there, to show up, also within three days, for his 14-day prison sentence at the district court's prison in Bamberg to avoid being taken by force. Issue 254 of *Bamberger Volksblatt* from November 11, 1876, printed Hopfenmüller's farewell greeting:

About five years ago, I sent out a “*Gott zum Gruâ*” to the Upper Franconian district and therewith gave life to *Bamberger Volksblatt*. For two and a half years it arrived weekly in the homes of its readers; and for another two and a half years it made its journey daily – in the beginning, a bit small and now of quite respectable size. I think the paper has become quite a lively 5-year-old lad during this time, proving its ability to survive. I believe I have fulfilled the task, which I gave myself at the paper's founding. Back then, I said: “We shall take up the

weapon of the pen and wield it in the service of the people's piety." I have fought for the rights of the people during these five years, for their freedom and happiness, against all kinds of suppression and bureaucratic arbitrariness.

Back then I said: "We will have to fight, but it will be the fight of self-defence, the fight which has been forced upon the church as the guardian of the Christian social order. Thus we love the words of free, decisive and brave men. We will fight with reason and not with personal insults." I have always fought on the defensive, against the overt *Kulturkampf* in the country and in Prussia, as well as against the secret, but likewise dangerous *Kulturkampf* in Bavaria. *Volksblatt* was called into being by the *Kulturkampf*, and when the *Kulturkampf* ends it will have reached its goal. Even my opponents cannot say that I provoke. I have only repulsed. But when I did, I did it firmly and powerfully. I never did it to confront a certain person, but always for the cause. I pulled people into the discussion only as far as they were inseparable from the issues. I count it as a merit of mine that I love clear words.

Back then I predicted: "We are well aware of the weight of the task, but we want to sacrifice ourselves in service of truth, justice and the well-being of the people. It is also a service to God, a priesthood to the truth. We knew that we were standing in a dangerous position and that the bullets of our opponents would from now on be directed at us." The prediction has proven true. The global bureaucracy has written me down in their black book. I am indifferent to it, but what hurts more is when a single higher or lower clergymen looks askance at me instead of giving me recognition. I console myself, however, in my clear conscience and in the judgment of the Catholic people and the majority of the Catholic clergy. But I do not seek offices or honours. Ever so often I dealt with the prosecutor. The magistrate's examining room became a familiar place and the bailiff's assistants became familiar to me. For a long time I was happy that they were unable to catch me, as it proved that the paper was edited with moderation and cool-headedness, but the last press trial has finally placed a crown on the work. I already have a ticket to Oberhaus in my pocket.

Slightly wounded, I must now part company with you, but as I believe in honour I hereby bid goodbye to the readers of the *Volksblatt*.

I depart forever, but a more than capable replacement has been found. I do not part out of despondency or despair or with a bruised or broken heart. I depart because to hold my position as chaplain of the busiest parish was only possible by using all my physical and spiritual strength, next to my work at the editorial office, which has made me physically exhausted. And for some time I have longed for relief. I depart because I know I can confidently hand over the sword to a better and more experienced power. My successor, Chaplain Schmitz, has already stood in the fire and has experienced the impact of the *Kulturkampf* on his own body while being imprisoned for nine weeks. He will do a better service to the Catholic people in this battle than I could. I depart firmly trusting in God, that the cause of the Holy Catholic Church, that is, the cause of the loyal Catholic people, will win. I hope to still be able to see this triumph. Surely, ominous clouds are appearing on the horizon, surely, many tests are still to come, surely our cause is almost hopeless in Bavaria at the moment. Nonetheless, I do not despair. Bavaria will be saved by the steadiness and unity of our party.

Before I leave the battleground, I wish to call out to the representatives of our cause in the Chamber and in the press: "Be firm, unyielding towards Liberalism, and be united." To the loyal and brave Catholic people, I wish to say: "Hold out. God is with you!" To the nonchalant and sleeping I give a warning from the Apostle: "Be watchful, be firm in your faith, act manfully and become strong. Recognize the signs of times and join the lines of the brave Maccabees who fight for Israel."

I ask the readers of *Volksblatt* to continue contributing to the only Catholic paper in Upper Franconia with all your zeal and activity, giving even more than you have until now. I thank all those who have supported me for their friendship. I ensure everyone of my peace of mind and that I do not bear a grudge against anyone.

And so I part with the shout: "Down with the *Kulturkampf*! Cheers to the holy Catholic Church! Cheers to our king! Cheers to our German Fatherland! Catholic people, go with this shout to the next parliamentary elections in which I will be no longer active! God bless!"

*Bamberg on the Feast of St. Martin, 1876, Dr. Hopfenmüller*

Doubtless it was particularly painful for Hopfenmüller that individuals from the higher or lower clergy did not agree with his self-sacrificing work. As he said himself, the secret *Kulturkampf* in Bavaria was far more dangerous than the overt persecution in Prussia. There, everybody knew what one had to do. In Bavaria, the *Kulturkampf* was active like a slimy poison, whose danger was not evident to everybody, and even turned one or another priest's mind. Complaints were not lacking about so-called "state-priests," who believed that they openly or secretly had to stand on the side of the prosecutor instead of protecting and encouraging the Catholic press, while reading and publishing articles in Liberal papers. Hopfenmüller, the eager and rigorously Catholic editor was, of course, a thorn in their sides.

What Hopfenmüller stated in his farewell address about his resignation as editor, he had been saying for some time. The burden of the work was too much for him. It is amazing how he had managed all that he did. His health had suffered. Repeatedly he spit blood and had pains in his throat! As chaplain of the busiest church in Bamberg, he first had to thoroughly fulfil his pastoral duties. He was also part of the governing board for retired pastors. Furthermore, for some time he had led The Holy Childhood of Jesus Society, a cause he had also promoted in *Volksblatt* through collections, raffles, etc. In early January, he published the annual report for The Holy Childhood of Jesus Society for 1875.<sup>1</sup> According to the filing, the income for the year had been 1,480 fl. 16¾ kr. But due to the workload, Hopfenmüller was also forced to resign his position on its governing board. He said goodbye to all the benefactors and members of the Society and announced that Chaplain Kettermann from St. Martin would replace him on the board.

In 1875, Hopfenmüller published a volume treating the life and selected writings from the Doctor of the Church Clement of Alexandria in the Library of the Church Fathers Series. The very busy and untiring chaplain of St. Martin had even found the time to translate a selection of these from the original Greek and had it published at the impressive size of 465 pages.<sup>2</sup>

Hopfenmüller had also been particularly keen to assist the Journeymen Society. In addition to attending regular meetings and the usual activities of this blessed Society, he also participated in general Communion, processions, Mass for deceased members and benefactors, and the exercise of other Catholic rituals alternated with theatre, entertainment evenings, singing lessons, trips, garden parties, musical programs, raffling Christmas trees, etc. As the heart of the

diligent chaplain was beating for the people, he embraced the working class with special fondness and devotion. Therefore, the Journeymen Society insisted on having a farewell party for their departing president on the evening of November 12. *Bamberger Volksblatt* wrote:<sup>3</sup>

Sunday evening, Dr. Hopfenmüller came to the Catholic Journeymen Society, whose president he had been for several years, for the last time before leaving for the detention fortress of Oberhaus. An exceptionally large number of members, journeymen and protection committees, as well as other friends of the Society filled the large hall in the Journeymen's House to see their beloved president one last time and to express their sympathy through their participation. Their sympathy was expressed in words, when one member held up the picture of a family whose father was leaving for jail. This Society too was like a family, tied to each other by the tight bonds of Catholic love, who were to lose their president, their father. In this case, the sorrow of the children was the sorrow of men who know why they mourn and how to mourn. There are also mishaps and wounds that honour and adorn the father, the leader, about which the children can be proud, having earned them in an honest battle and in the innocence of his conscience. Another member recited a well-done, humorous, farewell poem which was received with enormous applause.

This poem presented here expresses the mood and spirit living in the Bamberg Journeymen Society:<sup>4</sup>

The father of many children  
Felt too cramped in his hometown,  
And though winter had already begun  
He developed itchy feet.  
  
Saying he had business to attend  
Somewhere in the world,  
he had already found  
the best accommodation possible with a friend.  
  
Where he goes, I can tell you,  
Since he makes no secret of it  
But you may ask him yourself whether  
It's to the upper or the lower house [*Oberhaus*].

I will give you one hint,  
It's near Passau on the Danube shore,  
How the food is there, whether they have roast,  
Sadly I do not know.

To Passau! - called all children,  
Oh God, they say it's terrible there!  
And one of them, a brush-maker,  
Began to scream aloud:

“In Passau there is, and I should know,  
My teacher often told me so,  
A figure resembling a giant  
Unique in all the world!

Have you ever read about this lout  
Maybe in natural history?  
I tell you – he is given  
Only editor's flesh to eat.

And only “black” is given to him,  
All else is kept away.  
I don't know where, but many others  
gorge themselves on red.

Oh father, - sounds from all the lips -  
Oh father, stay and don't go away!  
We'd like to have a peaceful hour,  
But you're “blacklisted” there.

Oh father, if you'd had a wife  
Like Socrates, - just half as good,  
Then you would not leave,  
for such a dove would cure your itching feet.

“Stop screaming, children,  
A quarter year passes quickly,  
And I shall write you often  
That I'm happy and well!

“To your comfort, you should know,  
The brush-maker lies a lot,



The lout has eaten no one  
The whole thing's just a yarn.

“To whom God wants to show His grace,  
He sends into the wider spaces  
And always gives him something to chew,  
In my case it's already ordered.

If that's so, Father, everyone called,  
Then you may part in the name of God  
Because now in any case  
There'll be a happy, blessed reunion.

And the children perked up  
Gathered around Father and called out:  
“May God be your companion!  
Yes, may God's hand protect you!

“May he protect you and let you return  
Happily back into our fold.  
Now let us drain the glasses  
Cheers to your well-being, Father. Stay healthy!”

According to the *Volksblatt* report, the convicted president now talked about the saying: “You come to know your friends in misfortune.” That what had befallen him was no misfortune; he at least did not view it as such, even if it looked that way in the eyes of the people. He then talked about Oberhaus and how it would be there, etc. At the end he talked about his concern over what would happen to the Society and in particular to the journeymen during his absence. He said that if upon his return he would hear pleasing things about the Society, he would take that as a sign they really loved their president.

In two further speeches the journeymen expressed their love to their president and their eagerness for the good cause. Music and song made the party seem more happy than sad, and even the president himself was in the most cheerful mood up until the end.

Issue 256 from *Bamberger Volksblatt*, November 11, 1876, was the last signed by Hopfenmüller as publisher and editor. The following issue, 257 of November 13, carried a different name for the first time since the founding of the newspaper: Chaplain Th. Schmitz. With soothing words he addressed the honourable readers of *Bamberger Volksblatt*:

Taking up the position which my most honourable predecessor was forced to leave, I see it as my holy duty to send the best thanks and the sincere recognition of his comrades to Hopfenmüller for having represented the cause of the holy church during the *Kulturkampf*, which is being waged against the bride of God's son and their loyal children. Dr. Hopfenmüller has fought a good battle with courage, elegance and patience, as a true fighter for Jesus Christ. That is why his works, sacrifices, and suffering are honoured; that is why the blessing of the good deed, the love of his friends, the respect of his enemies will follow him, and he is assured the crown of a better vindication than people could give him. May the ever-just Redeemer amply reward him for what he has done in His service! May He comfort him in his captivity and strengthen him and lead him back in our midst from the place which has become for him and many others, a place of honour. Cheers to the brave fighter!

Hopfenmüller left Bamberg on November 13 for the detention fortress of Oberhaus. Numerous friends had come from different cities to give him an honourable escort to the train station. At 10 o'clock in the morning, the train carried him away amidst the most heartfelt wishes from his friends. This loyal devotion gladdened the one who was leaving even more as he had seen that others had timorously pulled back from him when they saw he too was having difficulty.

I was not able to find any written or printed reports about Hopfenmüller's stay in Oberhaus. I only heard from relatives that he was not doing badly there. He could even go to Passau on his own and only had to be back at a certain hour. During one of these walks he met an officer from the military prison. I do not know whether Hopfenmüller did not recognize him or believed that as a priest he should not greet him first. Anyway he did not greet him. Thereupon, the officer had him line up at roll call and gave him a sharp rebuke for not having greeted his superior. In the future, the necessary bow would not be missing. Hopfenmüller spent Christmas 1876 in fortress detention. His friends from Bamberg tried to make it easier for him by sending him a box of Christmas presents and baked goods. He found willing takers for them among the children of the prison officers and other children, whose friendship he had already gained.

On Monday, February 19, 1877, *Bamberger Volksblatt* was able to inform their readers that Hopfenmüller had finished and returned from his three-month's

detention and was beginning to serve his prison sentence of 14 days in Bamberg. “Thanks be to God he is well. Hopefully he will return healthy and happy from this life of seclusion,” the paper said.

This period in the Bamberg prison passed. On the morning of March 5, Hopfenmüller was released and returned to his post as chaplain of St. Martin. His first walk was to church to celebrate the Holy Sacrifice of the Lord, thanking Him for letting him survive imprisonment well. The admiration and devotion of those who were truly Catholic had prepared him a hearty reception. The entire day he was constantly greeted by his friends or parishioners who were all thrilled by his return.

Even though throughout his life Hopfenmüller never took his eyes off his worrisome child – *Bamberger Volksblatt* – and his collaboration with it, he never again assumed its leadership. With all the zeal of his soul, he now dedicated himself to the demands of his pastoral work. Serving as chaplain or president of the Journeymen Society could have required a full time person. The confidence and respect he enjoyed among the members of the parish was already shown by the fact that his confessional was always surrounded. According to the reports of his contemporaries, the chaplain of St. Martin in Bamberg was known as a diligent and pious priest, whom nothing could deter from winning lost souls, even if he was greatly inconvenienced or occasionally treated roughly.

*Bamberger Volksblatt* accompanied the notice of Hopfenmüller’s return with the following words: “May he always, even in his more peaceful position, continue undisturbed to fight the good fight which he has written on the flag of his life, until its course is ended by the will of God.”<sup>5</sup> Unfortunately, this good wish was not destined to be fulfilled.

#### **(Endnotes)**

<sup>1</sup> BV, January 19, 1876, No. 14.

<sup>2</sup> Writings by Titus Flavius Clemens, Doctor of the Church from Alexandria, translated from the original by Dr. Lorenz Hopfenmüller, chaplain of Bamberg. Published in “Library of Church Fathers” by Dr. Valentin Thalhoffer, Kempten 1875, Volume 42.

<sup>3</sup> BV, November 14, 1876, No. 258.

<sup>4</sup> Cf., BV, November 17, 1876, No. 46, Entertainment Page.

<sup>5</sup> BV, March 6, 1877, No. 52.

## 8. Before the Jury Court Again; In a Nuremberg Prison Cell

Hopfenmüller had yet to drain to the dregs the cup of bitterness which the *Kulturkampf* had poured for the brave editor. The tense hours at the court of Bayreuth had hardly passed when *Bamberger Volksblatt* had again to report another confiscation on October 18, 1876.

The conditions of our Bavarian justice are turning Prussian. Up until now all editors surely believed that newspapers were able to publish objective and true reports about public trials, because why would trials be public if they were not allowed to be reported? But the prosecutor and examining magistrates think differently. Yesterday afternoon at 2 o'clock, Issue 232 and 233 of *Bamberger Volksblatt* were again confiscated and we received a summons to appear before the examining magistrate on the 24<sup>th</sup> of the month – all because we truthfully reported on our trials before the jury court. Everyone who read the report in our paper was also free to listen to the trial in Bayreuth. Hence, reading is punishable but listening not. This makes the public nature of trials illusory.

The examining magistrate cited §28 of the press law which prohibits the reprinting of confiscated articles. The report of the trial at jury court contained the articles read in the courtroom from Issue 254 of the newspaper, which were the subject of the accusation. Therefore, the above stated paragraph was not at all applicable. *Volksblatt* wrote:

The incriminating report was published in many Liberal papers, even in *Nürnberg Korrespondenten*. We read from *Kronadler Anzeiger* that it was likewise confiscated for this reason! We put the question to the prosecutors: “Will *Neuesten Nachrichten*, *Nürnberg Korrespondenten*, *Fränkischer Kuriuer*, *Bayreuther Tagblatt*, etc., also be confiscated?” If not, please do not blame me for having negative thoughts about the condition of Bavarian justice.

In front of the examining magistrate, Hopfenmüller explained that he had the right to publicly report on a public trial to which everyone had access. This matter was of such importance that he would pursue it up to the Supreme Court. How could one publicly report about a public hearing if he could not state the subject of the accusation? Gradually the investigation was also extended to the

other papers, which had printed the objectionable paragraphs. But as a common saying goes, misfortune rarely happens singly, another was soon to appear.

*Bamberger Volksblatt* was able to report again on December 15, 1876, that on the day before it had yet again been delighted with another confiscation. Issue 239 from October 21, 1876, and Issue 243 from October 26 of the same year were confiscated. Both related to Hopfenmüller's activity as editor. This time it was about slandering Chancellor Bismarck.

In the autumn of 1876, quite a sensation had been caused in Berlin affecting the German Reich and countries beyond its borders by an accusation published in the Berlin-based paper *Reichsglocke* (*Reich's Bells*) alleging Prince Bismarck's participation in a stock-mortgage credit-society to the tune of one million thalers, which he had been bribed with as a "tip" so that his influence would promote the company. Hopfenmüller thought his paper should not ignore such a conspicuous matter. In Issue 239 he had reported from Berlin:

A "revelation" is causing a great uproar in Prussia at the moment regarding the first man of the state, Prince Bismarck himself. Mr. Diest-Daber reported in his latest issue that Bismarck's famous banker, Mr. von Bleichröder of the Central Mortgage Credit Bank, had given a share of one million thalers in stocks to an unnamed individual, meaning he gave it to him as a gift. So *Deutsche Reichsglocke* in Berlin came along and explained that this unnamed individual was no other than Chancellor Bismarck. "It is perfectly natural," said *Germania*, "that this blatant offence will be brought to the attention of the courts." *Sozialpolitische Korrespondenz* from Dr. Rudolf Meyer wrote: "Of course a charge for slander needs to be brought, since agreeing to a simple libel suit which does not call for evidence of the truth would mean that we admit to the charge." But the libel suit by the chancellor is still expected, which is quite surprising due to the chancellor's well-known sensitivity to gossiping old women. But this is not enough! Mr. von Diest-Daber has issued the following explanation in *Kreuzzeitung*: "According to the reports I have received, several public papers have drawn different conclusions from a report published a while ago. Since in my opening words I have stated the limit up to which I am now determined to continue, I see no reason to go further into those conclusions unless I receive a judicial request to do so. In the latter case I shall give precise information and name numerous witnesses."

Upon this, the *Reichsglocken* commented: “This basically means: If Prince Bismarck wants to have more information about these conclusions before a court, which *Deutsche Reichsglocken* have added to my brochure (because according to our knowledge no other paper has done so), I shall give further details and will bring numerous witnesses. We thank the brave Mr. von Diest for his offer and look forward to finding at least one intrepid pioneer for the traditional old-Prussian love for honesty and truth among our conservative men.” So much for the paper from Berlin. It seems that *Reichsglocken* and Mr. von Diest were raising these grave suspicions in order to push Prince Bismarck to file a law suit. We shall see whether this provocation is to be successful. Meanwhile the editor of *Reichsglocken* has been arrested.

This was Hopfenmüller’s first article. The second one, for which Issue 213 was confiscated, returned to the same matter and stated:

The high military ranks are astonished as to why the Chancellor, who is usually so generous with bringing actions, has still not filed a suit against *Deutsche Reichsglocken* which, as everybody knows, has accused him of having received one million thalers from Rothschild and Bleichröder at the Central Mortgage Credit Society. In case Prince Bismarck should not call for the help of the courts against the accusations brought against him, then the high officials believe that the matter should be handed over to a military disciplinary court, since, after all, the Chancellor is also the general of the cavalry.

These were the two articles, for which the now former editor of *Volksblatt* was accused of slander by Prince Bismarck.

Along with Hopfenmüller, his successor, the new editor Chaplain Schmitz, was sued for the same matter since he had reproduced a paragraph from the social-democratic paper *Vorwärts* in Issue 262 of *Bamberger Volksblatt* on November 18, 1876, which had pointed out that Bismarck had still not filed a suit against *Reichsglocken*, which as a servant of His Majesty, as a soldier, and as Chancellor of the German nation, *Volksblatt* thought he should be obliged to do. The finding of a secret session of the royal court of appeals in Bamberg consequently referred both editors to the next jury court in Upper Franconia. Both filed an appeal but it was dismissed by the Supreme Court in Munich on May 11.<sup>1</sup>

The trial took place at the jury court in Bayreuth on June 26, 1877. Hopfenmüller did not appear. In a written statement to the chairman he excused himself for not appearing and asked that his reasons stated in the nullity action be respected. As during the previous trial against Hopfenmüller, the chairman was again appeals councillor Meinelt. The prosecutor went to great pains to impugn the accused. He directly imputed him with the evil intention of wanting to rile Prince Bismarck. He contested the extenuating causes due to the entire tendency of this nation-hating, Ultramontane paper. Given the lack of other reasons, this was to be sufficient. Without consulting the jurors, the court condemned the accused to five-month imprisonment for having printed a confiscated article and for slandering Bismarck. On the following day, Hopfenmüller's successor, Chaplain Schmitz, was also sentenced to three months in jail for having printed the stated article from *Vorwärts*.<sup>2</sup> Both gentlemen appealed their sentences. Therefore, the matter had to be taken again to a session of the jury court, but this time with jurors. *Germania* in Berlin had the following to say about these convictions:

Both sentences are doomed to cause uproar in the higher ranks. The subject of the accusation were three notes regarding the report from *Reichsglocken* which caused such a sensation last autumn about Bismarck's alleged participation in the Berlin stock-mortgage credit-society. *Bamberger Volksblatt* did not support the report from *Reichsglocken* but already in the first article described it as a "revelation" in quotation marks; it explicitly stated that a judicial examination should determine "whether anything was true about it or not;" the third article published under Mr. Schmitz as editor expressly said: "With great rejoicing we greet the day when the distrust thus provoked will be gone." Nonetheless, the two editors were sentenced to a total of eight months in prison. The accusation and sentence were motivated by the infamous §186 of the penal law. "Whoever claims or circulates a fact about a person, aimed at belittling the person or degrading him before public opinion will be punished for slander even if the fact is proven to be true." According to the interpretation of the paragraph by the court in Bayreuth, the circulation of a false claim is also punishable in the case when the person circulating it expressly presents it as dubious and not yet proven. If the Bayreuth judges were right in their interpretation, then every notice about a fact later to be proven false would be punishable, and it would be simply impossible for the press to do its job of reporting. We also want to point out that the

prosecutor assumed from the two editors that they had the intention to anger Bismarck. But should a provincial Bavarian newspaper which rarely makes it to the capital really provoke the chancellor to anger?

So much for the report from *Germania*.<sup>3</sup>

At 9 o'clock in the morning on Friday, October 19, 1877, another trial against Hopfenmüller took place. The court was made up of Councillor Mattenheimer as the chairman, as well as Councillors Hartmann, Bayerlein, Rehm and Stoll as assessors. While the court was being constituted, the prosecutor rejected every juror who was believed to seem to think well of the accused, amongst them four men from Bamberg. After Prosecutor von der Pforten had laid out the reasons for the two accusations, the two accused were questioned. The main points shall be repeated here.

Upon the president's reproach that *Volksblatt* took an extreme Ultramontane direction and had been fighting against the country since 1870, Hopfenmüller replied that he represented the principles of the Catholic-Patriotic Party and that he was extreme only in the sense that he wished for an energetic, resolute and firm representation of these principles, but he surely did not criticize the German Reich as such, but only the current government, whose leader is Prince Bismarck. The first article regarding the prince had been sent to him by a contributor who had taken it from *Germania* and the *Pfälzer Zeitung*. He had only written the introductory and closing words. Of course, he would take full responsibility for the article.

The chairman asked if the defendant was not aware that in accepting the article he spread a grave, defamatory reproach about Prince Bismarck. He replied that he had not raised this reproach but only stated that a Berlin paper, *Reichsglocken*, had published the latter in front of the whole world, and that this supposed "revelation" – that is why the word was printed in quotation marks — was causing a great stir in Berlin and that the Prince should necessarily file a suit, and that one could be anxious to know whether this challenge by the Berlin papers would be successful. But nowhere was it said that this accusation was true or that it should be viewed as a fact – to the contrary it was described as dubious and undecided. The accusation was described as a "coarse offence," and a libel suit was requested. This should have left the readers with the impression that the accusation had not been established as a fact and, on the contrary, time was needed before its contents could be clarified.



Then, the president commented that circulating a rumour was punishable. Hopfenmüller explained that the rumour was not being spread as being true but that it was called into doubt. Once the judicial hearing had proven the complete falsity of the rumour he had informed the readers about the acquittal of the prince, just as he had before talked about the “defamatory accusation by *Reichsglocken*.” He himself had sent the second article to his successor for Issue 16 of the same year. He believed that under such conditions, if the prince would have known about the connection and the way the reporting would go, the he would probably not have started the legal proceedings or would have ended them. The chairman commented that this was possible but that he didn’t believe it.

Regarding the second article about Bismarck, the prosecutor told the accused that he had already reported in his first article that the editor of *Reichsglocken* had been arrested, but he had repeated in the second article that the prince had still not filed a law suit against him, and that the issue should therefore be brought before a court of military discipline. Hopfenmüller replied that public opinion had not only demanded a simple libel suit, but an action for slander in order for the truth to be proven. It may not have been clear, but this article also came from a different newspaper and one could not expect from an editor to precisely examine and differentiate everything. Anyway, disciplinary courts only had the purpose of preserving the honour of their officers. There is nothing defamatory about the fact that a disciplinary court orders an officer, about whom such a detrimental rumour has been spread, to prove his integrity and innocence through a judicial trial. Regarding the other accusation of having violated §28 of the press law for printing a confiscated article, on the occasion of the previous sentence by the jury court in Bayreuth, Hopfenmüller said that he had believed himself to be within his rights since he had only informed his readership about the subject of the trial and reported about something, which everybody could hear during the public hearing. Therefore §28 could not be applicable.

Thereupon, a witness, Mr. Thomas Schmitz, was questioned. He testified to having received an article by the former editor at the end of the trial against *Reichsglocken*, which contained the end of the matter with a full justification of Prince Bismarck and was printed in Issue 16 of January 20, 1877. The relevant article was shown to the witness who confirmed that it had been written by Hopfenmüller.

After the lunch break, another issue of *Bamberger Volksblatt* was read, which talked about the unequal justice in press trials from the previous fall, and about the distorted knowledge of the law on the part of the people.

The prosecutor now elaborated for two hours on the origin of the questionable suspicions against Bismarck, the development of the judicial hearing, and the punishment of authors. He insisted that Hopfenmüller had intended to slander and belittle the prince. The whole direction of *Volksblatt* was aimed at criticizing Bismarck, which proved that the accused wished to make a scandal out of this. Therefore, the jurors had to say “Yes” to the question of Hopfenmüller’s guilt.

Concerning the infringement of §28 of the press law, the prosecutor commented that the law speaks clearly on this matter. The excuse about reporting on a public hearing carried no weight. Only reports on governmental and parliamentary sessions were exempt from punishments. Even the remark that a series of other papers, which had printed the same report, had not been punished was also invalid because it had been presumed that they had not known of the confiscation due to the incriminated article. So even on this point the jurors should find Hopfenmüller guilty.

According to the report in *Bamberger Volksblatt*<sup>4</sup> the counsel for the defence was Attorney Schlelein from Bamberg who conducted it in an eloquent and precise manner. His exposition was very objective while the prosecutor had included many unnecessary issues and had made several personal attacks for no good reason. The advocate held a completely opposite point of view from his client and had opposed him during elections and other occasions. Nonetheless, he was delighted to represent the accused today. He wanted the same rights for everybody, even for the political opposition. The jurors were to judge a press offence in such a way that political liberty would be protected. There had been a storm of protests by all political parties when the attempt was made to withdraw press offences from jury courts. Citizens should judge other citizens and they can often pass judgment better than a lawyer, because the formal law is not always the material law. The prosecutor argued that all of the accused had been condemned for the same matter. However, he had overlooked the fact that the case was completely different for *Reichsglocken* and for those who had brought the accusation against Bismarck into the world. These were the authors and they said that they could prove their accusation. They claimed and circulated an improvable fact, and his client had not done that.

Previously, the prosecutor had pleaded that the courts in Bavaria had decided against the defendant since both the jury court and the Supreme Court had dismissed his nullity action. Two sentences were necessary to refer the case to the jury court — one by the district court and one by the appeals court. If these were to decide everything, then the jurors could never acquit anybody. Furthermore, the prosecutor had not said that the Supreme Court does not inquire into the actual act, but decides only about the legal issue and that their sentence again states: “For the time being, it has in fact been established.” But if this were so, when the court of appeals has in fact established something, then the Supreme Court could no longer change anything about it.

The only remaining sentence would be the one by the Upper Palatine jury court against Mr. Habel, bookseller and publisher of *Amberger Volkszeitung*. The latter was condemned to three months and eight days in prison for having printed the same article about Bismarck. But if the jurors in Amberg made their judgment incorrectly, then you the jurors of Bayreuth need not judge in the same way they did. You have to judge only according to your convictions and you are not bound by anything. The jurors in Bayreuth and Würzburg also judged one press suit differently last year.

It will not be difficult for you [the defence lawyer continued] to see the accusation’s lack of foundation looking at the main points of § 186. First of all, an unproven fact needs to be claimed and circulated. My client has not done so with even one word. The jurors would be convinced of this if they were to take a look at the two articles in their context. In them, the prince was not accused of having participated in the acquisition of one million thalers worth of stocks or of having done anything illegal. They only said that another paper, *Reichsglocken*, had accused him of this and that a trial for slander would be necessary to establish whether there were anything to it.

But after the dubious rumour had been widely circulated in the noblest ranks and the *Reichsglocken* article had been circulated to the public, then it would have been in the interest of Prince Bismarck himself to let the issue be cleared up so no doubt would remain.

It was furthermore true as claimed that the dubious rumour had really been published in the North-German papers, as the prosecutor had read out in the morning, and that it had caused quite a stir in Berlin.

But thirdly, the accused lacked the knowledge of committing an unlawful act. The latter could not have thought to be doing something wrong. The press is supposed to be free and has the right to report on events in public life. Even our greatest men need to put up with public criticism. His client had reported as an honest editor. As soon as the trial brought by the prince had made it possible, he had reported on the complete falsity of the rumours and had vindicated the prince.

All in all, the three points belonging to the notion of §186 are missing and the jurors should therefore answer “No” to the question of his guilt.

Regarding the second accusation of having violated §28, the defence attorney commented that the confiscated articles had not been reprinted but only what had happened during the public hearing. The fact that it coincided with those articles was only by chance. The other papers which had done the same, could not talk their way out of it by saying that they had not known about the confiscation, because in order to report about it, they had needed to attend the hearing and therefore knew that the articles in question had been confiscated. The accused had already testified that morning that the papers which had published the offending sentence had also been destroyed. Therefore, whoever printed them later had to have been aware of their confiscation. The defence lawyer concluded by requesting a not guilty verdict on this count as well.

Thereupon, Hopfenmüller began to speak, saying more or less the following:<sup>5</sup> He only wanted to add a little to the exposition of his attorney. Despite the fact that he was a political opponent of his solicitor, the latter had clearly presented the legal context of the matter:

1. That the incriminating article did not claim untrue facts but only the true fact that the *Reichsglocken* had raised an accusation against the prince;
2. That he had not supported or advocated this accusation but had expressly called it into question;
3. That the manner of his reporting was not aimed at degrading the prince in public opinion;

4. That he was completely unaware of any illegality.

Not only did his attorney share this conviction, but he would be able to cite other authorities. The accused then read a paragraph from the defence summation by the famous lawyer, Dr. Querenstädt, from Berlin. Hopfenmüller said that the Mayer Case, where Querenstädt had been the defender, had been even less favourable than his own since Mayer had called a number of excellent people to testify. But Querenstädt vowed that this had not been the reason he defended the accused, but that he was convinced as a man and as a lawyer that Mayer could not be punished because he had not made the accusation in question against Prince Bismarck. He had only reported in his *Sozialpolitischen Korrespondenz* that *Reichsglocken* had raised this accusation and that a trial for slander would be necessary for which Mayer had called several witnesses. “Where on earth is the slander here?” Querenstädt demanded.

Furthermore, Hopfenmüller referred to the sentences handed down by the district court in Tölz and the regional court in Weilheim, which acquitted notary Eisenberger of telling a citizen of Tölz that one of the speakers had publicly claimed during an electoral meeting on *Kreuzstraße* that Dr. Ratzinger, who was running as a candidate, had been suspended for a year. This claim was false. Eisenberger had not cast doubt on it, but was acquitted nonetheless. Hopfenmüller read the court’s reasoning for its decision, which expressly stated that the accused had not claimed a fact slandering the plaintiff and that the simple and true reporting on an incident was not punishable. Hopfenmüller argued that it was the same in his case. There could not be any doubt that from a juridical perspective, condemning him would be inappropriate.

He also permitted himself several comments from a journalistic and personal point of view. It was the right and even the duty of the press to report on all important issues in public life. The papers have to publish what is described popularly as “newsworthy.” The *Reichsglocken* issue had caused such a stir that the papers could not ignore it. But he had truthfully and loyally reported that the *Reichsglocken* published these offences, that their editor had been arrested for it, that the prince had started legal proceedings, and how the whole issue ended. It was a fact that the prince filed the action only several weeks later. Therefore, the freedom of the press would be suppressed if he were to be condemned today.

The chairman told the accused that this way of expressing himself was going too far. So Hopfenmüller corrected himself by saying that this made reporting

for newspapers very difficult if not impossible. He offered to demonstrate this with an example. A few days ago, *Volksblatt* reported that bank employee B. had been arrested and that his arrest had taken place in connection with the Bamberger Bank fraud. Although this did not prove that B. had really participated in it, Hopfenmüller argued that if he were convicted today, and if it turned out that B. were innocent, then B. could now sue the newspaper for having violated §186! Hopfenmüller continued:

Another example pertinent to this case would make the matter even clearer. Given that Cardinal Antonelli was supposed to have said to Cardinal Hohenlohe that the Pope had told him that he could have a share in the Landgrand Bank; furthermore, given that the Nuncio in Munich told the archbishop there that he had heard from Landgrand of a half a million stock participation; given that this rumour in the most noble ranks would finally find its way to the public through *Deutschen Merkur* and that Antonelli, Hohenlohe, the Nuncio and the archbishop would be called as witnesses, surely no one would claim that the press had exceeded its limits once the opposing papers took notice of it and argued for a clarification in a trial. Indeed, they would report about it as loyally and truthfully as the accused [Hopfenmüller] had done in his case. And they would also expressly state that not one word of it was true, if the inquiry were to prove it so, because in this case even the friends of the pope could not have anything to complain about such reporting. The jurors may therefore protect the freedom of the press and acquit the accused.

On a personal note, the accused commented that he was a theologian and hence obliged and accustomed to viewing everything from a higher, moral point of view. He had therefore examined his conscience whether he had sinned against the eighth commandment and that his conscience had acquitted him. He said to himself: “You have not degraded the reputation of the prince because you have not brought this rumour into the world; you have not calumniated him because you presented the rumour as being dubious; you have not offended him because it was in Bismarck’s interest to be urged to clear up the matter, and you reported his vindication, as well as that it was a rumour.” When an accusation is publicly raised, one can do nothing else from a moral standpoint than call it into doubt. It is impossible to ignore it entirely: the jurors themselves would not do so. Therefore he had not been aware that it was something unlawful. Otherwise, he surely would have been more careful since he had been severely punished only a short

while ago and was aware of how closely his paper was being watched, even to the extent that private societies were sending *Volksblatt* to Bismarck himself, as had happened several years ago in Zeuln.

The prosecutor had erred when he said that all papers reporting the issue had been punished. *Germania*, *Pfälzer Zeitung*, *Regensburger Morgenblatt*, *Vorwärts* and others had never been sued even though their issues were sent to Bismarck. So some were punished and others not. It all depended on whether one had a good friend who sent the paper to Varzin.<sup>6</sup> In his defence Hopfenmüller concluded:

The jury courts are the palladium of political freedom, especially in press offences. The citizen is to judge his peers, free and independent of the respective political authority, fresh and truthfully from life itself. I trustingly lay my fate into your hands. It depends on your verdict whether I leave this room a free man or am uselessly deprived of my work for a few months. Let the jury courts condemn the guilty; but today, gentlemen jurors, you must acquit an innocent man. Strike a blow for law and justice today.

Hopfenmüller was to be bitterly disappointed if he had believed that during the *Kulturkampf* such a hand picked crowd would rise above political views and under such clear circumstances grant simple justice for the Catholic editor, even though he was a priest. The jurors took one hour and 45 minutes to deliberate. To the question of whether Hopfenmüller was guilty for violating §186 of the penal law by having published the articles regarding the Chancellor and having intentionally claimed and circulated a fact, which had been proven to be untrue, aimed at belittling Prince Bismarck and degrading him in public opinion, while Lorenz Hopfenmüller had been aware of the slanderous nature of the article – for each one of the articles about Bismarck the jury foreman stated: “Yes, but not being convinced of the truth of the fact.” These additional words were received with general disapproval in the courtroom. Even the prosecutor commented the next day that this had astonished him and the judge. The jurors had probably intended to express something mitigating, but no one could know what they had actually meant to say. Even the other question concerning whether Hopfenmüller was guilty for having reprinted a confiscated article and hence of violating §28 of the press law, the jurors answered “Yes.”

The prosecutor requested three-month's imprisonment for each of the first two cases, totalling six months for the Bismarck-offence and another 14 days in jail for having reprinted the confiscated article. Thereupon, the defence asked that the jurors be sent back to chambers to complete their verdict. Hopfenmüller endorsed this. The chairman ignored it by stating that the jury's words appended to the verdict concerning Bismarck were to be considered as never having been made because it did not contain a contradiction. (Was the gentlemen afraid that the jurors' verdict would be clearer the next time and perhaps even more favourable to the accused?) The defence attorney thereupon highlighted the extenuating circumstances and appealed that the first and second cases of the Bismarck-offence be given 23 days imprisonment each, and for the third, a three-Mark fine.

Hopfenmüller never lost his superior equanimity during all of this. He only commented on the penalty with a trace of scorn, saying that the Liberal doctrine was presently affirming itself in the direction of completely denying all moral responsibility since it described all free actions as mental functions. He himself did not share this opinion but believed that in this case the extent of moral responsibility was so small, that the respected gentlemen had not, as the prosecutor had jokingly said in the morning, pardoned him from a prison cell but would be instead satisfied with a simple jail cell and that, hence, they had measured the penalty not with the prosecutor's modern meter stick but instead with the defence lawyer's traditional, Bavarian foot ruler.

Nonetheless, the total sentence amounted to five months in prison and the payment of all the fines. But the latter would be charged to the public purse since he would not serve his sentence in the place where he had committed the crime.<sup>7</sup> The accused listened to the verdict with the greatest of calm. It was 10 o'clock at night when this session came to an end.

Hopfenmüller's stay in Bayreuth had been painful. The cruel verdict was not the only reason. During the journey to Bayreuth his hand had been badly crushed in the door of a railway compartment. He had arrived there bleeding, in great pain and then had to sit through the long hearing. But he never lost his equanimity or humour. The following is an example of the mood against him in Liberal circles. One of the Liberals had told Hopfenmüller that he could not look at his face out of disgust for him. So, Hopfenmüller elegantly turned around and laughingly responded: "Perhaps you would prefer this side more."



The trial against Hopfenmüller's successor, editor Schmitz, for offending the Chancellor took place the next day. It concerned the above-mentioned reprint from *Vorwärts*. This time too in choosing a jury, the prosecutor rejected those jurors who could have been favourable to the accused. The desired effect was achieved. At least the extenuating causes were accepted for Chaplain Schmitz and he got away with only one and a half months in prison as well as the payment of the fees.

Looking back on these jury trials in Germany after all these years, one blushes with shame that such sentences were hung over worthy and innocent men, whose only crime had been not swimming with the current but loyally and firmly standing by their church, defending its interest with great courage, thereby attracting the disapproval of the authorities. Just like Hopfenmüller, many Liberal papers had reported on the first trial against him, including phrases from the confiscated article. But no one apart from Hopfenmüller was ever punished. Just like *Bamberger Volksblatt*, many other newspapers had reported on the article published in *Reichsglocken* about Prince Bismarck. But apart from the two editors of *Bamberger Volksblatt* only the brave editor Habel from *Amberger Volksblatt* was sued in Bavaria. The latter was also a real Catholic paper. Justice had every reason to cover its head in grief over such sentences, but the condemned will forever be crowned with the garland of those who have been unjustly persecuted, those who will be blessed from a different standpoint for having undergone persecution for justice sake.

Hopfenmüller was supposed to have served his sentence in Amberg. But since that prison was overcrowded he was sent to Nuremberg. But even there everything was full. Provisionally, the prison's chaplain hosted him. Meanwhile, the director of the prison contacted the Minister of Justice who ordered Hopfenmüller to be taken to the prison cell at Nuremberg at 4 o'clock on November 2, 1877. *Bamberger Volksblatt* reported in Issue 269 of November 24, 1877:

Father Mahr who personally asked about Hopfenmüller in the prison cell, has informed us that he is in good health and endures the cell imprisonment with that great equanimity, peace of mind and cheerful spirit, which is always found in a clear conscience. This may comfort the numerous friends of the sorely tried.

Nonetheless, the stay in Nuremberg was a difficult time for the longsuffering minister. He was not allowed to associate with the other inmates. Everyone had

his own cell and even outdoors he could only move within a determined, separated area when they let him into the prison yard for an hour a day. He saw the other inmates only at church. They pointed at him with their fingers and sneeringly said that the priest was also present. He was never allowed to say Mass. He attended the usual Mass for inmates. Hopfenmüller wore his clerical dress even in the dungeon. With it he wore the prison cap with his number. He suffered severely from the cold since heat from the heating system did not reach him on the fourth floor. Moved by sympathy, the prison's director gave him a woollen blanket. He experienced other such compassionate concessions. One day the prison guard came to bring him a table, chair, knife, fork, spoon and napkin for his cell. Hopfenmüller was astonished, saying that there must be some mistake, or that they had confused him for someone else. But the guard replied: "No, there is no mistake. You shall be able to use these things from now on. These objects are for your personal use from today onward."

But in other matters Hopfenmüller could not be convinced to take the easy way. The food consisted of pea soup or hard potato dumplings served with soup (the water in which they had been cooked). The guards could have helped him get better food, but Hopfenmüller firmly rejected it. He had been condemned for his Catholic faith, he said, and he wished to carry out the sentence in all its severity and wanted to be treated like any other inmate. It was of comfort to his deeply pious soul to be treated like any other inmate, just as the Divine Saviour had been treated. He had fought for Him and also wanted to suffer for Him. When anyone expressed admiration at how he endured everything with such a bright heart, he calmly responded: "I endure for the sake of Jesus, even though I cannot say that it does not cause me pain."

It was of no surprise that the stay in Nuremberg took a lot out of the 32-year-old chaplain of St. Martin. But on April 2, 1878, *Bamberger Volksblatt* was able to write:

We have been informed that freedom was given back to Hopfenmüller this morning, after five months of seclusion. A short while ago he wrote to us: "I am healthy and well." May God be praised! He has protected and preserved him. We shout out a heartily welcome to the noble and brave warrior.

Despite all their joy to again greet this innocent man who had been prosecuted, his relatives and friends were painfully struck by how he had suffered in the prison cell. The change was too obvious. He returned serious, pale and emaciated.

But the extent of his suffering had not yet reached its end. Soon, another ordeal was to add itself to the one he had just hardly past, perhaps an even more bitter one, as it came from a source from which he would have least expected.

**(Endnotes)**

<sup>1</sup> BV, April 10, 1877, No. 80; May 12, 1877, No. 107.

<sup>2</sup> BV, July 31, 1877, No. 172.

<sup>3</sup> Cf., BV, August 11, 1877, No. 182.

<sup>4</sup> BV, October 25, 1877, No. 244.

<sup>5</sup> BV, October 26, 1877, No. 245.

<sup>6</sup> Prince Bismarck's residence.

<sup>7</sup> Cf. "The Verdict" in BV, November 5, 1877, No. 252.

## 9. The Curate of Reichmannsdorf

Upon returning to Bamberg, Hopfenmüller received his appointment to become the curate of Reichmannsdorf in Steigerwald. Under the circumstances, it needed to be understood as a transfer for disciplinary reasons. Even though Reichmannsdorf was only four hours away from Bamberg, before the construction of the railway it was still known as a lonely and remote place.<sup>1</sup> In addition, the conditions there were not very pleasant.

Archbishop Schreiber of Bamberg made no secret about the reasons for this transfer. “This agitator,” he said, “needs to be removed from Bamberg.” Those who had followed Hopfenmüller’s activities so far, his selfless work in service of God and the church and the serious sacrifices and suffering he had endured, were astonished by such words coming from their shepherd. One would have expected grateful acknowledgement from this side. How can this be explained?

Archbishop Schreiber had done much good for the well-being of his diocese during his lifetime and even in the disposition of his last will.<sup>2</sup> He surely meant what he wrote in his pastoral letter: “This faith (with help from above) is being nourished in no small way by the sight of those who search their hearts and know that living in our souls is the firm decision to serve the Holy Church in self-sacrificing love until our last breath.”<sup>3</sup> After initial resistance he declared that he was ready to assume episcopal office, but only if he would not be put under any non-canonical conditions.<sup>4</sup> This did not mean that he was a renegade bishop. Archbishop Schreiber described his position in his first pastoral letter:

You will recognize that a priest who has spent most of his priestly work as a pastor in the countryside approaches the leadership of an archdiocese in the current serious days with the same worries as a man who until now has only captained his boat in a quiet bay, and now must take the helm of a great ship.

Under such difficult conditions of the time, the leadership of an archdiocese foreign to him was laid in his hands. He was no scholar. During his first years in office, he left everything up to his advisors, whom he did not know and who took advantage of him. Archbishop Schreiber did not at all possess as strong a character as Bishop Ignatius von Senestrey of Regensburg from whose diocese he had come, and who never shied away from addressing him openly.<sup>5</sup> By nature, Schreiber was extremely soft and mild and always tried to draw near to people



The presbytery at Reichmannsdorf

in the spirit of kindness and peace. In Chapter Five already described how he reached the episcopal chair due solely to the efforts of Minister von Lutz. Since he was his favourite, he relied a bit too heavily on the advice of this secular individual whose church-political activity has already been judged by history. Due to his basically good nature, his urge not to disturb the peace, and his tendency to pour oil onto the stormy waves of the times, he probably went a bit too far in placating the government. In a strange twist, during the fight mentioned above between Lutz and Bishop Senestrey, Lutz called Archbishop Schreiber as his special witness against Bishop Senestrey.<sup>6</sup> In a decree, Bishop Senestrey successfully enlisted the authorities of his diocese against Schreiber's testimony.

Schreiber maintained the same behaviour toward the Liberal Party with whom he did not want to fall out since it was the pillar of Lutz' government, and he may also have hoped to bring about something good through his complaisance. To the chagrin of Catholics, the Liberal Papers claimed him as one of their own from the beginning and often praised his kindness and peacefulness. Because of this, Bishop Schreiber was subject to many attacks from within the church.<sup>7</sup>

From the beginning Hopfenmüller's successor in the editorial office, Chaplain Thomas Schmitz, tried to walk in the footsteps of this brave predecessor. But despite all his efforts for the cause of the church, *Bamberger Volksblatt* never secured the friendship of the archbishop. Having this strict Catholic paper in the cathedral city, he still considered inaugurating another "Catholic" paper for Bamberg,<sup>8</sup> most likely one that was less opinionated and would not attack the Liberals, since their followers were to be found even within the circle of the faithful.

Given this situation, the archbishop's behaviour towards the sorely tried Hopfenmüller comes as no surprise. And his strong character could cope with it. In a short note about his life he simply and modestly commented, without the slightest bitterness:

"On April 11, 1878, following my release from the prison cell in Nuremberg, I was removed from my parish against my will because my editorial activity had made me unpopular with the Most Reverend Archbishop, His Excellency Friedrich von Schreiber."

Without further ado, Hopfenmüller went to Reichmannsdorf and took up his pastoral activity there with his usual energy. Humble as he was, he never complained about the undeserved disciplinary action. Such a slight could not shake his equanimity. His courage and zeal for the good cause, the church and its souls, remained unbroken. The only thing that mattered to him was to improve the community, which had been entrusted to him.

Already in his first year there, Hopfenmüller wrote a short chronicle of the church in Reichmannsdorf according to files which had been given to him by Baron Franz von Schrottenberg, and which today are still preserved in the archive of the curate of Reichmannsdorf. According to them, Reichmannsdorf was founded as a parish in 1473. Both the church and the rectory went up in flames during the Thirty Years War around 1630. Though the church was rebuilt about 40 years later, the neighbouring town of Schlüsselfeld saw to its pastoral needs until 1810 when the village again received its own parish priest. Until now the rectory itself has not been rebuilt.

Up to the 1870's a porcelain factory operated in Reichmannsdorf, employing a large part of the population. These workers possessed next to nothing, at most a small house, but they made a decent living by the work of their hands. When the factory suddenly closed all these people lost their jobs. It was difficult to emigrate.

The few possessions they possessed still tied them to their homes. There was no other work, especially not for so many people. This predicament brought about the danger that a part of this usually diligent population would forget about regular working life and succumb to begging. These were the conditions Hopfenmüller found when he was appointed curate of Reichmannsdorf, where parents also had a penchant for sending their children to beg in the surrounding villages. Out of a population of 600 souls, at least 35 children aged 5-15 followed this profession.

Beyond the occasional disturbances caused by this constant begging, Hopfenmüller was more concerned about the religious and moral dangers connected with it.

A child who is not sent regularly to Confession is an unhappy and pitiable creature, in great danger of being forever ruined. Education was often neglected in families where misery was knocking on the door. If in addition the children were sent off to beg, they often became entirely unsuitable for living in civil society. Restlessly moving from village to village encouraged a tendency to disorderliness, laxity and idleness; furthermore it blunts self-respect and confidence in one's own ability and work, as one is used to relying on outside help. This again diminishes the joy of working and saving. The love of settling down is replaced by certain nomadism. Such a child becomes more or less unsuited for ordinary jobs. They can not become good workman, farmers, stable boys or maids. Additionally, there were moral dangers. Fear of the civil authority who outlawed begging, the prospect of profit from arousing pity, and the hope to reach the goal faster made them lie.

Other scourges the eager pastor saw connected to begging were greed, occasional theft, immoderation, fondness for sweets, moral decay, shamelessness, neglect of the church and school, a blunted conscience, etc.

Gravely worried, he sought to remedy all this. As it would have been impossible to establish a St. Vincent de Paul or Elisabeth Society, he tried a Society for Christian Care for the Poor. He chose three men and five women, talked to them eloquently about his pursuit of the high Christian vision of saving souls and won them over to his task. As chairman, he assumed the leadership of the Society. Since at most only 12-15 wealthy families lived in the village, it was impossible for the community alone to care for all its poor families. So Hopfenmüller asked the local police authorities for permission to take up a collection in the nearby

villages where the children from Reichmannsdorf normally went begging. They willingly gave him a permit for three years. Through the neighbouring ministers he publicised his undertaking and invited people to send their alms to the Society in this single collection and in the future not to give anything to the beggars from Reichmannsdorf

In the fall, supported by several members of his Society, Hopfenmüller went from village to village. One man pushed a wheelbarrow and carried a sack. In this way, the stock for winter was collected. Most of the people were so appreciative they gladly participated in his plan to rid themselves of the disruptive children who had already taken quite a bit from them. Some of them doubted whether the effort would be successful. Only a few insisted on their unreasonable stubbornness and said: "We give to whom we want to give." Meanwhile, every time the village's children saw the curate, they said: "There comes the Capuchin." "No, my beloved children," he would then jokingly reply, "this is not a Capuchin but the curate of Reichmannsdorf."

In this way, enough was collected to survive the rough winter of 1879. Several families who really did not need to beg, had to stop because they could not get anymore. But the others were supported by weekly contributions of bread, potatoes, etc. The members of the Society asked every week if and how much was still left. The families in need were to be supported, while on the other hand, they were to be encouraged by the thought that they were better off now than they were when begging. A communal meeting after evening Mass on Sunday always determined the respective support.

With the help of charitable women and members of the Society for Christian Care of the Poor, the curate organized Christmas presents for the poor and for other children. He held a short talk in front of an illuminated Christmas tree beneath which a figure of the Child Jesus had been laid. The children joyfully sang Christmas songs. Parents and children alike were delighted by socks, scarves, and wrist warmers, pinafores, knitting baskets, gingerbread, apples and nuts. Furthermore, the parents received useful pamphlets describing the dangers connected to children who beg. These were aimed at making parents to feel differently about wealthy people, to be more satisfied in their poverty and perhaps even to be more receptive of the efforts to control begging.

During the early days of his stay in Reichmannsdorf, when he would caution the parents in his pastoral kindness not unscrupulously and heartlessly to expose their children to the physical and spiritual corruption of begging, he would often



receive the answer: “But we cannot starve.” Due to the large number of begging families, he was unfortunately not in the position to reply: “Come to me if you are about to starve and I will provide you with what you need.” Therefore, he looked for another solution and proposed it to the parents: “If you have no income, why do you not go to the charitable people yourselves and let them give something to you instead of to your children.” They replied: “They won’t give us anything. They tell us to go to work but there is no work in winter.” Under such conditions the pastor had no choice but to turn a blind eye to the children who missed school because they had to beg. He did not want to be too harsh with them until he was able to exercise charity by providing what they needed by donations – otherwise it would have seemed heartless.

But with the continued assistance of the Society for Christian Care for the Poor to help those in need, Hopfenmüller could no longer view begging as a necessity. Instead he described it as idleness, indolence, dissipation, bad manners or stupid beggar’s pride. It was for people who were not ashamed to wander about, while on the other hand they did not want to hear a word about the support of Christian charity. So one or another recipient needed to accept a reminder or a reproachful word. Those who continued their old habit of begging or sending others to beg in communities further off, or who still found individuals who were just too good-natured to refuse them, the curate now strictly reported to the judicial authorities as soon as he got word of them. He also asked the police to exercise strict vigilance by reporting the beggar children, or rather their parents. Those who were unreceptive to his pastoral love and God’s grace were at least to be scared off by the authorities from falling into this moral decay, which begging surely is when it is not an absolute necessity. Hopfenmüller was determined not to loosen up until these inveterate shirkers were put into custody and accommodated in jails or workhouses. Even though this was not necessarily going to improve them, at least it would be a deterrent for the weak and swaying.

Hopfenmüller’s activity was not only aimed at helping the poor; he also wanted to insure work and activities. For the girls, this was possible in the trade school through spinning, sewing, knitting and mending. It was set up in a way that the children could earn some more money by taking knitting orders from outside when they were free from school. Once they finished school, he tried to find them jobs in good households. He urged the boys to take up a decent life-profession. He found good masters for them who accepted the beggar boys out of Christian charity for little or no compensation and trained them to become competent workmen. Some entirely destitute children were housed by the curate

in the St. Joseph Institute in Bamberg. The community, the state, and especially private charity provided him with the means. Some of the children gave him great joy later on.

He was especially keen to establish a housing industry for the winter months to combat the severe unemployment. Basket and wire weaving, the production of felt shoes, brushes, home and agricultural tools and similar things were considered. But due to the stagnancy of most businesses at the time, it was most difficult to sell the goods. Hopfenmüller tried it with basket weaving. He had one boy learn the craft so that he could teach the others over the winter. To set up the basket trade he bought willows for 1,000 Marks. But he had no lack of sad experiences. The boys secretly sold their baskets once they had finished them, and the magnanimous entrepreneur had no choice but to pay for the willows from his own pocket.

In fact, his kindness was abused more than once. One day a man came to him and asked him with tears for a loan of 1,600 Marks, which he owed to a Jew who was now urging him to repay it. With the greatest sacrifice Hopfenmüller satisfied the Jew, but the man still went off and filed for bankruptcy. The Jew had his money and the poor curate had lost out. But he let nothing deter him from raising the prosperity of the community with the help of his Society by creating or procuring job opportunities and in this way, barring the door to begging.

Along with the manifold worries of his community, he never forgot about the house of God entrusted to him. He found two ladies who were particularly willing to help. One was Baroness Wilhelmina von Schrottenberg, and the other was the widow of a senior executive officer, Hyacintha Weidner. The first one washed the church's laundry to the glory of God for free so that it was always clean and worthy of the Holy Mystery. She also donated some linen to the church. The other woman took care of cleaning the church and the altars. She also had a chalice gilded, dyed her wedding gown so that it could be used as a beautiful red vestment, donated a new ciborium, and statues of the Madonna and the Child Jesus which was placed in front of the altar during Christmas time.

At the start of his pastorate, the curate found benefactors for a holy tomb for his church. He had this, as well as the statues mentioned above, built by the Mayer Art Company in Munich. Later he also managed to procure a new Way of the Cross. The royal captain, Heinrich Beitelbrock, who had fallen ill during the war against France in 1870, paralyzing both of his legs, used his free time to paint the Stations of the Cross gratis. His sister, the above-mentioned Mrs. Weidner, paid

for the paint and canvas. Hopfenmüller had the frames made by a carpenter in Reichmannsdorf based on a drawing from the Literary Institute in Fribourg. Again he was able to find benefactors for the costs. On August 30, 1880, Fr. Franz Teufelhart blessed the Way of the Cross. “May many people find the pleasure, grace and courage of following Christ in this Way of the Cross,” was the wish Hopfenmüller recorded in the Chronicle of Reichmannsdorf. In October 1881, a Bamberger benefactor procured him the means to have a baptismal pitcher and font produced by tin caster Melly in Bamberg. I shall not go into further details about how the untiring pastor provided Mass vestments, a confessional, and other useful things with the help of good people. He was even able to renovate parts of the church building. Due to dampness, the sacristy floor was raised by half a foot and given a new wooden floor in the autumn of 1879. In the summer of 1881, Hopfenmüller had the church gables restored and lined with lime and whitewashed on the outside.

The curate did so much for the church and his community, and so little for himself. He lived in the poorest conditions. His apartment was a very tiny house in which it was difficult to imagine that anyone could live and work. And the other demands he made on life were minimal. When he went to Reichmannsdorf he had taken his parents with him. His mother now ran the household. She cooked very simply. One time her soup turned out to be a failure and someone suggested it would be difficult for him to enjoy it. But his simple and touching reply was: “But my dear mother has cooked it.”

Hopfenmüller regularly helped out at the different patronal celebrations. When finer dishes were served on such occasions, he always passed them up. “That is enough,” he would simply reply, and trying to persuade him was in vain.

His visits to the sick and dying were unremitting. On all of his outings he carried the death cross with him. The priest of Wachenroth, about an hour away from Reichmannsdorf, once fell ill with terrible pneumonia and the doctor had already given up on him. In the deepest snow Hopfenmüller would daily cross the forest to stand by the sick priest and to comfort his sister Elise Traut in her pain. He reminded her of God’s love and grace, which would preserve her brother so his soul would reach salvation. She remembered:

Unforgettable are the marvellous prayers he said while administering the Holy Sacrament. He so kindly petitioned God to avert death if it was not against His most holy will. Just a few minutes later the dying priest began to recover and the crisis was over. I wanted to thank him

but he rejected it with the words: “Do not take away the little merit I have received from God with your thanks.”

The same lady also told us of other cases that occurred during Hopfenmüller’s time in Reichmannsdorf.

He once came to us in the bitterest cold with bare feet in his shoes. I got scared and brought him a pair of socks, but he smilingly said: “I just want to harden myself up a bit and see how much I can take.” Then he took one sock from each of his pockets and put them on.

He and my brother once helped out at the confessional in nearby Schlüsselfeld. There they spent the night together in one room. Following his evening prayer, my brother went to bed but Hopfenmüller remained kneeling in prayer until late into the night. He had still not gone to bed by the time my brother finally fell asleep. Oh, his entire life was a prayer, spiced with hunger and cold.

Caring so little about himself it was of no surprise when he fell ill with pneumonia in April 1879. The community held prayer hours imploring the recovery of their beloved pastor. He recuperated slowly from his illness but then took up his work with more energy than before.

In this way, nearly four years passed in Reichmannsdorf. In December 1881, a post at the parish in Seußling was advertised, about three hours away from Bamberg. The district authority of Bamberg II, to which Reichmannsdorf also belonged, had come to appreciate the social significance of curate Hopfenmüller’s activity for the state. They arranged for him to apply for the parish at Seußling where similar conditions prevailed. Even the parishioners of Seußling passionately appealed to the archdiocesan administration to secure the local chaplain of Reichmannsdorf. Hopfenmüller would have liked to remain a chaplain in Reichmannsdorf for the rest of his life, but he believed he heard God’s voice in these urgent pleas and applied for the new post. Even the archbishop was unable to resist the general insistence.

Hopfenmüller had already brilliantly passed the rectory exam while chaplain in Bamberg in 1871, an exam every minister needs to pass before being employed as parish priest. Amongst 15 candidates he had taken first place and received an “A.” Thus on January 24, 1882, Hopfenmüller received a decree from the governmental president of Upper Franconia from Bayreuth, which stated:

The Catholic rectory of Seußling within Bamberg District II has been conferred upon you by the Archbishop of Bamberg, and royal authorization was given by a rescript of his Royal Majesty to Hohenschwangau, January 19 of the same year. By this decree you may legitimately take up your post, but must first await the investiture letter from the archdiocesan offices of Bamberg and then turn to the royal installation commissioner of the royal district chair of Bamberg II who will introduce you to the duties and install you in the rectory with the archiepiscopal commissioner.

On January 31, 1882, Hopfenmüller received the investiture letter from the archiepiscopal general vicariate and his stay in Reichmannsdorf came to end. How this loss was felt by the community and with what pain they let him go is best mirrored in a news report published in *Bamberger Volksblatt*.<sup>9</sup> From Reichmannsdorf it writes:

After having been active for almost four years in this curate community, Dr. Lorenz Hopfenmüller parted on February 7 to continue his work in the parish entrusted to him in Seußling. Convinced that this noble and pious priest is not out for human thanks or recognition for his work, it would nonetheless be a black ingratitude if one were to remain silent about all he has done. His merits are indescribable as an excellent preacher, an untiring and enthusiastic confessor, an outstanding catechist in the Christian doctrine and education, and as a benefactor for the poor. His dealings inspired the highest respect and awe. That is why he was honoured and respected by everyone and his memory will never be extinguished. His farewell gives the best example of this. Innumerable tears were shed from the time of his nomination until his departure. He was highly appreciated for the great sacrifices he made for the temporal and eternal well-being of the souls entrusted to him, while on the other hand, the resulting consequences of his departure were taken into account. A large part of the citizens – young and old – gathered around his house on the morning of his departure to pay a last farewell to their beloved pastor. Not a single eye remained dry. Loud crying accompanied his beautifully garlanded coach, which took the noble philanthropist and pious priest from the grieving community. May God repay him for that which men are not able to do! May he find many new friends at his new destination, and may they listen to his advice and teachings! May his old and brave parents remain at the side of their beloved and virtuous

son for many more healthy and happy days and be a pleasant memory to the community they leave behind!

A letter from the current curate of Reichmannsdorf, Heinrich Rauh, demonstrates how his life and work are still remembered today. Among other letters, he wrote on December 31, 1921:

I have tried to find out one or the other thing about Reverend Dr. Hopfenmüller. Even though it is now 40 years since he was working here, he is still known as the “spirit-filled gentleman” who came to Reichmannsdorf because he had defended the rights of the church during the *Kulturkampf*. An old man told me: “Sometimes we said that our curate should have become archbishop instead of Archbishop Schreiber of Bamberg because he would have fit the post better.” He is still known as the great benefactor of the poor. In order to stop the begging, he himself went around begging in the area. He distributed what he brought back home in order to break the people of the habit of begging. One has to know that the population in Reichmannsdorf was extremely poor at that time. He was very strict on himself in fasting. One woman once said to me: “That was the man who held those beautiful May devotions!”

By now, Reichmannsdorf has changed enormously. In an exemplary, sacrificial manner the entire community helped with the construction of the new church, which was completed this year [1923]. It was surely this noble man who sowed this good seed, which is now coming up after decades.

### (Endnotes)

- <sup>1</sup> BV, June 8, 1878, No. 132.
- <sup>2</sup> M. Pfister, Friedrich von Schreiber, pp. 19-24.
- <sup>3</sup> Bamberger Pastoralblatt, 1875, No. 37.
- <sup>4</sup> Bamberger Pastoralblatt, 1876, p. 4.
- <sup>5</sup> Cf., Bishop Senestrey’s decree “To the Clergy of My Diocese,” December 21, 1875
- <sup>6</sup> Cf., The above-mentioned decree by Bishop Senestrey.
- <sup>7</sup> Cf., BV, February 17, 1889, No. 38; March 11 & 21, 1884; December 17, 1890; Bayerischen Vaterland by Dr. Jur. J. Sigl of April 19, 1877, No. 88; Fränkischen Volksblatt, February 25, 1889, No. 45; Bamberger Pastoralblatt, February 11, 1880, No. 42; Allgemeine Zeitung, Bamberg, May 23, 1890, No. 119, etc.
- <sup>8</sup> BV, February 17, 1880, No. 38.
- <sup>9</sup> BV, February 11, 1882, No. 34.

## 10. A Parish Priest of Seußling

Seußling lies on the left bank of the Regnitz River in Upper Franconia. Previously, it was also called Seußlingen or Seußelingen. It was given its name due to the large numbers of wild pigs (*sau* in German) in this formerly wooded area. Around 642, the tribal people, the Wendens, came to the Fichtel Mountains and spread out so far that subsequently the entire Diocese of Bamberger was just called Slaveland. The Slaves were converted to Christianity by the monastery in Fulda founded by St. Boniface. Among the parish churches Charlemagne established for the Slaves he erected one in Seußling. Like all the other churches at the time, it was made of wood, as were even the domes of the churches of Würzburg and Regensburg. Given the plentiful supply of lumber in the area it took little time, trouble or expense to build such a church.

A stone church with a crypt was first built in Seußling around 1100. The construction of the existing late-Gothic church dates back to 1420. Benefactors from the Monastery of Schlüsselau contributed substantially to the construction of this parish church. For two centuries the monastery held the right of patronage over the church and parish; so the abbess of the monastery decided its location. Only after the destruction of the monastery in 1552, did that right pass to the Bamberger bishops.

Being the owner of seven properties, for a long time the parish priest of Seußling also had jurisdiction over his people. He is noted as exercising the office of judge in many cases, in files dating from 1534 up to the mid 18<sup>th</sup> century. In 1596, for instance, the mayor of Seußling remained in the custody of the parish priest of Seußling for five days and nights for having chased away the schoolteacher, berating her with a torrent of terrible insults. He also had to pay the parish priest a fine of 10fl., although others involved in this incident received lesser prison sentences or fines. Even in church offences, the jurisdiction of the parish priest was exercised in a way we can hardly imagine today. One man had to pay four pounds to the church for making an overly bold speech; others were given the same penalty for going to Nuremberg on a Marian Feastday and again the next Sunday, thereby missing Mass to the great anger of the parish priest. Another had to pay 3 pounds 6fl. for cursing. A Jew had to pay 1 pound for driving an ox through Seußling on Sunday; another was fined 3 pounds in 1756 because his wife had hung her laundry in plain sight of the street on the Feast of

the Holy Rosary, thereby angering those passing by. Following these incidents, Sunday rest was taken quite seriously in Seußling.

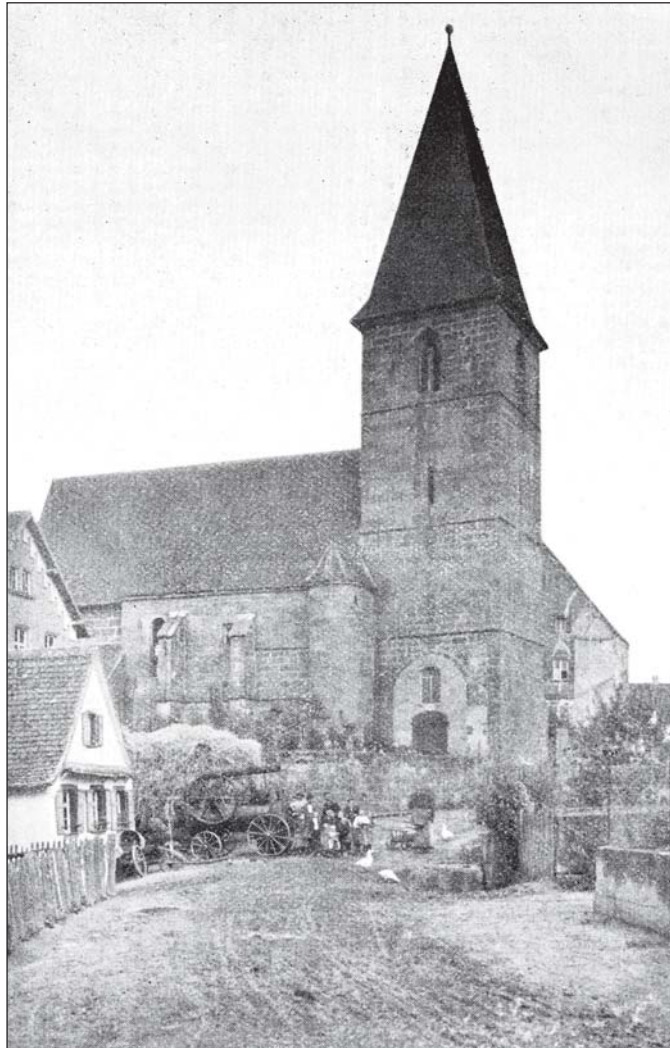
From 1631-32, Seußling was hit hard during the Thirty Years War when the Swedes were present in Franconia. All the people fled, except for two men who hid in a cave in the nearby forest. The Swedes smashed the doors of the church but all the holy vessels and vestments had already been taken to a safe place. After the Swedes' retreat, a pestilence broke out in 1634, afflicting all those who had been spared by the Swedes. The survivors had no oxen left to till the ground. In some places, twelve or more men harnessed themselves to the plough to cultivate the land. Most fields lay fallow due to constant fear of the Swedes. The few remaining people struggled to survive due to a lack of working tools.

To avoid starvation, the parish priest of Seußling had no choice but to leave the parish and move to another area. Due to his absence the parish began to decay. It was almost ten years before another parish fair could be celebrated or another Corpus Christi Procession. During this first celebration in years, the priest took his traditional ride on horseback around the land, carrying the Blessed Sacrament. After an interruption of almost 21 years, regular celebration of the Mass was resumed since there had been no resident parish priest during this time.

In August 1796, it was the French who looted and demolished Seußling. The citizens were maltreated. The stored grain was put into sacks and sheets and carried away. Hidden money was found and stolen. Every box was wrenched open and smashed. The enemy stole all shirts, linens and beds. They also carted away everything Fr. Lang possessed in reserves, money and useful things, while badly maltreating him. The church was broken into and looted. Silver tassels were torn from vestments and a precious cope cut to shreds. The French enemy forced open the tabernacle, yanked out the ciborium, threw the consecrated hosts onto the altar and smashed it to pieces. But this place was not to bring them any luck, and retribution soon followed the crime. The arriving Austrian Hussars knocked the perpetrators to the ground in front of the church. Seußling was to have some good fortune from all this woe. The French had already hung pitch rings on houses to set the village ablaze after looting it, when they were surprised and partially brought down by the Austrian troops. The rest fled.<sup>1</sup>

The village recovered slowly from these disastrous wars, but Seußling remained among the poorest parishes. Local conditions did not favour good development. Tillage was difficult and brought little return. Most of the fields were situated on slopes or on the north side, so that the farmers of Altenhof, only 15 minutes





The parish church at Seussling

away from Seußling across the Regnitz, were able to plough and sow without difficulty, while those in Seußling still needed to wait two or three more weeks to start their spring work in the fields. Moreover, the ground was infertile, noticeably different from other areas. Clay soil alternated with sandy fields. The citizens had to slave away just to get enough from the earth to survive another year and to pay tax and interest.

It was in this city that Dr. Hopfenmüller arrived on February 9, 1882. His reputation as a good and zealous pastor preceded him and ensured him a joyful reception. He addressed the children, who greeted him with a song, and the adults with such encouraging words that he immediately won over all hearts. The royal commissioner present at his introduction as parish priest said to the gathered parish community: "You are receiving a Good Samaritan." This was shortly to be proven true.

Similar conditions to those at Reichmannsdorf also prevailed in the two villages of Sassanfahrt and Köttmannsdorf, which belonged to the parish of Seußling. Here, the new priest encountered the same situation of many adults and children begging in the neighbouring villages. The consequences were an abuse of alms as well as moral and religious decay. The experiences he had had in Reichmannsdorf proved to be very useful. Hopfenmüller was convinced that real pastoral care for the poor would be impossible without Christian care for them. In his Chronicle of Seußling, still preserved in the parish, he wrote about the matter to his successor:

Watching youth wandering about begging withers the heart in a way that a man loses all ability to construct the capacity for an inner spiritual life. Just as one cannot build a natural order upon sand, it is impossible to build a spiritual structure in these people without the presence of a natural foundation of an externally ordered life.

It was, therefore, Hopfenmüller's highest aim to establish here a Society for Christian Care of the Poor. This was founded at a Solemn High Mass in the parish church on December 3, 1882, in which Hopfenmüller explained its significance to the parish community. On the occasion of this foundation, Hopfenmüller went back to the original apostolic institutions in the early Christian communities. He identified several competent men and women who were to serve as deacons, and designed the institution as a voluntary society whose chairman was the priest. It was the task of the Society to go out to the neighbouring villages where the beggars had wandered about until then, to collect alms of

money, wheat, potatoes and bread for one year and then to distribute it according to the needs of the poor of the parish. In this way no one needed to go begging for alms. At the same time it discouraged waste and laziness, thereby removing the dangerous effects of begging on a moral, religious lifestyle.

The priest of Seußling immediately addressed the public to stimulate more people to participate. On December 14, 1882, *Bamberger Volksblatt* published the following “heartfelt plea” by Dr. Hopfenmüller:

Because begging easily exceeds one’s needs and becomes a business or even a type of low hedonism, according to the words of the Doctor of the Church St. Basil, the caretakers of the poor in the earliest Christian community went out to collect alms to distribute to the needy. In order to control the increased begging of children and adults and its corrupting consequences in my parish, I have founded a Society for the Christian Care of the Poor according to the model of the early Christian communities. With the permission of the royal government, volunteers will collect alms in the neighbouring villages once a year. These alms will then be distributed in kind to the poor according to need, week by week, after a town meeting has decided on it. I now sincerely and urgently ask the neighbouring villages to give your alms to this Society out of Christian charity and in the future to send away all beggars from Sassanfahrt, Köttmannsdorf and Trailsdorf, and to report them to the Society. This way, the Society will be able to help those really in need, prevent the abuse of alms, and eradicate the devastating consequences of begging. Whoever still continues to give alms to beggars from these villages after the Society for the Christian Care of the Poor has been established, will not be doing a good deed for these people, as St. Basil says, but will be supporting and encouraging their decay.

I also ask the citizens of Bamberg to refuse beggars from the places named. Those who wish to give them alms should do so directly to the parish of Seußling or to the editorial office of *Bamberger Volksblatt*. May God let this difficult task succeed!

The priest set to work with courage, zeal and faith in God to overcome the emerging difficulties. He himself set the best example. He personally undertook the collection once a year in the villages of Seußling, Trailsdorf, Schlammersdorf, Pautzfeld, Hallerndorf, Altebdorf, Buttenheim, Neuses, Eppolsheim, Herrnsdorf, Wingersdorf and Sambach. The police willingly gave permission for three years.

Hopfenmüller took one or more volunteers with him, and if there was no one, a day labourer from Seußling. At the target village he would work with a community official or another day labourer. He was not ashamed to pass from door to door carrying a sack on his shoulders to ask for the poor of his village. The collected items were then taken to Seußling. To reach the more distant villages of Herrnsdorf, Wingersdorf and Sambach, he would use a horse-drawn cart and drive to Sambach with his men early in the morning. While he took up the collection in Wingersdorf and Sambach, another man stayed behind in Herrnsdorf to do the same there. Pious women from the Order of St. Francis took up the collection in the places where he could not go. A number of these women stood loyally by his side. Margareta Spies from Sassanfahrt undertook the greatest amount of work and effort.

To keep things light and do something good for the benefactors, the priest distributed little images, printed prayers and other uplifting writings, and had the other collectors do the same. The members of the Society met to discuss the distribution of alms every two weeks after Sunday evening Mass. Each meeting opened and closed with a prayer. At times the priest added a suitable reading. Every participating Society member was in charge of a certain number of families, about whose needs it inquired and reported. A majority vote decided how much bread, starch, potatoes, salt, soup and other foods should be given to each family. Clothes, shoes and socks were distributed according to need. The Society also paid household rents. The Society members received little tin badges for each family in their care, which could then be exchanged for the respective goods at the parish.

The priest made his own cellar available for storing potatoes, and his loft for grain. But the stored goods were too heavy for the loft and cracks soon began to appear in the structure of the parish house. Hopfenmüller had all the grain ground in the mill at Trailsdorf. Taking turns, several housewives from Seußling baked the bread each week for free. About 70 large loaves were distributed each week. The priest had special racks constructed for cooling the baked bread. These still exist. He put them up in a room which became nothing less than a bakery for the poor. Hopfenmüller's parents, and later his nieces, took care of distributing the bread to those with tin badges.

Every quarter, a special Mass was celebrated on Quatember Sunday, at which the poor joined in praying for their benefactors. The upcoming Mass was announced from the pulpit. The priest usually prayed the Litany of the Sufferings

of Christ or of the Name of Jesus, followed by three Our Father's, the Creed, the prayer for the benefactors from the Litany of All Saints, and a prayer for the poor. He insisted that the poor come to him to receive tin badges for the food for the upcoming week. Weekly support was cancelled for those absent for no reason.

The priest was and remained the soul of the Society. He set an example to the members in collecting food and also in overcoming difficulties, always encouraging them to more active participation. The patrons of the Society were St. Vincent de Paul and St. Elisabeth. Following Sunday Mass on the Feast of St. Elizabeth, the annual festival of the Society took place. Dr. Hopfenmüller especially used this opportunity to thank the members publicly for their work, to encourage them to loyally continue their work, and to invite the community's gratitude. On that day the members were also presented with the annual report of the Society. It also marked the beginning of winter activities. During the summer, regular sessions were unnecessary because many jobs were available. Distributing alms to those incapable of working, and therefore in constant need of support, could also be done by individual members who just picked them up from the parish priest on Sunday.

After Hopfenmüller had provided for the needs of the poor in this way, he urged people to refrain from begging or run the risk of police intervention. Some of the hardcore poor were greatly angered by this and scolded and threatened him. One beggar woman, who had been punished for this, threatened to throw him onto the rubbish pile as soon as she could get a hold of him. Another time, a woman was caught begging by the police and arrested. Her husband angrily approached the priest and said that now he should take care of his children. He had brought his youngest with him, who could not even walk yet, and left him on the doorstep when he left. The priest's niece soon heard the child crying. She went to see what was going on, but Hopfenmüller told her: "Let it be, it will soon be picked up again." Indeed, the man returned to pick it up after a short while. On his way home, he had been unable to refrain from speaking of the incident to other citizens, but they taught him a proper lesson, forcing him to pick up the child immediately. At any rate, the people from Seußling never spoke well about those from Sassanfahrt since they believed that the priest spent way too much of his time with the beggars.

One time, an angry beggar threw a loaf of bread at Hopfenmüller's feet during the distribution of bread. He picked it up and ate it himself. He then said to the

people: "I have eaten the bread which has been thrown at my feet. Throwing it on the ground was such a bad thing to do." This humiliation angered the beggars even more. They laid in wait for him at Mühlberg near Sassanfahrt. When he came along, they ambushed him and throttled him saying: "Your game has come to an end. You are going to die now, because we are going to break your neck." "Well," the priest replied, "then I shall die for a good cause and become a martyr!" But the beggars did not want to grant him this and let him go.

Gradually, the steadiness of the priest and the Society members began to triumph over the ranks of the poor. When they saw that nothing helped their cause, they calmed down and gave in. Soon the children's begging ceased. The adults, however, still tried to beg, but they were gradually scared away by the rejection they faced in the villages and the punishment meted out by authorities. After a while, few went out to beg anymore and did so rarely. At present [1923], the rising economic conditions of the villages leave only a few professional beggars.

The reasonable and fair-minded among the poor realized the priest's good will from the beginning and were grateful for it. It really was surprising how he repeatedly gathered food for the poor. The people had great faith in him and gladly placed their contributions at his disposal. More often than not, he was short of money to satisfy expectations. In such situations, the only thing he could do was to set out and implore the charity of those who were better off. During one of these walks in a nearby village, he passed by a farmhouse from which could be heard a loud quarrel. As he entered the house, the farmer excused himself and told him what had happened. The fight had arisen because someone in the house had unnecessarily lit a match. "Oh no," the priest thought to himself, "You have come to a real cheapskate. He will not donate much." He was quite surprised when the farmer handed him plenty of alms. His healthy approach was to save at the right time to be able to give when needed.

To support the poor and the sick, Dr. Hopfenmüller went beyond the help of his Society and used even his personal resources at great sacrifice to himself. When necessary he let the poor cook for themselves in his own kitchen or had it sent to them no matter how time consuming this was. His niece brought lunch and dinner to a sick woman every day for an entire year. On Christmas he always organized presents for the poor children. Along with useful things like knitting wool for the girls and trouser cloth for the boys, he also delighted them with marzipan, ginger bread, apples and nuts. He always had these last items in

sufficient quantity so that all the spectators could also get some at the end of the show.

He was always a good friend to children. They ran to the good father to shake his hand as soon as they saw him on the street. His pockets were usually filled with all kinds of little things, even the gooseberries from his garden found a welcome purpose. He always used these opportunities to send the children on their way with good advice.

Many families in Seußling already made their living by weaving baskets. Basket weavers also lived in Trailsdorf, but most of them lived in Sassanfahrt where only a few lived off of the yield of the fields. The most varied baskets were produced – baskets for coals, purses, larger baskets for carrying things, etc. Once a certain number were finished, they were sold to a wholesaler who would then sell them to larger stores in Augsburg or Regensburg. To make basket weaving more profitable, Hopfenmüller founded basket maker societies similar to today's farmer's cooperatives. They purchased the raw material together and then took care of the individual product sales and the intermediate trade. Hopfenmüller was ahead of his time in this matter. His basket maker's society was the first in the entire country. Unfortunately, the indefatigable founder had some disappointing experiences here and had to deal with the losses. Despite many people's warnings, he trusted one man too much and made him sole administrator of the willow warehouse. Large amounts of the purchased willow and the finished products were kept here. The man used his position of trust to get rich from the stock in the warehouse by stealing from it at night. The priest learned of his deception much later. Together with the Society for Christian Care for the Poor, the people's judgment about this today is: "Even if Fr. Hopfenmüller had done no good, he did help the people of Sassanfahrt to establish these organizations."

The priest not only took care of Seußling's poor and workmen, he also devoted much attention to farmers to lift and support them economically. To this end he founded the Raiffeisen Loan Society which gave opportunities to the wealthy to make secure investments while the less well off or the unfortunate could get a loan at modest interest rates. This helped control the dreadful usury business, which had already caused some farmers to lose house and home whether they were indebted or not.

Even his long years of experience as editor of *Bamberger Volksblatt* proved useful to Dr. Hopfenmüller in keeping his parishioners away from social errors. He gave public speeches during parliamentary elections in which he exposed and defeated the ruinous Social-Democratic doctrine. As a consequence there were no Social-Democrats left in his parish. Even in the village of Sassanfahrt, which was composed mostly of basket makers and would therefore have been fertile ground for this new doctrine, of the approximately 100 families, 104 people cast their votes for the Zentrum candidates and not a single one for the Social-Democrats.

Not did the priest neglect to found new religious establishments. Being a great admirer of the Blessed Mother, every evening during the month of May he held solemn May devotions. The Lauretanian, another Marian Litany, or a decade from the rosary was prayed in front of the Marian altar. This was followed by a short reading for the month of May taken from good books like *The Magnificence of Mary* by Alfons Ligouri, Gemminger's *Blossom Bunch*, Fr. Beck's *The Month of May*, etc. These devotions always ended with a Marian song and prayer.

This not being enough, Hopfenmüller also introduced the Confraternity of the Holy Rosary. Pope Leo XIII repeatedly recommended that Christians around the globe pray the rosary to renew their zeal for prayer and virtue. Through the mediation of the Queen of the Rosary, there were to implore God's help for aid against persecution and oppression of the church, as well as for social needs, and against danger. This is why the month of October was particularly dedicated to the rosary.

To encourage and enlarge this devotion, Hopfenmüller decided to introduce the Confraternity of the Holy Rosary. The Dominican prior in Vienna helped him obtain authorization by mediating with the superior general of the order in Rome. As a result, the pastor received authorization both to establish the confraternity and to bless rosaries. On All Saint's Day 1885, the confraternity was solemnly installed. Cathedral-vicar Wenzel of Bamberg delivered the festive sermon. 361 members registered themselves the first day and the priest carried a statue of Mary through the village during the procession in the afternoon. Hundreds of members followed him carrying candles and torches. Watching it was just as moving as it was uplifting for the parish community.

Dr. Hopfenmüller held the monthly meeting of the confraternity on the fourth Sunday of the month. Following the recitation of the rosary and devotions at the Marian altar, new members were accepted and he would then speak a few



encouraging words. A candlelight procession took place following the final prayer. On the Feast of the Holy Rosary or on other special occasions, the same thing was done but with greater solemnity along with flags and standards in a larger procession. Returning to the church the priest celebrated benediction with the Blessed Sacrament from the high altar.

The Confraternity of the Holy Rosary soon enjoyed great popularity. By the time Dr. Hopfenmüller left Seußling, most of the parish had joined it. Because of his great devotion to the Blessed Sacrament, the pastor took the opportunity to introduce another confraternity. This devotion took place on the first Sunday of each month and was celebrated in great solemnity. Many parishioners also joined this organization.

Hopfenmüller set the best example for his parishioners by his own veneration of the Blessed Sacrament. One of them later said that Hopfenmüller read Holy Mass in such a devout manner that one believed he was seeing an angel in human form. He frequently remained a long time in prayer in the church. Late at night, one could still find him kneeling before the tabernacle. One time, a teacher unknowingly locked him up in the church. Thereafter, the priest made himself a key to the church so that he could remain as long as he wanted at night with no fear of being locked in.

He viewed frequent reception of Holy Communion as the best means to promote the spiritual life in every regard. That is why he allowed it without reservation or pettiness to all those he regarded as worthy, and who expressed the desire for it. At any hour he was ready to distribute the Eucharist. The Holy Childhood Society and the Angel Sodality also merit mention, which Hopfenmüller likewise introduced to his parish and which he occasionally enlivened with special encouragements. He also found eager collectors and benefactors for it.

Dr. Hopfenmüller was tirelessly active in the exercise of his teaching duties. Twice a week he held religious education for the school children of Sassanfahrt: twice a week for the four higher grades, and three times a week for the three lower grades in Seußling. He chose his best-behaved pupils to be altar boys and always instructed them himself. If one of them were missing or had come late to the morning distribution of Holy Communion on a Sunday or a working day, he subtracted ten cents from their altar boy money. This was given to the Holy Childhood Society. Hopfenmüller also chose the boy who readied the coals for the censor. If he behaved well, he could later be promoted to altar boy.

Hopfenmüller dedicated particular zeal to preparing children for their First Confession and First Holy Communion. Since the penitential from the Catechism was a bit difficult to comprehend, he gave the children who went to Confession for the first time a special children's penitential published by Auer along with the Guardian Angel letter *Eight Days before Confession*. He put off the preparatory lessons until Easter time. He arranged for the children to go to Confession in the afternoons they did not have school and never more than 15-20 children at a time. In this way, neither the children nor the confessor were kept occupied for too long. After the children took their seats in the pews, Hopfenmüller tried to put them in the right state of mind by giving a brief talk, praying a phrase of contrition for children, and lined them up on both sides of the confessional. The children who lived furthest away confessed first and then of those living in Seußling – one after the other, just as they sat in school. Every child needed to have his own prayer book; the priest would insist on this during Mass for all children from grade 2 and up.

Lessons for the children preparing for First Communion usually began in the first week after Septuagesima Sunday. First, he warmed their hearts for the teachings of the faith by giving a brief overview of the main topics in the entire catechism. Hopfenmüller procured the necessary means for those children whose parents had not given them the instructional book *White Sunday* by Auer in Donauwörth so they could have it too. During the lessons, which took place twice a week, he encouraged them to use the book and chose the chapters to be read each day. He went through the teachings on the Blessed Sacrament and General Confession thoroughly. Following the lesson he always took them to church to visit the Blessed Sacrament and to pray from their little booklets.

After evening Mass from Easter Monday evening onward, increasing preparation for the big day began. On each of the following days, Hopfenmüller held spiritual exercises concerning two main issues for the children; each one took about three hours and 15 minutes and included a prayer before and after. A half an hour break took place between the two meditations. On the Thursday and Friday before White Sunday, the children went to General Confessions in groups of 10 to 12. Whoever wished to confess venial sins again were also able to come Saturday afternoon. After such a deep preparation the day of First Communion was approached with great solemnity. It is no surprise that this day imprinted itself deeply on the hearts of the children as a highlight for the rest of their lives. The children were even allowed to walk around in their white dresses on the

Monday after White Sunday. To their delight, the pastor took them on a trip that day.

Dr. Hopfenmüller was also zealous in his Sunday classes for the children who had left school before the age of 18. To be assured of the presence of those obliged to attend, he always took roll. The particularly indolent and their parents were publicly scolded at the end of the school year; those who had missed a few times were reprimanded; and the others were recognized for their good will. To protect the youth from useless or sinful conversations, he provided them with good books and magazines to read. Among the latter he also distributed *Der Missionär*, which is still being published by the Salvatorians today [1923]. The magazine and the Apostolic Teaching Society which published it had made a stirring appeal in Issue 58 of *Bamberger Volksblatt* on March 13, 1882. It was signed by B. Lüthen, diocesan priest and editor, Munich, Unterer Anger 17. Hopfenmüller also gave out special books as presents during ceremonies of Confirmation to both the confirmandi and to their sponsors.

To distinguish legitimate from illegitimate children, Hopfenmüller introduced bells that would ring only during the baptism of the legitimate. Previously it had been a custom in Seußling that after a baptism all sorts of little things were thrown into a crowd of children by the parents and relatives in front of the church. This led to unsightly scuffles. To put an end to this, the priest ordered the people to bring food for the children if they wanted to delight them. He would then distribute it himself to the children in front of the church, beginning with the youngest.

Hopfenmüller only allowed a special escort before and after the wedding when both of the spouses came to the altar with a clear record. Previously the escort was only possible for those who would pay for it. He gave money to poor people living in dire circumstances so that they could pay for the expense of a wedding. He wed them for free and gave them shoes and clothes.

With particular care and self-sacrifice, the zealous pastor dedicated himself to the sick and dying. No hour, night or day, no unfavourable weather conditions could prevent him from making his way to attend an ill person. A long-time loyal member of the Society for the Christian Care of the Poor, Margaretha Spies, recounts: "Once I saw him rushing into the deepest snow to a sick young man living in Köttmannsdorf, about 45 minutes away from Seußling, without an umbrella and bareheaded." He regularly visited the ill in the different villages of his parish. In addition to spiritual consolation, he also gave physical comfort to

the poor and often left alms behind. He also would not take their money for funeral costs.

Even though Hopfenmüller was generally deeply seriousness, nonetheless he was never sullen or depressed. He met everyone freely and openly, with mildness and kindness. He calmly replied to his adversaries or offenders without using a single hurtful word, or else he remained silent. In company he loved cheerfulness and jokes. His great knowledge was hidden behind an even greater humility. He never paraded it. Notwithstanding, he was extremely indulgent towards those who believed they always had to have the last word despite little knowing little; he never hindered or rebuked them.

As kind as he was towards others, he was hard on himself. His house looked almost like a cloister. When his mother could not longer work, his niece, the daughter of his oldest brother, came to care for his household. They shared morning and evening prayer together at set times, as well as meals. Prayer took about half an hour in the morning. After evening prayer they prayed the rosary kneeling. If the priest were at home, he always arrived punctually to all appointments. The regular cloister-like life was a bit difficult for his father who at times could not forgo a glass of beer with friends at the pub. His good mother had a hard time when her husband was not home by 7 o'clock in the evening. She already knew what would happen. Dr. Hopfenmüller usually was on time at the dinner table. He would stand there for some time waiting for his father, not wanting to eat without him. But this was only an excuse. Without having eaten that night, he went to his room and resumed his work. It was a good occasion to fast. "Besides," said his niece, "he always managed to fast in some way."

Nevertheless, it was good that Hopfenmüller's father went to the pub from time to time. One day, a workman in the pub offered to sell him a good pair of shoes. He immediately recognized them as his son's, who had shortly before given them to the workman out of pity for his damaged footwear. Hopfenmüller's father bought them back from the workman and carried them back to the parish.

Hopfenmüller's lifestyle was extremely simple. He never made any demands of food or drink. He completely abstained from beer. If he were offered something to eat or drink in someone's house, he only tried it to make the people happy. After Mass in Seußling, he went to his religious education lessons in Sassanfahrt without breakfast. At most, he allowed himself a sip of water from the well. Still without having eaten anything, he returned to Sassanfahrt at lunchtime. Once,

when he was asked to give a sermon at Strullendorf on the patronal feast of St. Laurence, he went there barefoot along the entire length of the canal.

Curious people, who wanted to know what the priest was doing in his room at midnight with the light still on, snuck to his window. It was between 11 and 12 o'clock at night, and to their surprise they saw him absorbed in a long prayer lying on the bare floor with outstretched arms. Despite going to bed so late, he still got up early in the morning. One could find him at the confessional early in the morning. By praying, fasting and exercising great rigor on himself, he worked to receive God's blessing and its effectiveness.

The effect of such a virtuous life on the parishioners became obvious. People in neighbouring parishes soon began to say that he had turned Seußling around completely. He was venerated like St. Francis Xavier. People listened intently when from the pulpit his eloquent sermon on holy zeal warned of sin and tried to make them walk the Lord's ways. As severely as he preached against sin, he was just as kind in the confessional where he always had a rich harvest. People even came from far away to confess to him.

Hopfenmüller did not pray in vain with the psalmists: "I love, oh Lord, the ornament of your house and the place which is filled by your splendour." Concern for his church was very dear to him. He provided a long list of things to decorate the church or to increase the worship of God in the devotion of the people during the celebration of Mass, most of the time with the help of benefactors. Among these was an altar image of the Sacred Heart of Jesus and the Heart of Mary, the latter linked with the rosary. Then there was the statue of the Child Jesus for the high altar during Christmas time, several vestments, robes, altar cloths, brass candlesticks, altar carpets, etc. The priest eagerly began to introduce the new diocesan Bamberger hymnal and prayer book, even though the people were not always happy with it, as they would have liked to keep the old one. Since the new book included the songs and their melodies, he acquired song chalkboards for the school so it would be easier for the children to learn the notes. He also tried to teach some girls to sing according to the notes for the more important celebrations of Mass. In a relatively short period of time, he managed to have a four-part Mass by Molitor performed on feast days and a choral Mass on Sundays. He also managed to renovate an image of the Most Holy Trinity in the cemetery chapel. In place of a rotten wooden cross in the cemetery, he put a stone cross and solemnly blessed it. He also got an organ for the parish church

in Seußling and undertook the stylish restoration of its interior in the summer of 1887.

With this work the activity of the indefatigable priest was to come to a sure conclusion. All during this time his thoughts and strivings had taken a different direction. While renovating the church a great deal of mortar and gravel was lying around. Hopfenmüller loved to walk barefoot on the rough surface to prepare himself for his mission, as he said. He had been grasped mightily by the thought of the many souls still awaiting the proclamation of true salvation, a thought which made him believe his sphere of activity thus far had been too narrow. But in this parish he had proven to be a real man of God who strove only for the will of God in everything and lived for the salvation of souls. After his death, *Bamberger Pastoralblatt* wrote of this period of his life:

His blessed activity in his Bamberger home diocese ... (especially after the long setback and his having been assigned the parish of Seußling, and that only with great difficulty) has remained in everybody's memory through his fearless and self-sacrificing zeal for the Holy Church, for the salvation of souls and for everything good; through his severe moral purity, and his otherwise mortified life –no visits to pubs, no beer, no wine, only the most frugal food, and contempt of everything earthly. He gave away everything he had for the poor and for good causes, never paid a compliment or made a concession to a hustler or to the state clergy – he is a brilliant example for every priest and layman. He never received any recognition from above. The Catholic people esteemed him all the more. His honest character, which was truer than gold, did not square with the duplicity of the world and the new era. He fled from it by choosing a cloistered life.<sup>2</sup>

#### **(Endnotes)**

<sup>1</sup> Cf., J.B. Teuber, History of the Parishes of Seußling, etc. p. 35ff.

<sup>2</sup> Bamberger Pastoralblatt by Dr. J. Körber, Issue 36, September 6, 1890.

## 11. Farewell to the Parish at Seußling

The bright aim in life for the parish priest of Seußling was to be a missionary and a religious. Even though he had always been active for the foreign missions, especially through his Holy Childhood Society, during a pilgrimage to Rome he learned more about this subject from his former classmate, Rev. Grimm, and became even more enthused about it. His strict life, dedicated to piety, drew him toward an even more perfect striving and deeper consecration to God in religious life. He returned from his 1886 pilgrimage having made the decision to enter a religious order. He would have preferred to do so immediately, but being a good and loyal son to his parents, he postponed the implementation of his plan. His father had already met his Creator on July 27, 1884, in Seußling, where he was also buried.

On this occasion, he set a good example to counter the bad habit of some villages to hold a funeral party with excessive eating and drinking, something he had previously criticized several times. Moreover, he believed that death was a reason to fast and give distribute money that had been saved as alms for the deceased. Prayer, fasting and almsgiving were comfort and salvation for those suffering in purgatory. The priest boldly defied the custom of Seußling. He said to the pallbearers: “Men, you realize that it is improper for Christians to eat and drink on the day of a funeral. I will give 2 Marks to each one of you as repayment for your efforts.” “No, Father,” was their kind and modest reply, “donate them as alms, as you had wished.” The relatives who came from other towns held a simple lunch just as on any other day.<sup>1</sup>

His dear mother was still alive. His parents had sold everything in order to stay with their son until their deaths. So despite his desire for religious life, he could not leave her. On January 1, 1887, she also closed her eyes on this life. Hopfenmüller viewed this as a special sign from God. The road ahead was now clear for him.

Reverend Bernard Lüthen, already mentioned in the previous chapter, had likewise joined the Catholic Teaching Society as a missionary priest. He can justly be called the co-founder of the Society. Hopfenmüller had previously been in contact with him since he was the editor of *Der Missionär*. During one of those contacts, Lüthen once said: “I hope to see you sometime among us and I would be delighted if we were to be in closer contact.” Dr. Hopfenmüller now remembered these words. He decided to turn to Lüthen, now living as a religious

by the name of Fr. Bonaventure at the side of Fr. Jordan in Rome, and to lay out his thoughts in an open exchange of ideas. Already on January 3, 1887, he wrote to Lüthen from Seußling:

For a long time I have been having inner promptings to enter a missionary order. Following the death of my beloved mother on January 1 of this year, I no longer need to take care of anyone in this world. So I feel an even greater compulsion than before to meet this inner urge and to rigorously examine my vocation. In this examination, I recognize that I feel a preference and an incentive to go into the field as a missionary to pagans. Our European Christians are degenerate; the soil no longer absorbs the heavenly dew. Should one therefore not recognize a breath of the Divine Spirit in the new and stronger emerging zeal for foreign missions, which want to carry the divine seed, disdained by European Christians, to fresh cultures so that new branches of the eternally green Kingdom can blossom there in place of the old and declining ones? Should I, so I think, not become such a tool and offer myself to Our Lord in this work, particularly since the Holy Father has urgently asked in his encyclical for more missions and for many to take up missionary work? Am I not too old, I asked myself, to undertake such a work at the age of 43? Will I still be able to learn the necessary languages that become so much more difficult to learn at this age? I asked the Trappist abbot Fr. Franz from Marianhill in South Africa about this when he came to Bamberg and he replied: *Numquam sero!* (It's never too late!). Surely I am healthy, sprightly, and can endure quite a bit. Perhaps the rest of my life could be used for this work, and God's grace could strengthen my memory even to learn languages. But where to, is the next question?<sup>2</sup>

Dr. Hopfenmüller now went through the list of different possible German missionary societies. He was tempted by the undertakings of the Trappist abbot Fr. Franz in South Africa. A missionary field of operations had already been set up there. Its missionary activity, similar to that of the old Benedictines, appeared to him as the most suitable approach since they not only taught the local people about heavenly things and how to pray, but by practical example they also showed them the necessary work. "Should I become a Trappist and work for God's Kingdom there?" was his doubtful question.



He also sympathized with the German missionary house in Steyl with its Chinese mission in South-Shantung. "My heart inclines to this out of German patriotism," he wrote, "because it is a purely German and national congregation." His concern was only about learning Chinese. Then he said:

The Missionaries of the Sacred Heart of Jesus in Tilburg and now in Antwerp, who are also purely German and who have recently bravely taken over an extensive mission in Micronesia and Australian Melanesia, have a promoter in Bamberg who is in the female branch of the congregation in Issoudun. She is preparing herself for the Australian mission and has already urged me to join her congregation.

The seeker now examined the Catholic Teaching Society, to which Fr. Lüthen belonged. Hopfenmüller put the following questions to him about the Society:

Will a new missionary field shortly be assigned to your congregation by *Propaganda Fide* and will it take up the task? Could I be of use in such a case? Or is it God's will for me not to be active in a mission but to take part in educating the talented youth who go to the missions, and in this way work indirectly for the missions? Will your congregation continue to exist? The support you receive, as noted in *Der Missionär*, is far less than Steyl receives from the People of God. Nonetheless, this would not deter me because I possess the faith in God to believe that such work will not be abandoned as it is designed to serve for the honour of God and the spread of his Kingdom.

It was not easy for Hopfenmüller to make the right decision. He concluded his letter to Fr. Lüthen:

I wish to crystallize the back and forth of my thoughts and, apart from my prayer and the prayers of others, I wish to hear the opinion and advice I request from you. Perhaps you could also inform and ask the reverend superior of your congregation, Fr. Franz Jordan, about this. After having used all possible human and divine means, I will surely be able to attain knowledge of God's will. If this knowledge shall turn out to be, "You are there and you are called to be there," then I shall follow God's grace. If it should be, "You are not called to the missions but instead should continue to be a Bavarian parish priest," then it shall also be alright with me.

This letter is a beautiful example of how Hopfenmüller sincerely tried to work only for God's Kingdom, to recognize the Lord's will, and to direct his life accordingly. Fr. Bonaventure Lüthen's response completely satisfied him, and he decided to join the Catholic Teaching Society, which had just recently been founded in Rome on December 8, 1881 by Fr. Francis Jordan, a priest originally from Baden. Hopfenmüller's response can be read in his letter to Fr. Jordan of January 24, 1887. This demonstrates better than anything else the state of mind of this principled man of God and the inner driving force behind his action:

In the name of Our Lord Jesus Christ, who has taught us evangelical perfection and sent out his apostles to spread the blessed truth of the faith, I dare to address this humble, child-like and well-thought-out request to you, Reverend Father, to take me into your congregation. On receipt of the letter from Reverend Fr. Bonaventure Lüthen, I immediately began a novena to the Queen of the Apostles and attentively reread his appeal in *Apostlekalendar*. Now, at the end of my searching and praying, I feel the inner urge to join an order, and in particular a missionary order, because my inclination and heart's desire led me especially to this. During my discernment, I finally decided to choose the Catholic Teaching Society. The decisive motives are the following: I preferably feel drawn to the pagan missions. While comparing the Trappist community and your congregation, I said to myself: If you go there, your will and wish will be fulfilled, but you could err as to whether your will is really God's will – it could also be self-will. If you go to the Teaching Society, you will put your obedience into the hands of a superior who will examine you, assess your qualifications and assign you to a post. This way you can be sure that the divine will is being fulfilled by the superior and not by your own will. I feel the readiness to place my will completely in God's hands and to live and act in religious obedience, as to precisely where, how, and what the superior wants and demands, and to follow loyally, willingly, obediently and humbly the holy rule of religious life with the grace of God. Poverty is not difficult for me since I possess nothing anyway.... What particularly attracts me to your congregation are:

First, the fact that Fr. Bonaventure gave me the initial impulse to take up religious life through occasional correspondence with him.

Second, I am pleasantly moved that the last letter did not contain the least attempt at winning me over for your Society, nor the least

disparagement of other orders. In this, I believe I saw God's spirit and religious perfection in your Society. This attracted me.

Finally, the fact that your congregation is still rather unformed and has just begun did not deter me, but to the contrary attracted me even more. I thought that I might be able to contribute a bit of God's grace and work for the continuation of this heavenly work.

Simply and humbly, I again ask you, Reverend Father, to take me as your novice and examine whether God the Lord has called me to be in your congregation or not. In case you assent, I would also ask you to let me know when you want me to enter, whatever else I need to note, and if possible, a printed copy of your rule.

With these words, I place the rest of my short life at God's disposal and under your will enlightened by God, and I hope that God's undeserved love and grace will guide everything for the best in the future as it has so far. I ask you to please to greet Rev. Fr. Bonaventure on my behalf and to thank him for his letter. In the love of the Most Sacred Heart and the Queen of the Apostles, I remain,

Your most obedient Hopfenmüller, Pastor

Before departing the Diocese of Bamberg, Hopfenmüller believed he owed his friends a goodbye, to explain his motive for leaving, and to tell them more about the Society. *Bamberger Volksblatt* printed a lengthy article he wrote about the Catholic Teaching Society in Rome.<sup>3</sup>

It surely is a comforting and delightful sign that the ever-fresh vitality of God's Holy Catholic Church continues untiringly and indefatigably to try to extend its boundaries. At all times it fulfils the task given by the Lord: "Go into the world, preach my Gospel to all people, baptize and teach to them all that I have told you," so that they will become happy and blessed in their days in the flesh and in days of endless eternity.

In our time, a significant increase in the church's missionary work can be detected and it must particularly delight us Germans that as a nation we have entered this missionary work. Up till now many German missionaries have existed, but the work of the German nation was not recognizable as it mingled with other countries. Now Germans have entered the arena with German missionary houses and represent with dignity the German nation in a competitive drive with the other

nationalities to expand God's Kingdom, to Christianize and evangelize the pagan and unbelieving people who are still in darkness and the shadow of death.

Hopfenmüller then pointed to the recently erected missionary house in Steyl, another by the Missionaries of the Sacred Heart of Jesus in Tilburg, the German Trappists in Marianhill, the Benedictine Missionaries of St. Ottilien, and finally the Catholic Teaching Society founded by Fr. Jordan. Even though it had not been founded exclusively for the foreign missions, this was nonetheless viewed as one of its main tasks. Hopfenmüller continued by saying about the Society:

It received ecclesiastical approval at the hands of the Cardinal Vicar of Rome on June 5, 1886, on the Feast of St. Boniface, who God's providence and his own inner calling took him from England to us in Germany in order to convert our rough and coarse ancestors into the noble Christian German nation. And there is no better way for us Germans to show our gratitude for the grace of Christianity transmitted to us by St. Boniface than willingly to use and to preserve this gift, and also to bring this fortunate light to other nations who are in the same conditions as our German ancestors of 1,100 years ago.

The Society is still growing and developing, but it already has a missionary house in Rome with 90 students and with a significant number already registered for next year. The Society is the kind of order that professes the three vows of voluntary poverty, chastity, and voluntary obedience to spiritual superiors, all binding for life.

The Catholic Teaching Society still does not have its own missionary field of operation, because it does not yet have enough missionary priests due to its brief existence and the need to educate them. As soon as this is done, *Propaganda Fide* with great joy will entrust them with a part of the still fallow divine vineyard where they will be able to sow and plant.

Since missionary work cannot thrive without missionary sisters, the Catholic Teaching Society is also thinking about founding a convent for missionary sisters. St. Boniface already saw that nuns were a useful model and remedy in the Christian education of the female part of pagan populations. That is why he brought his cousins, St. Walburg, Lioba, and others to Germany, so they could establish convents for young women in Eichstätt, Fulda and elsewhere.

The elements of missionary work are twofold. The first element is the need to work on oneself, and that is the most difficult part of the work. Those who are lucky can, by an inner calling and God's choice, leave everything to live for God in a religious order and can let themselves be sent anywhere on earth to do missionary work. Jesus the Lord promises them a hundredfold reward in this life and the eternal life just like the apostles. But the theologians tell us that whoever recognizes God's call in an inner exhortation and does not follow that call commits a grave sin. In this case Jesus Christ's terrible judgment will come down on him, as he said: "Whoever loves his father and mother, brother or sister, house, home or fields more than he loves me, does not deserve me."

While those called as God's unworthy servants and handmaids to work in the mission fields, those who stay at home need to support those workers with their prayers and alms so that they can live and do whatever is necessary things to implement their work. It's just like bees which carry the honey to feed those inside the beehive and thereby take care to preserve and increase the hive, or like the inhabitants of a country who pay taxes to maintain the civil servants who govern.

A short while ago *Volksblatt* printed an article that compared the worthiness and necessity of alms for foreign missions with those of the church's needs at home. The outcome showed a prejudice against the foreign missions. I believe the best and simplest solution to the conflict is to give to one and not to neglect the other. The faithful must make it a matter dear to their hearts to take care of everything necessary to preserve Christianity in Christian nations.

Regarding the diffusion and expansion of God's Kingdom, this cannot be neglected by the faithful, because if something does not grow it dies. If a comparison must be made, then everybody will agree with my judgment: that the embellishment of a church, a new statue, a picture and similar things are elevating, pleasant and useful: a resplendent temple for God and for baptism and grace is something necessary, indispensable for everybody and desired by the heart of God. So, I may say goodbye to my friends by asking them to support the Catholic Teaching Society, into which I am ready to enter through God's mercy.

Dr. Hopfenmüller recommended the Society's publication, *Der Missionär*, as good and worth reading and supporting, as well as *Manna für Kinder* and

*Apostlekalendar* which at that time were available from “*Missionary Expeditions*” in Simbach. Through these writings, he said, the Society also wanted to do good things among the German Christian people and to contribute to preserving and conserving Christ’s light and grace.

The auxiliary bishop of Bamberg at the time, Bishop Senger, said that if someone were to write about Dr. Hopfenmüller’s life it would have as a motto: *Omnis Sanctus tenax*, meaning that each saint distinguishes himself by tenacity. Being unflappable, fearless and dogged, Hopfenmüller always clung to what he recognized as right. And no resistance, hostility nor even persecution could put him off it. He also needed such steadfastness to put into action his decision to become a missionary and religious for the rest of his life.

As soon as his parishioners heard about this they tried everything to make him change his mind. They bombarded him with pleas and entreaties not to leave. They tried to influence him with every possible effort, all in a good spirit. Even those who had caused the priest one trouble or another completely turned around; they were now ready to do anything and supported his efforts with all their strength. The loyal affection of his community didn’t make it any easier for the shepherd to carry out his intention, but even they could not deter him from the vocation he recognized as being God’s will.

It meant a lot to Dr. Hopfenmüller to find the right successor for his parish. He believed he found him in the Chaplain of Forchheim, Johann Baptist Schramm. The latter is now [1923] dean and spiritual director in Hirschaid. He carefully preserved his correspondence with Hopfenmüller and made it available for this book. Hopfenmüller wrote to him on February 8, 1887:

Yesterday I handed in my resignation from my parish as of May 1, to enter the Catholic Teaching Society in Rome, which is a new congregation for missionary activity. It is a matter dear to my heart to search and find a successor who will continue the work of the Society for the Christian Care of the Poor for the prevention of begging, and in this way lead the community in the process of religious and moral improvement. The work that is to be done is not bad because it is well-organized and under way for more than five years. I know that you are an enthusiastic priest and are cut out to continue this work. This is why I have recommended you to be my successor to his Excellency, the reverend vicar-general. I now urgently ask you: Please grant me the wish by agreeing to this task and apply for this parish.

To Hopfenmüller's great joy he received a letter of acceptance. In the meantime, the situation changed a little: the parishioners kept imploring him to stay. Since he would not listen to them, they asked him whether he could at least leave them hope that he would return after his novitiate and ask the archbishop to name only an acting pastor for the first year, who would have the right to succeed only if he would not return. Hopfenmüller wanted to leave them this last straw to clutch for comfort. He notified the archbishop of but left it completely up to him whether to accept or not. He also informed Rev. Schramm of the new situation on February 12, 1887, and asked him whether he would be willing to also accept the position as acting pastor for the time being; if not, he should just boldly petition the archbishop for a definitive transfer to the position. Regarding his income, Hopfenmüller added, this would not cause any difficulties. He would leave his successor his entire income even if he were only the acting pastor.

The archdiocese decided to advise Hopfenmüller to provisionally request a one-year leave to test his vocation to religious life. He followed that advice. The final resignation, which Hopfenmüller had submitted on February 7, was not accepted, but he did receive a six-month leave on May 1, 1887. "The fact," Hopfenmüller wrote to Fr. Schramm, "that my leave is only for six months instead of a year does not change anything. If my call proves to be divine, in six months I will just have again to go through the trouble of requesting an extension of my leave or my final resignation."<sup>4</sup>

Chaplain Schramm was chosen parish administrator of Seußling starting May 1, with the right to succeed as parish priest. In the meantime, the parish priest of Forchheim died and Chaplain Schramm was also named administrator of Forchheim. As soon as Dr. Hopfenmüller heard this, he immediately wrote to the vicar-general of Bamberg and asked him to see to it that this nomination not jeopardize his leave. The latter replied that he had forgotten about this; Chaplain Schramm was to remain the administrator of Forchheim until May 1, and would then become Hopfenmüller's replacement. He would then appoint another chaplain to administer Forchheim; another chaplain also replaced Mr. Schramm, but it had been difficult to find one.

Relying on this notification, Hopfenmüller prepared himself accordingly. He had already sold most of his furniture when, during a visit to the vicar-general on April 21, he heard that the latter had not been able to find a suitable chaplain for Forchheim anywhere in the diocese. Under such conditions it was impossible for him to send Fr. Schramm to Seußling on May 1. If Hopfenmüller was to

insist on his departure he would see no other solution than to have the chaplain of Eppolsheim (an hour and a quarter away from Seußling) to look after the parish temporarily; on some Sundays and feast days he could get stand-ins from Bamberg, three hours away from Seußling. Hopfenmüller wrote,

I foresaw that such a stopgap would cause confusion and bad feelings in the parish and that the Society for the Christian Care of the Poor (which I founded through many troubles to put an end to children begging and which has worked well so far) would split and break up. Too many troubles would be created in this parish about which I care so much. The vicar-general urged me to stay until the new candidates are ordained in mid-August; then a replacement could be found for Forchheim and he would be able to send Fr. Schramm to Seußling.<sup>5</sup>

To avert this trouble, Dr. Hopfenmüller decided to wait. At the same time, he informed Fr. Jordan of his postponed entry into the society and added:

I ask you, Reverend Father, to let me know what you think about this and whether I did right by postponing my departure, whether you are satisfied with this or if I should have behaved differently depending on your wishes and orders. I am determined to sacrifice my last strength for missionary work even though every landmine is exploding to keep me here. The parishioners are crying, friends and brothers are rebuking me, and my superiors are trying to keep me. But I believe that God is calling me and that his grace will arrange and settle everything in the way He believes to be right.<sup>6</sup>

The final date for his departure was set for September 1, 1887. Even though the affection of his parishioners caused him some difficult moments, he was nonetheless in good spirits at the thought of seeing his dearest wish fulfilled. His cheerful mood was mirrored in the humorous letter he wrote to his successor on August 16, 1887:

September 1 is getting closer. It is time to prepare myself for my departure and you for your arrival. The community at Seußling wishes to bring the treasure of the new priest on their own carts, pulled by their own oxen. The priest himself will be nobly picked up in a beautiful carriage, which will be hitched up to a team of horses. Now we must only know the date when the people can come with their carts and know how many carts will be necessary for all of the priest's belongings.



Furthermore, we need to know on which day the gentleman with his thousand things intends to move in so that we can receive him in a festive manner. The parsonage is already quite empty. You can move in whenever you want.

The new parish substitute arrived in Seußling on August 31, 1887. Hopfenmüller had already left his parishioners the day before. The farewell was deeply moving. With tears, said the Seußling parish chronicle, they saw their dear fatherly shepherd depart. When he made his final farewell blessing in the church, loud wailing and sobbing was heard. The community members, the church administration, and numerous parishioners escorted him to the railway station in Hirschaid. Many boys swam across the Regnitz to see him one last time from the other riverbank. Loud crying and lament was heard throughout the station when Hopfenmüller entered the train. The train conductor could not understand it all and angrily murmured something about how one could make such a fuss about a cleric.

Only the community itself could express and assess the loss of its father and loyal benefactor. Their sentiments were expressed in *Bamberger Volksblatt*, September 5, 1887:

With much grief, today the parish community of Seußling saw their loyal and self-sacrificing shepherd leave, the Reverend Fr. Dr. Lorenz Hopfenmüller, whose zeal and pursuit of perfection led him to dedicate himself to religious life. During his five and a half years of beneficent activity here, the holy gentleman had been a true father to the parishioners, whose edification and sanctity had been dear to his heart. As a friend and helper of the poor, he alleviated their plight by founding a Society for them and making magnanimous sacrifices. He was a circumspect advisor to the community, a consoler of the ill and needy of all types, a friend of children – in short, he was the model priest enthused for his vocation to whom God's honour and the salvation of souls meant the world, regardless of any earthly considerations. May Almighty God repay him with the richest blessings until the end of time for his innumerable social and spiritual good deeds for which the community is grateful, while in no position to repay him for all that he has done. He can be certain of the parish community's grateful memory, especially in their prayers.

Seußling, September 1, 1887

On behalf of the parish:

Georg Friedrich, Mayor of Seußling  
Seb. Bezold, Mayor of Sassanfahrt  
Johann Mauer, Mayor of Trailsdorf  
Werthmann, Governor of Kottmannsdorf.

Just as this recognition honoured the departing priest, it also honoured the grateful parish. Its publication was particularly emphasized by *Bamberger Pastoralblatt*, which commented:

Once again, one of those who does not look for his own honour or advantage, and one who the system could not change in loyalty and faithfulness to the church, has said farewell to our diocese. Our friend, Dr. Lorenz Hopfenmüller, pastor of Seußling, took his journey to Rome on the first day of this month to enter the Apostolic Teaching Society. *Bamberger Volksblatt* from September 5 contained a beautiful, true and well-deserved farewell by his parishioners, this time really written by the voice of the people because the people of his diocese knew him, appreciated him, will appreciate him, and will never forget him.<sup>7</sup>

The pain and sacrifice of his separation from the affectionate parish was felt many more times by Dr. Hopfenmüller while reading the numerous letters written by his parishioners entreating him to return from his silent monastery cell.

The priest's selflessness and helpfulness almost prevented him from entering the cloister at the last moment. Despite having been warned several times, he could never resist the requests put to him, and would always stand ready when someone was in need. For the purchase of clothes, shirts, goats, cows, fields or other things, he lent from 100 to 200 Marks, plus collateral for the basket makers of Sassanfahrt. He hardly ever received his money back.

Thus over the years his indebtedness to church coffers, from which he had mainly borrowed, considerably increased. All these debts needed to be covered before he could enter the monastery. To do this Hopfenmüller sold everything he had; the profits covered his debts but he had nothing left for his trip to Rome. He still had a small amount of money outstanding that he was sure to receive. He thought he could settle this with his successor who would then receive the money from the man that owed it to him. But Fr. Schramm, who was also poor, had sustained great expenses in assuming the parish and furniture and was not able to give him the sum. Hopfenmüller, surprised and taken back, replied: "Well,

then I cannot go to Rome.” The response moved his brother, who in true fraternal fashion gave him his last penny regardless of the fact that now he would need to fight to survive for the next half year. Several good benefactors took care of adding the missing amount for his journey. And so at the age of 43, and after 21 years of priesthood, Hopfenmüller found himself knocking on the door of the monastery as a poor disciple of the Saviour, completely free of any earthly treasures but rich in knowing he had dried one or another tear, alleviated one or another misery, and even led one or another soul onto the path of goodness through the help of earthly goods.

Dr. Hopfenmüller had found a loyal helper in his niece who stood by his side during all his good deeds and who had run his household after his parents’ death. From childhood onward, she had looked up to her spiritual uncle with saintly awe. In Seußling she threw herself completely behind his wishes and aspirations. She did not expect any earthly advantages from her situation; she was also entirely convinced that everything her uncle possessed belonged only to God and to the poor. That is why she diligently helped in the societies and services to the poor and ill, as well as in the distribution of weekly donations. She quietly watched her uncle’s daily life and tried to imitate his fasting, vigils, prayer and self-mortification. Because she was so familiar with the societies for the poor and Dr. Hopfenmüller’s other works, his successor would have liked to keep her in Seußling. She was willing to do so for a short time but as soon as possible she tried to follow her uncle’s example.

As soon as Fr. Jordan founded a society for sisters in Rome she entered it. She even followed her uncle into the far-off missionary field. She was among the first sisters the young society sent to its mission in Assam, India. As its longstanding Mother Superior, she experienced the difficult beginnings and harsh years of ordeal and encouraged the development of the sisters’ undertaking by her selfless devotion, self-sacrifice and restless zeal. In her 24-year-long missionary activity, Sr. Scholastica and the other sisters left their imprint on the missionary work. She rendered outstanding service in converting the Khasi Tribe. No Catholics existed among them at the time of her arrival in the mission. But today generations of good Catholic women look up to her as their dear mother.

The sisters in Assam looked after the school and orphanage and did many other useful things. Thus they laid a solid foundation for truly Christian family life, which reflected itself in a delightful way among these young Catholics and lent great steadiness and stability to the mission’s development. As mother superior,

the missionaries always found in Sr. Scholastica Hopfenmüller great aid and understanding for their missionary foundations. She worked untiringly with the other sisters for the growth and welfare of the mission in the school and orphanage, in preparing catechumens, in caring for the sick and elderly, in keeping God's house clean, as well as in singing and making music in church. Sister Scholastica was always ready to promote or help the missionary's work. She had not passed through the school of her enthusiastic and indefatigable uncle in vain, but not even the war would halt before an honourable person like her.

In 1915, the British tore her away from her children, poor and ill, because she was a German, and she was forcibly returned to her Fatherland. Never again was she able to return to the place where her uncle's mortal remains were buried. Nonetheless, with unbroken willpower she had no greater desire than to assume a new missionary assignment and dedicate her last strength to the service of the Saviour and the church.

Fr. Hopfenmüller had found another loyal devotee in a simple and modest farmhand. While collecting grain for his poor, he came to the parish of Amlingstätt in Seesten, near Bamberg. There, at the home of the pious Sauer couple, he met farmhand Schumm who was a loyal, pious lad. Hopfenmüller encouraged him to enter the Catholic Teaching Society and he did. With his new name, Br. Marianus, he too accompanied Hopfenmüller to the Indian mission.

Through Dr. Hopfenmüller's entry into the Catholic Teaching Society it became better known in the Diocese of Bamberg, which brought it several new benefactors. *Bamberger Volksblatt* also contributed to this by printing several articles about the aim, the condition and the development of the young Society, while calling on people to support it, to enter it, and to read its various publications.<sup>8</sup>

Since Hopfenmüller was held in high esteem, his entering the Society removed several prejudices about it, which arose because it was still unknown and in its infancy. Dr. Johann Körber, the meritorious and longstanding editor of *Bamberger Volksblatt*, who had loyally fought at Hopfenmüller's side against Liberal Catholicism in the *Kulturkampf* days, wrote about the priest's entry into the Catholic Teaching Society:

One can only congratulate the new, embryonic Society for having won Hopfenmüller. Perhaps he is called to act as a new catalyst for the health and durability of this institute (about which we have always had some doubts) and to ensure and extend the existence of the order

through his will, diversity and persistence. We have been told that the third volume of *Apostlekalendar*, published by the same Society, already contains an article by him entitled: “Borrowing Leads to Sorrowing.” We have acquired several of these calendars, which are rich in content and illustrations and whose purchase will serve as alms for the good purposes of the Society. We urge our friends and those of Dr. Hopfenmüller to do the same to promote the good cause.

The article also recommended other writings by the Society such as *Der Missionär*, *Manna für Kinder*, and concluded:

There is no doubt about the goodness of the contents, and there is no need for a lengthy recommendation for those who admire and subscribe to it. Not a single doubt kept us away from dedicating attention and recommending these two journals, about which we have been thinking for quite some time now. Above, we stated the reasons for our behavior.<sup>9</sup>

Hopfenmüller’s thorough influence on the Society was due especially to his outstanding example and holy lifestyle. He pioneered the missionary activity of the Society in India. Today [1923], its houses can be found in Germany, Austria, Switzerland, England, Belgium, Poland, Czechoslovakia, Romania, Italy, North America, Brazil, and in the South-American country of Columbia. In the latter they are not only present in the capital of Cartagena, but also in the Indian missions.

The Catholic Teaching Society is now known as the Society of the Divine Saviour. Following on its Latin name, *Societas Divini Salvatoris*, its members are simply called Salvatorians. At the beginning, the Society’s aim had been to spread Catholic doctrine at home and abroad. That is why the name Catholic Teaching Society seemed suitable. But this was often misinterpreted and some believed that it was a society of teachers and scholars who were especially interested in Catholic learning, which is why the name was later changed. But the purpose always remained the same. Whenever the Apostolic or Catholic Teaching Society is mentioned, it speaks of the Salvatorians, describing the same religious order.<sup>10</sup>

#### **(Endnotes)**

<sup>1</sup> Apostlekalendar 1891, p. 41.

<sup>2</sup> AGS.

<sup>3</sup> BV, September 6, 1887, No. 199.

<sup>4</sup> Letter, March 8, 1887.

- <sup>5</sup> AGS. Letter to Fr. Jordan, April 22, 1887.
- <sup>6</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>7</sup> Bamberger Pastoralblatt, September 10, 1887, No. 37.
- <sup>8</sup> BV, December 8, 1888, No. 229; July 1, 1889, No. 146, etc.
- <sup>9</sup> Bamberger Pastoralblatt, November 12, 1887, No. 46.
- <sup>10</sup> Cf., The Society of the Divine Saviour, Munich 1918, p. 37f.

## 12. The Religious

Hopfenmüller entered the Catholic Teaching Society in Rome on September 13, 1887, the eve of the Feast of the Triumph of the Cross. A number of rooms had been rented near St. Peter's Square for the Society, which today is its motherhouse. The conditions were rather poor and humble. As the founder Fr. Jordan emphasized, it was the young Society's task to "prepare missionaries for the Christian and pagan peoples from their first studies onward."<sup>1</sup> Accordingly, their entire lifestyle was set up in the greatest simplicity and modesty. The apostolic spirit was constantly held up to inspire the members. The Queen of the Apostles was especially venerated; her colourful image hung in all its glory from the walls of the otherwise simple dining hall, depicting her on a throne surrounded by the Apostles, blessing and protecting a crowd of different groups of missionaries who were carrying out their apostolic activity at home and in the wilds. The Holy Apostles were likewise their special patrons, whose example continuously stimulated their worthy imitation. Truly apostolic doctrine read during the simple meals contributed to stimulating and lifting this spirit, which found vivid expression in the annual Feast of Languages during which the students praised God in various languages.

Hopfenmüller was vested in the habit of a novice in September. Out of devotion to his home diocese, he expressed to the superior his desire to receive the name "Otto" at his vesting ceremony during which he finally became a religious. St. Otto had been the bishop of Bamberg and is buried there. Hopfenmüller had already pleaded for this saint's special intercession during his first years as an editor in Bamberg.<sup>2</sup> His wish was granted and he began his novitiate in the Catholic Teaching Society as "Father Otto."

Even though Hopfenmüller's motive for entering a religious order was primarily his enthusiasm for the missions, the order in Rome wanted him to be first and foremost a religious. So for the time being he had to bear the sacrifice of holy obedience in place of his dearest wish to bring salvation to remote countries.<sup>3</sup> He did so with his whole heart and soul. With all of his power of will he concentrated on striving for perfection, thereby setting a brilliant example to the other novices. One of them, whose difficult pastoral work in a city has turned him grey, still wrote:

30 years have now past since Fr. Otto's death so it is easy to see why I can't remember all the details from our time as novices. I still remember Fr. Otto as a man of deep faith and strict self-mortification. The deep impression his personality left on me and many others has still not become blurred after all this time, and remembering him always brings up in me a feeling of self-reproach: Oh, if only I had followed his example more.

His deep faith was especially shown when he prayed in chapel before the Blessed Sacrament. Everyone was deeply edified by his way he entered a church and knelt before the Holy Sacrament, which was so free of any superficiality or absent-mindedness and made one feel his deep faith in the real presence of the Saviour in the sacrament.

His posture during prayer also bore witness to this faith. He did not lean back in the pew, and when he was alone he knelt on the chapel's bare stone floor, holding long dialogues with the Saviour in the Blessed Sacrament in this tiring position. Everybody noticed that he never chased away the annoying flies that crept across his face while he read Mass in the summer. He was too immersed in the celebration of the Holy Mysteries to notice such a thing.

Even more striking was the way he mortified his will and natural inclinations. As a mature and well-trying man, he knew how to live among the novices who had hardly grown out of boyhood and were little educated in academics. He lived just like one of them. He never hinted at his former position, high knowledge or worldly experiences. Just like the others, he underwent the many humiliating exercises in a simple and child-like manner, threw himself on the ground, kissed the floor, and publicly accused himself of the smallest offence or imperfection.<sup>4</sup>

The novices once joked among themselves that their novice master was taking a bit too tough a stand on one of them. Fr. Otto consolingly told that novice: "He does the same to me." Indeed, the novice master believed it was better not to give him anything as a gift. He wanted Fr. Otto to be treated like the others. For instance, the novices were not allowed to have a pocket watch since the daily activities were announced by the sound of bell. Fr. Otto too needed to surrender his watch to the novice master. It was quite hard for him since he had gotten used to it as a precious memento of the past decades.

At the start of his novitiate he had to go for walks with all the other novices. They had to walk behind each other in rows of two, like pupils on a school trip or



boarding school students. One's walking companion was chosen daily by the prefect of novices. The prefect was a 16-year-old boy who was instructed to arrange the order of the day in the novitiate. He posted the different activities and had to supervise the prescribed exercises; he divided them up for the daily housework, which included sweeping rooms, cleaning bathrooms, etc. According to the novice master's will, Fr. Otto was not to be favoured by any type of exceptions. Humbly and willingly, he complied with the prefect's instructions and did every type of work just like all the others. Here he found sufficient opportunities for self-denial while his virtues shown with an ever more radiant.

Already during the novitiate, Fr. Otto's outstanding abilities were used for the benefit of the other novices. He gave talks on an 8-day retreat for some of the novices who had been permitted to take holy vows on All Saints Day. One of them still speaks emotionally about the persuasiveness and deep inwardness of the words with which the talented speaker explained the gospel to them. Fr. Otto was well equipped in this area and dedicated himself to the work entrusted to him with zeal and devotion.

Soon the tasks and worries of the young Society were to concern Fr. Otto. At the beginning of 1888, its founder Fr. Jordan issued a call to the public to procure means for a proper house in Rome. Related to this, on March 1, 1888, Fr. Otto wrote a letter to the clergy of his home diocese and sent it to each individual priest along with a number of small pictures of building stones, and amicably urged them to spare no effort in their contributions. To better recommend the work he was promoting, he added:

Just like you, for 20 years I have been working in pastoral care of a community that is already walking in the light of Christ. Since last year I have felt the urge to contribute to foreign missionary work among Christian peoples as well as to the nations who are still in darkness and the shadow of death. I chose the newly founded Catholic Teaching Society in Rome because they were in need of manpower and because I saw that their good spirit would be fruitful in God's Kingdom. My expectations were not disappointed. Its constitution as a congregation has strengthened the initiative, and their increase in students demonstrates their ability to live so that the number of enthused and sacrifice-minded missionaries for home and abroad will substantially increase in the near future.

But inevitably a Motherhouse is needed if the roots of the work are to grow deep. We will have to depend on the support of Catholics and especially of our German countrymen to not only preach the Gospel to the poor, because the poor will soon become preachers of the Gospel, just like the Apostles. God's Kingdom is a family. Each one of us has a particular task and his particular portion in God's vineyard...

Novitiate usually lasted for one year. The superiors could calmly make an exception for a man like Fr. Otto and requested from church authorities a reduction of his probationary period. Already on the Feast of Pentecost, May 20, 1888, he was able to profess his holy vows. He did so in the presence of the entire community, kneeling on the steps of the altar with a solemn, loud and moving voice. Until today, it was the first and only time the novitiate year was shortened in the Society of the Divine Saviour. Shortly afterwards, Fr. Otto remarked to one of his confreres that he had thoroughly examined himself, recognized the Society as a work of God, and he intended to die in it.

By professing holy vows, Fr. Otto had now forever broken with the world, tearing the last ties that still bound him to it. Now he was entirely devoted to and united with God. Immediately he renounced his parish in Seußling for good, which was transferred to the Rev. Fr. Schramm. By this, the parishioners' last hope for his return was buried forever.

Of course being a professed religious now, Fr. Otto continued his life of sincere union with God. Like many Italian houses, one part of the Motherhouse had a flat roof. One could stroll around on it. From here, one could sometimes see Fr. Otto in his room at night, where he felt unobserved, looking up to heaven full of ardent desire and praying for long periods either with outstretched arms or lying on the floor, like the austere ascetics in the desert.

One day, a confrere knocked on his door and received no reply. After repeatedly knocking, he silently opened the door and found Fr. Otto absorbed in prayer kneeling before the cross. Tears were running over his cheeks caused as he observed the Saviour's sufferings.

Due to his other activities, Fr. Otto had obtained permission to spend the evening recreation period in chapel. Usually he knelt on the cold floor and became so immersed in God that he no longer realized what was happening around him. If for some reason one needed to disturb him during his devotion, it was necessary to become quite loud or to tug hard on his sleeve until he finally noticed it.

Following his profession, Fr. Otto was instructed to assume leadership of the so-called Oblatory [i.e., candidature], which meant caring for the pupils who were preparing for novitiate. He also taught Latin, Greek and German. When one group of pupils left the classroom and a new one entered, he would regularly turn to look at the image of the Sacred Heart of Jesus which hung on the wall behind his lectern. At times, all the pupils would already be gathered and Fr. Otto would not notice. Moved and edified by this prayerful spirit, they remained in silence until suddenly remembering where he was, he was startled and began the lesson somewhat embarrassed.

Many people can tell similar stories. We young boys watched this man in holy shyness when he walked through the hallways of the house engrossed in deep meditation and at times so unworldly that he bumped into the corners of the walls or doorposts. None of this disturbed him. His mind was occupied with God and paid no attention to such things. "This is a saint," we whispered to each other. Fr. Otto's patience and gentleness set an outstanding example to his pupils. Never was he seen anxious or angry even if something that happened was extremely reproachable. In such a case, he cast a painful glance at the person and reprimanded him gently. In this way he won over the love and admiration of his pupils more firmly and completely.

In addition to secular subjects, Fr. Otto also taught catechism. He taught it with such dignity and enthusiasm that everyone attentively and motionlessly hung on his every word. In this subject the teacher was deeply absorbed in what he was teaching. His words were particularly cheerful and enthusiastic when he talked about the Blessed Sacrament, the sacraments in general, mortification, the true religious spirit, the vanity of everything earthly, and everlasting life in heaven. In eloquent words he presented how the soul searches and finds its Lord and Creator in all beings, meaning that they can get to know Him in creation since it loudly and clearly proclaims His wisdom, omnipotence and goodness. But only pure souls are capable of this.

His entire outer being mirrored his purity of heart, child-like piety, and genuine sincerity. The impression made by his spiritual character could not be dulled even when he was not able to formulate his thoughts completely. As director candidates Fr. Otto also taught several Italian candidates whose behaviour at times was not so perfect. But they immediately and willingly followed his instructions even though he was often only able to express himself in infinitives since he was not yet fluent in Italian.

Fr. Otto approached all of his confreres with the same love and obligingness. Everybody enjoyed spending time in his company. They enjoyed listening to his humble words during recreation. Every time he was literally encircled by them. A blessed joy bubbled from his being, which flowed from his deep faith. His sick confreres were delighted by his eager visits. One of them had typhoid and was kept separate from the others for danger of infection. Nonetheless, this could not keep Fr. Otto from visiting him and cheering him up with comforting words.

Even after his profession, Fr. Otto did not give up the exercise of the self-imposed humiliation he had had to undergo in novitiate. He always cleaned his own shoes, made his bed, and swept his room. At the weekly Chapter of Faults he publicly accused himself for the smallest mistake and called himself a great sinner.

Even as a diocesan priest Fr. Otto had exercised the spirit of penitence and mortification, and now he never missed a single occasion to continue it. He exercised it in the most extreme way. He often left letters and newspapers lying around for a long time before reading them in order to stifle his curiosity. He often slept on the bare floor. He only permitted himself the amount of food and drink that was absolutely necessary. He fasted strictly on Fridays and Saturdays. In the morning, he often ate nothing at all, or just drank half of his coffee, or ate no bread along with it. Due to the low cost of wine at the time, even poor people in Italy could afford it, and particularly since doctors recommended it due to the Roman climate, wine was also served at table. Fr. Otto only drank it on high feast days. When the bell rang, he immediately stopped whatever he was doing and hurried to wherever it summoned him. If anyone wanted anything from him, he was always ready to comply, but he would always add: "If it is alright with the superior." In this manner, he attempted to crush his own will along with his exterior mortification. *Der Missionär*, the Society's outreach to people, added a delightful comment to its report on the Rev. Dr. Fr. Otto Hopfenmüller's profession of final vows: "We sincerely thank our dear God that our house was able to see his knowledge and experience in an even more beneficial and accessible way during his novitiate."<sup>5</sup>

Fr. Otto's well-trying will especially showed itself in how he formed and taught the Society's offspring. "At the moment," he wrote, "our main activity consists in raising and educating a host of apostolic religious priests for our cause. This is surely the most important and rewarding activity that a young Society can undertake in these priest-poor times."<sup>6</sup> But that was not all. The former chaplain

of St. Martin in Bamberg had worked so much with his pen that now he had to lay it aside. For now he had used his probationary time to immerse himself in the spirit of the institution to which he had dedicated and united himself. This is clear from a brochure he wrote about the Catholic Teaching Society especially for ecclesiastical circles. There he talks about the Society's aims, works and structures. His words are full of a truly apostolic and global love. On the very first pages he answers the question: "What do we want?"

Along with the other existing religious societies and orders, we want to work for the great aim in a manner which is holy, unselfish, thirsting only for the salvation of souls and for God's glory as we say in the Lord's Prayer: "Hallowed be Your name! Your kingdom come!" because "that is eternal life, that they will know You, the Father, and the one You have sent, Jesus Christ." But He cannot be known if he is not preached. We wish to reveal to the world the Triune God, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, as humble helpers in the teaching ministry of the church.

We want to serve the Gospel of Jesus Christ and the happiness of the world by our lives and by the printed word. We want to send missionaries into countries of heretics and unbelieving people and to support pastoral care in Christian countries; we want to write and print academic as well as traditional books, leaflets and other writings; we want to raise neglected children, etc.; we want to use every means and tool to reveal the Triune God and to lead people to happiness and eternal life.

In 1889, Fr. Otto wrote a prayer book marked by the spirit of deep piety as well as concern for the interior progress of the pupils entrusted to him. Entitled *Manna Religiosum* it was designed for use by the student members of the Society. Written in Latin and produced by the Society's own press in Rome, the book provided all the prayers and devotional exercises that repeat themselves monthly or annually. The book distinguished itself by a spiritual language derived from the rich treasures of a pious heart. The extensive use of phrases from the books of the Old and New Testaments was surprising. Their words, even if not always discernible as such, are beautifully dressed in prayer form. *Manna* has maintained a high value to the present day, and the members of the Society as well as other young students still make eager use of it.

Immediately after professing his vows, Fr. Otto was put in charge as editor of the magazine *Der Missionär*. Amid general articles about the increase and defence of the faith, to a large extent his editorial activity also included reports

on missions. What Fr. Otto wrote in one issue sounds like the Song of Songs for the missionary, God's apostle of faith.<sup>7</sup>

God sends out his apostles so that those who still sit in darkness and the shadow of death will become children of God and heirs of heaven by the bath of revival – Holy Baptism. God sends out his messengers to all countries, and in God's place they set out amidst trouble and strain, suffering and hardship, to preach truth and penitence and to spread peace. Indeed, how lovely are the feet of those who preach peace!

Everywhere you look, dear readers, to the north, south, east and west, everywhere you encounter vast shoreless oceans, tremendous deserts without oases, mountains covered by eternal snow and ice, terrible abysses, valleys, plains, wild animals and poisonous snakes. Now tell me: who crosses the Alps and mountains covered by snow and ice, passes measureless oceans and fearlessly wanders through the deserts of Africa, the American prairie, and the enormous steppes of Asia? Who moves from continent to continent, country to country, ocean to ocean, city to city, village to village, hut to hut? Who runs across fields and plains to comfort those who are sad, to heal the sick, to ease pain and to dry tears. Who risks his life and is likely to be torn apart and eaten by wild animals? Who has the courage to expose himself to the danger of being eaten by voracious man-eaters or even by evil and ungrateful humans for the sake of whom he sacrifices and devotes himself to the extent of being torn apart alive? Tell me, dear readers, who brings civilization to barbarians and to the wild, opens up knowledge of truth, beauty, and goodness to dark spirits, moves through the countries with a cross in his hand and crushes idolatry, scatters the darkness of lies, triumphs over any kind of enemy and all peoples, nations and tribes, enlightens their different inhumane ways of life, natural inclinations, customs, laws and institutions by the light of the divine knowledge and brings them under Christ's sweetest yoke, proclaiming peace and the truth to everyone?

Indeed, who is the one who tames wild and passionate souls, who turns wolves into lambs, enemies into friends, sinners into penitents and saints? Is this not the apostolic man, the missionary, covered in sweat, consumed by the fire of love, kindled and flaring out with zeal for the honour of God and the salvation of immortal souls, who does not rest until he has

returned the lost and stray lambs to his Lord and God, his Saviour and Redeemer? Yes, it is the missionary! The missionary is this hero! The missionary is this true philanthropist!

Everything in the young Society pressed for apostolic activity. The Catholic Teaching Society, it once said in an article about the missions, was hoping and longing for the day when it too could enter the great assembly of Christ's apostles in the pagan world with all its missionary men and women.<sup>8</sup> Fr. Otto's personality and zeal substantially contributed to the early arrival of this moment. With such an apostle at their disposal they could dare to assume a missionary project. In November 1889, he brought the joyful message to the readers of *Der Missionär* that they had been confirmed to take over their first pagan mission, and that the first missionaries of the Catholic Teaching Society would soon depart. Negotiations with the Congregation of Propaganda Fide had already begun and would soon be concluded.<sup>9</sup>

#### **(Endnotes)**

- <sup>1</sup> Apostlekalendar 1889, p. 86.
- <sup>2</sup> Cf., BV September 6, 1872, supplement 36, p. 1.
- <sup>3</sup> *Der Missionär* 1890, p. 151.
- <sup>4</sup> Apostlekalendar 1892, p. 80.
- <sup>5</sup> *Der Missionär*, 1888, p. 124.
- <sup>6</sup> Brochure, The Catholic Teaching Society, p. 4.
- <sup>7</sup> *Der Missionär*, 1889, No. 22, p. 256.
- <sup>8</sup> *Apostlekalendar*, 1889, p. 84.
- <sup>9</sup> *Der Missionär*, 1889, No. 21, p. 246

## 13. Establishing the Apostolic Prefecture of Assam

In the farthest northern end of India lies the province of Assam, washed by the waves of the Brahmaputra River. In the 1870's, following an eventful history, the ecclesial administration of the country was divided between the neighbouring missions of Krishnagar and Dacca. For the next several years, due to a constant lack of missionaries, only a single mission belonging to Krishnagar existed in the country. Fr. Pozzi, apostolic prefect of this mission, wrote about Assam in a letter to the Cardinal Prefect of *Propaganda Fide* on December 27, 1881: "This province alone would require a number of missionaries for itself."<sup>1</sup>

Nonetheless, finding evangelizers encountered insurmountable difficulties. This was one of the topics during a consultation meeting of the North-Indian bishops in Allahabad in February 1887. The apostolic delegate to India, Monsignor Agliardi, held the chair. Furthermore, the archbishop of Agra and Calcutta, the bishop of Krishnagar and the administrators of Dacca and Lahore participated in the synod. The participants formulated the following petition to the Vatican Congregation responsible for evangelization in Rome:

The signatory archbishops and bishops of Northern India believe it was necessary to promote God's highest honour and for the salvation of souls, to set up a new apostolic prefecture in Assam by dividing the diocese of Krishnagar and Dacca, and that it be managed by a religious institute. We implore his eminence, the cardinal prefect of the congregation for evangelization, to bring this about.<sup>2</sup>

The apostolic delegate sent the Synod's petition along with a letter to the Cardinal Prefect of *Propaganda Fide*. Immediately and with great effort, he tried to find an order willing to take over the newly established mission. They negotiated with Franciscans, Barnabites and others, but all in vain. Finally the matter had reached a level that it was brought before *Propaganda Fide*'s college of cardinals on November 18, 1889. At the negotiations were present Cardinal Prefect Simeoni, and Cardinals Serafini, Mertel, Aloisi, Verga, Oreglia, Meazella, Zigliara and De Nuggero. The report was read by Cardinal Oreglia. He explained<sup>3</sup> that a new apostolic prefecture needed to be set up in Assam. This included the entire area since the Province of Assam was under the jurisdiction of the British High



Command. Furthermore, the principates of Bhutan and Manipur would be annexed to establish a mission similar to its neighbours.

The province of Assam was situated between the 24° and 28° north latitude and 89.45° and 97° east longitude. Covering 47,000 square miles, the last census in 1881 had counted 4,881,426 inhabitants, including 351 Catholics. The country was made up of three entirely different regions: the Brahmaputra Valley, the Surma Valley and the mountain range between the two valleys. While the Brahmaputra Valley belonged to the diocese of Krishnagar, the Surma Valley and the rest of the mountainous region was under the authority of the bishop of Dacca, despite the fact that he had not been able to send any missionaries there. The Apostolic Prefecture of Assam was therefore to be comprised of both parts of the neighbouring diocese of Dacca and Krishnagar, whose shepherds had not only asked for this, but had also repeatedly urged for it to happen.

But who should take over this new mission? Cardinal Oreglia gave the following answer: “The institute willing to assume care of Assam is the so-called ‘Catholic Teaching Society,’ founded in Rome by the Reverend Johann Baptist Jordan from the diocese of Freiburg. This institute appears to be asking for a mission for the first time.” With these words, the cardinal handed out a printed brochure containing a favourable recommendation issued by several cardinals and bishops, as well as the original letter by his eminence, the Cardinal Vicar of Rome praising the institute.

The members of this institute take the three simple vows of poverty, chastity, and obedience, and for this purpose are not only responsible for their own sanctification but also for the salvation of others. At the moment, they number 154 professed men, novices and candidates. Among them are six priests, three deacons, four sub-deacons, 124 students striving for the priesthood, and 17 lay brothers.

This information was obtained from the printed leaflet entitled *Brevi Cenni Sulla Società Cattolica Istruttiva*,<sup>4</sup> which was presented by the Reverend Mr. Jordan. All of this, as well as other relevant material concerning the matter are in the hands of the cardinal-speaker.

The ecclesial borders of the newly established apostolic prefecture were the same as the political borders of the Province of Assam, thereby facilitating missionary activity. The cardinals present at *Propaganda Fide*'s general assembly decided to erect the Apostolic Prefecture of Assam in the named

areas. The proposal to entrust the new prefecture to the Catholic Teaching Society was also accepted. For the time being, their members were to be sent there as simple missionaries under a superior. Pope Leo XIII approved the new resolutions during an audience he held with the secretary of *Propaganda Fide* on November 24, 1889.

The Society's magazine *Der Missionär* rushed to report to its readers the news of the takeover of their first field of work.

Today we can deliver the good news to our readers that our Society has taken over a new scope of activity. Up until now, we have tried to be of use to Catholic people by our papers and calendar. This work appears not to have been fruitless and will continue to bring further fruit of salvation, enlightenment, encouragement, and conversion in the future. We have tried especially to train young people for the apostolate. A stately stalk is in the field, nearly ripe. By founding places in Catholic and Christian, as well as in pagan countries, we mean to expand God's Kingdom with all our available strength. The conditions in which the work of Divine Providence is always made evident, have led us to start a foreign mission.<sup>5</sup>

So the young Society's first step into the Lord's vineyard was to take over the Assam Mission. By looking closer at the number of members stated by Cardinal Oreglia, it is surprising how much confidence *Propaganda Fide* placed in this young, eight-year-old Society when it transferred the huge and important mission to a group that was still lacking experience. One also has to be amazed at the courage, initiative, and religious zeal of its Reverend Founder, who could no longer restrain his urge to work for God's Kingdom, and gave such a task to his sons as their first assignment. But fulfilling this task was not going to be easy. The Society first needed to develop and gain strength. The difficulties it had to pass along its way also had an effect on the mission. The storms which raged over them quite often stirred up waves that reached up the coast of the far Indian shore.

A decree by *Propaganda Fide* officially conferred the Apostolic Prefecture of Assam to the Catholic Teaching Society on December 13, 1889. "The latter will," it says, "send its pupils there under the subordination of their mission superior who will hold the title of Apostolic Prefect, as soon as the Holy See has approved the institutions of the Catholic Teaching Society." Up until then the Society had only diocesan approval.

To lay the groundwork for the new mission, on December 31, 1889, *Propaganda Fide* informed the president of the Institute for Spreading the Faith in Lyon, France of the establishment of the Apostolic Prefecture of Assam. It also recommended that the Society should be considered at the annual distribution of donations.<sup>6</sup> The latter wrote to the former administrator of the Diocese of Dacca on January 16, 1890, notifying him of the newly-established prefecture and asking that the new missionaries receive a friendly welcome in case they passed through his area.<sup>7</sup> Along the same lines, the Cardinal Prefect of *Propaganda Fide* wrote to Bishop Pozzi of Krishnagar on January 14, 1890, asking him to assist the arriving missionaries along their first step in apostolic mission work, supporting them as much as possible.<sup>8</sup> The bishop fulfilled this task by giving the first superior of the Assam Mission all the necessary information he possessed during his first visit.<sup>9</sup>

Fr. Otto's urge to work in foreign missions and his outstanding capacities substantially contributed to the Society's decision to accept the Assam Mission. Without hesitation, he was appointed superior. He was full of happiness and joy that his dearest wish to go out to the pagans and save souls was to be fulfilled. The holy enthusiasm he felt is mirrored in words he wrote shortly before:

If St. Theresa would have seen that souls are going to hell like snowflakes falling to the ground in winter, would she remain untouched by this sight and not melt away in tears of pity and compassion?

Oh, let us imagine that these souls imploringly reach out their hands toward us, like someone wrestling with the waves as he is about to drown and implores us for help with his last strained efforts! Oh, just look at these souls! With tears in their eyes, sighing and sobbing they call out to us:

O dearest! Save us, save us or we shall perish! Look at our misery, our poverty and our need! Help us! Oh, how grateful will we be to you in this world and especially up in heaven! Have mercy on us, because look, our words are full of pain and the Lord's arrows are deeply embedded in us and their wrath tires our spirit. Oh, who can do something so our plea will be heard and God will give us what we hope for? What can we do? Our pain does not stop when we speak; nor does it cease when we are silent.

Turning to God in heaven, they continue:

Have mercy on us, oh Lord! We are weak. Heal us, oh Lord! Our bones are trembling. Our souls are in dismay. Oh Lord, how much longer will it take? Turn, oh Lord, save our souls! Help us for mercy's sake. No one thinks of you in death, and who praises you in hell? Oh God, procure help for us! Lord, come rushing to heal us!

That is how they call and implore. Up, beloved reader, get up to save souls! Let us work on the salvation of the many, many millions who will otherwise be lost for eternity. Oh, brother and sister in Christ, off to the holy battle! Up, God wants this, God wants this! And with this final slogan, let us fight for the salvation of our unhappy brothers and sisters!<sup>10</sup>

### **(Endnotes)**

- <sup>1</sup> Archive of Propaganda Fide in Rome. *Indie Orientali* 1881-82, Scritture Riferite nei Congressi Vol. 23.
- <sup>2</sup> Archive of Propaganda Fide, *Acta s. Congregationis de Propaganda Fide*, anno 1889, No. 33.
- <sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>4</sup> Brochure: A Short Description of the Catholic Teaching Society.
- <sup>5</sup> *Der Missionär*, 1889, p. 265f.
- <sup>6</sup> Archive of *Propaganda Fide*, *Lettere e Decreti della s. Congregazione* 1889, vol. 385, p. 875.
- <sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, 1890, vol. 386, p. 24.
- <sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 22
- <sup>9</sup> Letter by Bishop Pozzi to the Cardinal Prefect, February 25, 1890 included in *Indie Orientali* 1890, Scritture Riferite nei Congressi vol. 35.
- <sup>10</sup> *Der Missionär*, 1889, No. 24, p. 279f.

## 14. Preparatory Activity before Leaving for the Mission

The Bavarian Fr. Angelus Münzloher was chosen to be Fr. Hopfenmüller's first companion. Br. Josef Bächle and Br. Marianus Schumm were also marked for the mission. Given the conditions of the Society at that time, a group of four men was nonetheless a good percentage.

Fr. Angelus was still quite young, having celebrated his First Mass on Christmas 1889, at the age of 23 in Taufkirchen in Upper Bavaria. Fr. Otto accompanied him home. The celebration went splendidly in light of the upcoming departure for the mission. Before the High Mass, which was celebrated by the new priest, he blessed his grandparents who were celebrating their golden wedding anniversary on the same day. On December 27, 1889, Fr. Otto Hopfenmüller wrote from Seußling to the superior Fr. Jordan in Rome about the course of the Mass:

The reception celebration was held in the most solemn way at the set time, after the Dean of Dorfen had personally picked us up from the station in his coach and brought us to his house. A magnificent escort had arrived from Taufkirchen in Dorfen and I have never before seen such lavish ceremonies during similar occasions. About a dozen carriages with adorned horses made up the escort; furthermore the crowd was led by a lead horse and rider as well as by another dozen riders on horseback. Triumphal arches had been set up along the way; I counted more than 12 of them. All of the houses were adorned with garlands, flags and wreaths and three girls recited poems of welcome. After the procession, accompanied by music, had reached the doors of the church the parish priest held a reception speech. All the schoolgirls and many adult maidens were adorned like brides with garlands. The weather was generally favourable, but on the feast day the rain made it impossible to hold the celebration outdoors. The procession from the rectory was accompanied by music just like the evening before. Such a large crowd flocked to the scene that the church could hardly hold half of them.<sup>1</sup>

That is how Catholics loyally devoted to the church honour their apostles.

The short time remaining before departing to India and assuming the cares of the mission which now weighed on Fr. Otto's shoulders, left little time to celebrate. At 1 p.m. on the day of the celebration, he said goodbye to drive to Munich where he expected to give a speech. Unfortunately, upon his arrival he heard that the Society had not been able to procure the hall they had wanted. But the chairman of the Ludwig-Missionary Society, capitular Dr. Kagerer, proved helpful to the new mission superior. Due to all the charity requests that had been put to the population of Munich for constructing churches and many Christmas appeals, he advised Fr. Otto to refrain from asking for donations. Nor was he in favour of the idea of visiting the aristocracy. He said that he himself once visited two princesses together with a Chinese missionary bishop. The result had been 20 Mark and neither of the ladies had received them. So Fr. Otto dropped the idea. But Dr. Kagerer was all the more ready to help the Assam Mission get on its feet by donating a good amount from the Ludwig-Missionary Society, as he had already done for many other missions. He immediately donated 1,000 Mark as a contribution for the journey and promised Fr. Hopfenmüller to remember the mission with a larger sum during his society's next annual distribution of donations. Delighted, the superior left Munich.

In addition to gathering money for the journey, Fr. Otto tried to collect enough to cover his and his companions' living expenses in India for the first two to three months. By then, the annual contributions of the Ludwig-Missionary Society and the Francis-Xavier-Society in Lyon would have arrived to help continue their work.

On the eve of St. Stephen's day, Fr. Otto left Munich to reach his former parish of Seußling in an overnight journey. The joy at seeing their revered shepherd was enormous. On the afternoon of December 27, he gave a well-attended sermon and an hour of prayer to the Sacred Heart of Jesus. Everybody was keen to attend. Despite the parish's poverty, they collected 500 Mark and handed them to Fr. Otto for his mission. A moving goodbye followed the next day since Fr. Otto had to move on to Bamberg.

*Bamberger Volksblatt* had already informed its readers about the first mission of the Catholic Teaching Society on December 6.<sup>2</sup> On December 24, they could report:

We have been told by reliable sources that Fr. Dr. Otto Hopfenmüller will come here at the end of the week to see and say goodbye to his friends and relatives before departing for the mission. The reverend



Audience with Pope Leo XIII

missionary will be so kind as to give the sermon on Sunday morning, December 29, in St. Martin's Church, in which he was active for many years. This will give everyone the opportunity to see and hear Fr. Otto.<sup>3</sup>

This was a joyful Christmas surprise for Bamberg's Catholics. The sermon was held before a large audience. The church overflowed.<sup>4</sup> The words about the path to real happiness by the superior-to-be of the Assam Mission made a deep impression and it was thought best not to let these words be blown away by the wind but instead to preserve them in print. The words portrayed the spirit of the whole man (his zeal, his love of God) and offer much by way interest so that it cannot be left out of this portrait of his life. It appeared in *Bamberger Volksblatt*:<sup>5</sup>

Last time I stood in this pulpit was about 13 years ago, here where I preached God's word to my beloved parish for ten years and where I was chaplain. Since then the paths of my life have led me on, first to enter a religious order and soon it will lead me across the ocean to Assam.

On January 18, I will board a ship in Naples along with three confreres and will move out to preach Christ's joyful Gospel to the people there who still live in darkness and the shadow of death. Because I have not forgotten my dear city of Bamberg and have always carried it in my heart, I feel urged to say a last farewell to my friends and Catholics, all brothers in Christ, and at the same time to ask them for their help and support.

To my delight, I see from the crowd gathered around the pulpit that my friends and relatives too have not forgotten me. If one says goodbye to someone, it includes the wish and the desire that he will be well for all times. Now that I have figured out what I wish to present, I wish to contribute some happiness to you, my beloved Bamberg friends and relatives. I want to contribute a little drop of happiness and joy to your lives because it is always a priest and missionary's desire to be of use to souls. All the happiness of life is summarized in two points: to love one's own soul and to love the souls of others, to make oneself happy and to wish, hope, and procure the happiness of others. Let us awaken some thoughts and impressions, 1) about love for one's own soul; 2) about love for the souls others. Listen attentively and patiently. May Jesus bless my words!



1. The Christmas bells have proclaimed it louder and more fully than ever before: God is love, and because He is love He also wants us to enjoy life and become happy. And because we lost our happiness due to our own sin and fault, that same love drove Him to come down to us in His own person, to lay Himself in the manger as a child and to let Himself be nailed on the hard Cross as the expiatory sacrifice. Why and to what end? To make us happy so that we can enjoy our life on earth and enjoy an even better and more blessed life in never-ending eternity.

My God, I am amazed and astonished at what You did to make us happy! Your love shall be praised in eternity! It is not an empty delusion or a forbidden desire when I enjoy life and am happy. Yes, God Himself created this desire in my soul that I can't do anything else but long for happiness and bliss.

But, my dear friends, we need to look for happiness where it can be found. Many people are unhappy because they look for their fortune and happiness in places where it cannot be found. One believes he will become happy by collecting many earthly goods. He is a fool, he errs because although he may be able to cure his body with this, he will not be able to satisfy his soul, and surely the time will come when all of this will be taken away from him.

Another believes he will find his happiness in the enjoyment of the senses, by certain loud activities and festivities or impure amusement of the body. He is deceived. After a short joy from the physical senses he will feel suffering and his soul will feel weariness, disgust, nausea, dissatisfaction, unrest, fear, and pain in his conscience. That is why Solomon said the following in his ancient proverb: "Take no pleasure in the paths of the godless, no joy in the path of evil. Depart from it, flee from it because the end is death, joy will be mixed with pain, and pleasures will be overtaken by grief."

Where should we look for pleasure and joy in life? Where we find it. Where can it be found? Only and solely in our Lord Jesus Christ. What can give cheerfulness, amusement and rest to a man's heart? It is the sweet word of "peace." "The goods of peace are so enormous," says St. Augustine, "nothing can be heard which is more pleasant and nothing more desirable can be wished for in all earthly and human things – in

short, nothing better can be found.” Our Lord Jesus Christ brought this peace to earth as the heavenly daughter; it is the gift from heaven that the Lord’s angels proclaimed to the world: “May peace be with people of good will.” He alone can send this peace. “I give you my peace, my peace I leave you; I do not give it to you as the world would.”

And who receives this true peace and thereby true happiness? Let us hear the Lord’s angel: “Peace to the people of GOOD WILL.” Who is of good will? St. Bernard shall tell us: “One is of good will when he does not search for his happiness among creatures but from God, the one who looks only for true and real happiness, which once he possesses it, no one can take away from him.” In other words, one is of good will when he follows the holy law of the Eternal Father that Christ proclaimed to us on His behalf. Priests, pastors and missionaries have the task of preaching this law to people at all times, in the name of Christ and as His vicars. So whoever honours and follows the church is of good will and is a good man. “And the good man,” says St. Bonaventure, “has peace in the world, peace at the end, peace at the last judgment and peace in heaven.”

This peace on earth may still not be perfect because it is mixed with difficulties and hardships. Our corrupt nature longs for many things that are forbidden by the Father. That is why we often need to force ourselves. Christ’s law is the law of the Cross. My heart feels a sweet peace every time I make a sacrifice and have not followed my personal will but that of the heavenly Father; or every time I refrain from something permitted or prohibited for the sake of God. Let us listen to someone who has felt this – St. Paul: “for which cause we faint not: but though the outer man is corrupted, yet the inner man is renewed day by day. For our suffering which is at present momentary and light, fashions for us an eternal weight of exceeding glory beyond measure.” Oh, how lovely and marvellous will this eternal weight of glory be! Faith in this, hope for this eternal weight, give a sweet peace to Christ’s suffering apostles, a peace that exceeds all human perception.

Not only has St. Paul experienced it, we as members of a religious order enjoy it daily despite the fact that we are carrying Christ’s cross. Every good priest has it; every good Christian can have it. Do you also want to have it, my dear friends? Oh, then always be of good will and follow your priests! If you follow them, you follow Christ; if you follow

Christ, you follow the heavenly Father; if you follow the heavenly Father, you are of good will; if you are of good will, you will live happily on earth and live blessedly in eternity. Oh, may all people recognize this! If only all souls would love! Then Christ's Gospel would be their most precious treasure, faith their highest good, virtue and Christ's cross their only love. "Oh, if you had only followed My commandments!" the Lord said to his people through the Prophet: "Then your peace would become a torrent and your justice like the tides of the ocean!" In the face of God and with the Psalmist we renew our solemn promise: "I decide and swear that I will observe the precepts of Your justice." Then we will have joy and happiness in life, now and forever.

2. Loving our own soul is inseparably connected with loving the soul of another. Whoever enjoys God's peace and happiness in Jesus Christ, grants and wishes the same good fortune and happiness to others – he does not want to have it only for himself. This is a natural feeling of the human heart. A woman who recovers her lost drachma gathers her friends and neighbours: "Be happy with me, I have found my drachma again." She does not want to be happy alone. Or tell me, my dear friends, would one of you hold his wedding without the participation of friends? Hence the old saying: "Shared joy is joy doubled, shared pain is pain halved." Where God's peace lives in the heart there too is the desire to share it with others.

Our Lord Jesus Christ enjoyed the absolute sweet peace of God in His holy humanity; already on earth He participated in the contemplation of God. That is why His zeal drove Him to the cross, so that He would not be alone in His Father's Kingdom but instead would have all His human brothers share in his happiness. Our beloved Mother Mary had barely tasted God's peace after the angel's heralding when she made the difficult journey to her relative Elizabeth, to have her share in the joy and to have Jesus sanctify John. During her entire life, she directed all her sighing, longing and prayers so that all people would recognize Jesus Christ and the Father who sent Him so they could become happy. That is why she received the title "Queen of the Apostles."

And, what drove the Lord's Apostles to sacrifice themselves, to preach Christ's Gospel under all strains and to suffer and die for it? Because Jesus had given them the happiness of peace. They could not rest and needed to tell others about this joy. What caused all missionaries over

the centuries to give up the joys and comforts of their homes and put their bodies on the line, as well as their lives, goods, and blood? What else could it be if not the zeal to bring one's own happiness to those who have not yet had it? What would we be if this zeal hadn't driven the missionaries to our ancestors in Germany 1,000 years ago? Most likely we would still be at the same level as the people in Assam, to whom we are being sent. This zeal also drives us to Assam now, where 7,000,000 unbelievers and pagans live in an area twice as big as Bavaria. One part of it, the mountain people, are still wild, cannot read or write, have no schools and, it is said, still secretly make human sacrifices to their insolent idols and devils. The other part situated in the Brahmaputra Plain, the actual Assamese, is a bit more educated but is still lost deep in vice especially polygamy, hedonism and lethargy. They are slaves to the intoxication of opium pleasure, which has spiritually and physically ruined the population. We have hard and tough work ahead of us – but we will not despair.

What could you do my dear friends and Catholics, to exercise your zeal for souls? First of all, I say: it is the will of God and of our Lord Jesus Christ for all of us to be filled with zeal for souls because that is how He has taught us to pray in the Lord's Prayer: "Hallowed be Thy name" – not only by me but by all people. God wants all people to be happy, not only you and me. That is why it is God's will that everyone be zealous for the souls of whoever Divine Providence may bring to him, first to those nearby and then to those more distant. Those who are closer, child and servant, man and woman, brother and sister, friends and relatives, acquaintances and neighbours and all those whom God unites to the solitary individual; and to those further away who are likewise God's children, by participating in missionary activity.

Any participation in spreading the faith is laudable, and I desire that all missions grow and find support. But I would also like to find support and help for my mission from my Bamberg friends and relatives. This may seem like egoism – but mankind is like that: we are always egoists. But if egoism intends to spread the Kingdom of God and the salvation of souls, then I believe that God will not condemn it.

How does one participate in our mission? What can you, my dear friends, do for us? First of all, you can pray; we urgently need prayer so that the ground will be moistened by heavenly dew, that we missionaries

will attain proper wisdom and strength and the people the necessary enlightenment and good will. The spiritual fruit of the mission grows and flourishes to the extent that it is being prayed for.

We also need alms from our friends. We cannot live without the necessities of life, even though we restrict ourselves to the bare essential. Means are required to construct churches, schools, mission houses, and orphanages. Christianity cannot take a firm foothold without such institutions. Because the mission in Assam is being taken over by the Catholic Teaching Society, participating in our mission also means being favourably disposed to the Society. So I openly and urgently ask all my dear listeners to join our Society.

We have co-operators who pray a short prayer every day and give us a small annual contribution of 20 Mark, and read our newspaper *Der Missionär*. Our benefactors have the task of gathering other co-operators, collecting annual alms, ordering *Der Missionär* and distributing it if several have been ordered together. This task demands a greater willingness to sacrifice, but the payback and God's rewards will be greater. In case one of my esteemed listeners wishes to assume the task of a benefactor, I would like openly and urgently to invite you to let me know.

We even have a place for children in our work. They can join the Society through the Angel Sodality. They say a short prayer daily, promise to study the catechism well and to become good Christians as pure as angels, read our children's paper, *Manna für Kinder*, and wear our badge – a cross on a blue and white string. The children do not give alms because they are still children and do not possess the means.

See, my dear Bamberg friends, in this way you can exercise your zeal for souls for distant people, and at the same time do me a personal favour. There is one more way I do not want to leave out. If someone hears God's call to serve in the salvation of souls by becoming a missionary, a lay brother or missionary sister, he is invited to join our Society fully and forever.

Now, my dear friends of Bamberg, I say my last farewell to you. May God preserve you in peace, happiness and true joy in life. And He will do so if you are always of good will and search for happiness in Jesus Christ. May God escort us on the path with his Holy Angels so that we

will attain the rich fruit of salvation for the increase of the Divine Kingdom and the happiness of mankind! When our paths cross in eternity, let us hope to find each other in an eternally joyful life where we will see the Triune God, the fountain of all happiness and joy, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, who shall be glorified in eternity. Amen.

Fr. Hopfenmüller's forceful words met with success. On January 2, 1890, he reported from Bamberg to his superior Fr. Jordan in Rome:

I am doing well in Bamberg. I have already collected about 3,000 Mark. I preached in St. Martin. I gave a lecture to the Journeymen Society. Today, I will give another speech in the Catholic *Kasino*. God is always good; his love shall be praised for this. I have even won some benefactors and many issues of *Der Missionär* have been ordered.<sup>6</sup>

On Sunday, January 5, 1890, the untiring missionary was seen giving a sermon in Burgkundstadt, and again the following day in Kronach. It was the Feast of the Epiphany, and it gave him another occasion to give a deeply moving speech. He managed to point out to the people of Kronach that he was not a stranger to them but had talked to them during stormy times in the town hall many years ago. Just as he had been enthused for the cause of the holy church back then, this time his enthusiasm was for the great missionary activity. Many people were moved to tears.

Despite not feeling well due to a cold, Fr. Hopfenmüller carried out his work with a dedicated fervour. If someone alluded to his health he would always reply: "Oh, I don't need anything, but I need to cheer up and take care of Fr. Angelus Münzloher. He has heart problems."

Fr. Hopfenmüller lived with the pastor in Kronach, Fr. Traut, who had worked in Wachenroth while he was still living in Reichmannsdorf. He was highly welcome there. Fr. Traut and his sister were extremely delighted to have such a guest in their house. They believed him to be a saint. The candle he put out on his last evening in the house, the slippers he used, and the letters he wrote were preserved as keepsakes by Miss Traut.

Fr. Otto began his return trip to Rome on January 7. The goodbye caused deep pain in many people. Some of them ran to the station with presents for him. His friends escorted him there. "It is unforgettable," wrote Miss Elise Traut in a

letter,<sup>7</sup> “how his emaciated hand waved to us one last time as the train was leaving. He promised to pray for us. May God reward him!”

**(Endnotes)**

<sup>1</sup> AGS.

<sup>2</sup> BV, Entertainment Supplement, 1889, No. 49.

<sup>3</sup> BV, December 24, 1889, No. 294.

<sup>4</sup> BV, December 30, 1889, No. 297.

<sup>5</sup> BV, Entertainment Supplement, January 10 and 17, 1890, No. 2 & 3.

<sup>6</sup> AGS.

<sup>7</sup> AGS. Letter from Kronach, August 10, 1892.

## 15. Off to India

On January 17, 1890, a solemn farewell celebration took place in the Motherhouse in Rome that turned into an unforgettable family celebration. The young Society's joy at being able to send out their first messengers of faith contributed to the solemn atmosphere.<sup>1</sup> The refectory was festively decorated. On the wall above the door hung the painting of the Queen of the Apostles surrounded by flowers and Chinese lanterns. A large, semicircular piece of tracing paper in the middle of the room attracted everyone's attention. It bore the inscription: *Quam speciosi pedes evangelizantium pacem.*<sup>2</sup> These words encircled an illuminated globe on which the province of Assam was highlighted in special colours. Other tracing paper as well as a series of posters with sayings in different languages completed the festive scene. Over dinner some of the confreres gave farewell addresses to the missionaries, telling them they should count themselves lucky for being able to move out as the Lord's apostles and they expressed their ardent hope to join them soon as workers in the Lord's vineyard.

After dinner a companionable recreation with all the members of the house convened in the large refectory. The choir performed its best songs. The departing missionaries passed among the groups of confreres, distributed keepsakes and listened to their last good wishes. The closing celebration took place in the brightly illuminated house chapel where the superior, Fr. Jordan, directed heartfelt and moving words to his departing sons:

Two feelings move my soul on this day: a feeling of pain and a feeling of joy. It is painful for us to be separated from our beloved brothers. But joy overcomes us at the thought that they are leaving us to go to Asia, the country that is the cradle of humanity, there to preach about Christ, the Crucified. Through our first confreres sent by our order, peace and the good news of the Gospel shall be brought to the people. The joy by far prevails over the pain.

So you will set out [he said turning to the four chosen ones] to face the difficult battle ahead of you. Yes, the battle will be hard. You will have to wrestle with the most evil and wicked enemies of the world along with the devil. I will give you a weapon along the way, with which you will always win, and the sight of this weapon will make hell tremble.

When Emperor Constantine set out to battle Maxentius, he saw a sign in the sky, which said: "With this sign you will conquer." It was the





The sending of the first missionaries in the Salvatorian Motherhouse – Rome

cross. You also will win under this sign. You will win over the people and over hell. The Divine Saviour led the way with the cross. Already as a child he embraced the cross, his entire life was a cross, and his end was a cross. He held tight to it until he returned His spirit into the hands of the Father under the most terrible pains. This is how He defeated hell. You also will win through the cross and suffering. Yes, you will have to suffer much. Do not expect anything else. But I tell you, the more you suffer, the greater will be your success. There is a relation between how an apostolic man suffers and the work he accomplishes for the salvation of souls. God's work blossoms in the shadow of the Cross...

Following these words, those leaving received a missionary cross from the hands of their spiritual father who sent them on their way with the words: "Set out in the name of God! May you always be united with your confreres until we meet again up there in eternal joy and bliss."

The evocative tones of *Ave Maris Stella* ("Hail, Star of the Sea") still sounded from the choir. A last farewell, a last heartfelt handshake, and the Roman night swallowed up the hurrying carriage containing the first Assam missionaries who now climbed aboard the train near the old grey baths of Emperor Diocletian.

In the morning of January 19, 1890, they reached Brindisi where the steamer *Ozeana* was to take them onward. The day passed by celebrating Holy Mass and buying a few small things. Then they boarded the ship. Fr. Otto recounted:

When we arrived in our cabin we met a man with a sick child. We were only able to move into it at around 10 o'clock at night. In the meantime, we said the breviary walking up and down the beach; then we went aboard to the reception room, had a cup of tea or coffee in the evening until we could lay down to rest at 10 o'clock. Prior to that, we had said a travel prayer together because the trip was to begin during the night. When we woke up in the morning, the ship was already moving but so subtly that one hardly noticed the movement. We prepared ourselves to celebrate Holy Mass. Doing this was a bit complicated on the first day when we tried to do it in the cabin. The following day we asked whether it would be possible to hold Mass in the reception room. They replied that it would disturb others if we held Mass there at 5 o'clock (it takes an hour and half). So we organized ourselves in the



The Founder of the Salvatorians,  
Fr. Francis Mary of the Cross Jordan, around 1890

cabin better and it works quite well this way. Until now, our journey has been good and we celebrate Mass every day. We try to follow the Motherhouse's daily schedule as much as possible. We do our spiritual exercises just as at home; the remaining time we use to learn English. Since it was very difficult at first, I prayed that God might send us someone to help us learn it. And behold, on the same afternoon a gentleman with a collar, who looked rather worldly, approached us. "Excuse me, are you a clergyman?" "Yes!" "Catholic?" Thereupon, the reply came in German, "I am a Roman Catholic priest." "Are you German?" was my astonished question. "No, I am Irish, but I speak some German."

I asked him to teach us English. "It would be my pleasure," he replied. And, we sat down and started immediately. The gentleman was a professor of theology and was travelling to relax and enjoy the sea air. Everyday from 10 to 11 o'clock in the morning, we have a lesson in reading biblical texts in English. I thank God for this act of providence and hope that we will be able to speak better English by the time we arrive in Shillong.<sup>3</sup>

An Indian officer, Irish by birth, was also helpful in assisting the missionaries to learn English. Soon they recognized that the right pronunciation often did not coincide with the one they had learned at home. But even greater was their eagerness to use all the rest of the time available to thoroughly dedicate themselves to the language.

But the frivolous levity surrounding most of the journey did not correspond to Fr. Hopfenmüller's seriousness. He withdrew all the more into deep introspection. In his travel report he said:

Contrary to the godless mood present among a large part of this European travel group, my soul was vividly overcome and moved by the thought of celebrating Holy Mass, which I am honoured to be able to say, and to offer the only sacrifice worthy of the divine majesty of the living God and creator of all things, even on the ocean. The eternal God shall be paid his due tribute not only in the vast areas of the earth but also on the depths of the sea. The two-thirds of the earth that is ocean shall likewise bear the mysterious sacrifice of Jesus Christ, with whom we unite and join the other third, which is land, in prayer, praise, love and forgiveness.



Fr. Otto Hopfenmüller, SDS, first mission superior



Fr. Angelus Münzloher, SDS,  
second mission superior



Fr. Christophorus Becker, SDS,  
first apostolic prefect

This is one of the distinctions of a missionary who sails across the depths of the sea to far-away people.<sup>4</sup>

The deep piety Fr. Otto observed in the external behaviour of Muslims during the ship's stopover in Aden, people who did not shy away from kneeling down on public streets and places to say their prayers, caused Fr. Hopfenmüller to make the following comparison:

Contrary to the dead religious sentiment of the noble Protestant and Catholic world, I observed that even the poor Muslim Arabs expressed their religious sentiment without reserve. I would have been even more astonished about this if I hadn't previously read and heard just how precise Muslims are in observing their religious practices. Several of the half-naked brown figures kneel towards Mecca, praying and kissing the ground to which they alternately bow and get up again. How embarrassing this precision must be to those Catholics who believe that the living and true God, Jesus Christ, is present in their churches, but believe it to be beneath their dignity to genuflect respectably to the ground, or to kneel down with both knees in front of the Blessed Sacrament while bowing their head as the church prescribes!<sup>5</sup>

On the Red Sea and on the Indian Ocean, the travellers discovered that a journey by ship does not always go smoothly. The stormy sea also made them familiar with seasickness, to which they all had to pay tribute, apart from the robust Br. Marianus. On the smaller postal steamer to which they had changed in Aden, they finally arrived at the Indian shore at Bombay on the Feast of the Presentation of the Lord, February 2.

Because I, along with Fr. Angelus and Br. Joseph, had suffered from seasickness during the last three days of our journey, we were extremely delighted, and joyfully greeted the sweet word "port." We did not miss thanking God for His merciful protection.

Even for the newly arriving Europeans, there was no getting around the confusing impression made by the Indian world after a 40-day journey at sea. They were immediately led to the house of the German Jesuits, who at that time were still highly respected due to their uncomplaining sacrifices and ceaseless activity which resulted in turning Bombay into the first and most respected Indian mission. Of his walk from the port into the city Fr. Otto reported:

Never before have I seen such hustle and bustle, not even in a European metropolis. The people are white, black, half-black, brown, yellow of all shades, entirely naked, those who carry only a loincloth, half dressed, three-quarters covered, and fully dressed. The latter present themselves in the most various costumes: European trousers, skirts and hats next to pointed Indian headgear made from oilcloth, Turkish turbans next to a cap with a large visor or straw cap twisted round with red cloth. Very few women can be seen. I only saw a few along the way, perhaps four or five from the lower class. Actually, it is an advantage to the Indian people that their women are told to stay at home and not live in freedom in the market or streets. Of course, this has gone to an unhealthy and distorted degree, but I prefer it to the opposite distortion now present in European Christianity. Women in beer halls and liquor bars, women speaking before public political gatherings, a woman with a cigar in her mouth – in short the emancipated (meaning the women who jumped over the barriers of femininity imitating men), I find more repugnant than a woman locked in the solitude of the house and treated like a slave. This one deserves my pity, the other one my contempt.<sup>6</sup>

The newcomers were kindly received by the diocesan administrator and by the German Jesuits.

Fr. Rector showed us the magnificent college, where Jesuit priests taught 1,400 pupils in the higher sciences. The teaching is of such excellent quality that a large number of non-Christians visit the college and maintain an awe and respect for the fathers for the rest of their lives. Even though not all of them immediately become Christians, it is still aimed at preparing the ground to spread Christianity in the future. Later in Shillong, I heard many pagans and Muslims speak of the Jesuit Colleges in Bombay and Calcutta with great awe.<sup>7</sup>

From the beginning, the missionaries were to learn the peculiarities of the Indian caste system. Fr. Rector had them brought to the Hotel Taylor, which was owned by a Catholic. Despite the fact that they were only four men, they had four servants at their table because each one of them was only able to do one type of work. A fifth servant joined the others to constantly pump a large wind fan to cool down the air a little. Fr. Otto continued:

Even though it was only February, an oppressive heat was in the air causing thick sweat to run down my face. As a result, a funny thing

happened to me. We had received large blue-printed cloths to dry our sweat. Suddenly, my confreres noticed that my face had turned blue and for a moment did not know what was wrong with me until they guessed the secret. [The dye had come off cloth.]

Supplied with some provisions, they continued their journey to Calcutta in the evening. After an uninterrupted train ride of three nights and two days, they reached the city on the morning of February 5. Fr. Angelus and the two brothers availed themselves of the hospitality offered by the Belgian Jesuits, taking the opportunity to get to know India's capital a bit better, while their Fr. Superior went to visit the two neighbouring dioceses from which Assam had separated. He first travelled to the Dacca Mission, to which the southern part of Assam had belonged. His journey took him to Chittagong by train where the diocesan administrator, Fr. Fallize, was staying at the time. Fr. Hopfenmüller found that Fr. Fallize was delighted at being rid of that part of Assam, because he had never succeeded in administering it. In a lovely manner, he provided Fr. Otto with all the necessary information about the province.<sup>8</sup>

After six days, he returned to Calcutta. Fr. Hopfenmüller then set off to visit the bishop of Krishnagar. The only missionary living in Assam, the Venetian, Fr. Broy, was under his supervision. Fr. Otto recounted his visit to Bishop Pozzi:

He is already an elderly man, has worked as a missionary for 33 years and was very friendly. I found out that there is a church and a nice missionary house in Gauhati where Fr. Broy (the wandering missionary in Assam) lives when he is not on some trip. The Catholics are very scattered, mostly on tea plantations. I asked the Most Reverend to leave Fr. Broy over there for another quarter or half year. He willingly agreed. In the meantime, we can inform and prepare ourselves.<sup>9</sup>

According to what Fr. Otto wrote to Cardinal Prefect Simeoni, both Bishop Pozzi and Fr. Fallize were delighted to hand over part of their enormous areas to a new worker.<sup>10</sup>

By February 16, the missionary superior had finished his courtesy calls and the missionary team was able to continue its journey to Assam that same evening. An overnight train ride brought them to Goalundo. Here they boarded a steamer to go up the Brahmaputra River. Until now the four missionaries had been in a third class compartment on the train from Bombay onwards, despite this being usually out of the question for Europeans. To get by as Christ's apostles in the



most simple and cheapest way (even on a steamer) the superior decided not to share in the available meals. He wrote to the superior general, Fr. Jordan:<sup>11</sup>

Daily meals would have cost 4 Rupees (5.60 Mark) per person on board. Therefore, I decided to take the kind of meals according to our way of living, since Bishop Pozzi had said that this was possible. At first, the servant in charge of the meals did not want to hear of it. He called the ship's officer. I talked to him and straightened things out. On the first day, I tried to take tea and coffee in the morning. These cost two Rupees. This was still too expensive for me, so for four days we lived on bread, cheese, butter, and wine, and by doing so, we ate for very little money, which would otherwise have cost 64 Rupees. Our health was excellent and we are all well. We still had butter, cheese and wine left from our trip from Bombay to Calcutta. On the way we bought bread. When we finished it, we bought it on the steamer. In Dhubri there was no more bread left on the steamer. A salesman brought us some bread (called *ruti* in Bengalese) but it was a type of thin, unleavened cake, just like German dumplings. In the absence of other bread we ate this and it tasted delicious because hunger enhances the taste of food.

All the while the steamer brought the expectant group closer to Assam. On February 8, they reached Dhubri, the first city of Assam. One companion, Fr. Angelus Münzloher, gave us an insight into the superior's heart when he wrote the following about him:

The closer we got to our destination, the more visible Fr. Otto's eagerness became. When we arrived at our Prefecture he consecrated himself to God and completely sacrificed himself to Him. I remember very well how he fell on his knees on deck. Fiery prayers welled up in his heart to bring about the grace of conversion to pagans.<sup>12</sup>

Because the steamer stopped in Dhubri during the day, this provided an opportunity for the new missionaries to set foot on Assamese ground for the first time. Fr. Angelus Münzloher wrote:<sup>13</sup>

When one is led into such a city for the first time, one instinctively wonders: "Where is this city anyway?" One hardly sees anything apart from huts, which are hidden beneath trees on both sides of the road. As we walked around Dhubri and looked at the houses and people, we

met two natives, one of whom approached us. This good man did not even think of the fact that we did not speak Bengalese. Luckily his companion was able to speak English. Both of them scrutinized us from head to foot. They were especially interested in the crucifixes that we carried on our breasts. They even took them in their hands.

The journey continued in the evening, but they soon needed to stop again. The water level of the Brahmaputra was so low in this “dry season” that the boat could not travel during the night so as to avoid the risk of running aground somewhere. That is why they didn’t reach Gauhati until the morning of February 21. To the missionaries’ delight they were received by Fr. Broy at the gangway. He led them to their mission station where they said Holy Mass in Assam for the first time.

### **(Endnotes)**

- <sup>1</sup> Cf., *Der Missionär*, 1890, p. 21; *Apostlekalendar* 1891, p. 49.
- <sup>2</sup> Translation: How beautiful are the feet of those who bring the good news of peace.
- <sup>3</sup> AGS, Letter of Fr. Hopfenmüller aboard the Ozeana to Fr. Jordan, January 25, 1890.
- <sup>4</sup> *Der Missionär*, 1890, no. 6, p. 46.
- <sup>5</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>6</sup> AGS, Fr. Hopfenmüller’s travelogue.
- <sup>7</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>8</sup> AGS, Letter of Fr. Otto to Fr. Jordan written on board the Coconada, February 9, 1890.
- <sup>9</sup> Ibid. Letter from Calcutta, February 15, 1890.
- <sup>10</sup> Archive of Propaganda Fide. Letter from Shillong, March 6, 1890. *Indie Orientali* 1892. *Scritture Riferite nei Congressi*, vol. 37.
- <sup>11</sup> AGS, Letter from Gauhati, February 21, 1890.
- <sup>12</sup> AGS, Letter to Fr. Jordan, October 15, 1890.
- <sup>13</sup> AGS, Letter from Gauhati, February 22, 1890.

## 16. In the Desired Land

With years of hard work, Fr. Broy had built a chapel with a sacristy and a few rooms in Gauhati – all under one roof. He had prepared everything to receive the newcomers because he believed they would settle there. And in any case, this would have been a relief at the start. The chapel was fine, equipped with the necessary items so the two priests could immediately say Holy Mass. The spacious apartment consisted of six rooms and would have been more than sufficient. There was also a small community of Christians— 32 Catholics, Europeans and half-castes.

But tempting as it was and despite the fact that it would have been more than suitable for their headquarters, Fr. Hopfenmüller could not stay in Gauhati.<sup>1</sup> For it had been Propaganda Fide's wish to establish the headquarters of the apostolic prefecture of Assam in Shillong, the state's capital, where the state government also had its seat.<sup>2</sup> The diocesan administrator of Dacca as well as Bishop Pozzi had also pointed out that the mountain tribesmen living there would be much more open to Christianity than those living in Assam.<sup>3</sup> So the path to be taken was set for them. They could not remain in Gauhati.

To save money, the superior had sent the heavy luggage by freight train from Calcutta. So they now awaited its arrival. Fr. Angelus recounts:

Because I lived in a room in Gauhati from which I could see Fr. Otto well, I often saw him throwing himself on the floor and remaining in this position for a long time. Tears ran down his face. His main thought was, how can I best help the pagans? He probably consulted often with God about this in such moments.<sup>4</sup>

The stay in Gauhati only lasted a few days. As soon as the luggage arrived they continued their journey from the Assam valley into the Khasi Hills.

The superior thoroughly described this last part of the journey to his “good and helpful friends at home” to whom he had promised at his departure to publish his travel report in *Bamberger Volksblatt*.<sup>5</sup> In those days it took about four days to reach Shillong from Gauhati by oxcart. With a horse-drawn carriage (a two-wheeled *tonga*) the city could be reached in about one day by frequently changing horses. But Fr. Hopfenmüller did not approve of this.

The horse *tonga* would have cost 120 Rupees – about 170 Mark. We took the oxcart holding three people for only 15 Rupees. It was my wish to exercise the poverty vowed in the order even on our journey, so I figured: three people could ride, the other one would walk. After an hour, the walker would climb into the carriage and another would walk. This way, there would be a nice change. When we saw the carriage, all of us preferred to walk and only to load the luggage on the oxcart. It was a type of two-wheeled cart also used in Italy. Above it was set up a barrel-like cover, old, torn, made of wicker from old bamboo cane. It was so low that no one could really sit down beneath it. There were no seats. One had to sit on luggage or on some straw. Under such conditions it was more pleasant to walk than to ride, despite the fact that the heat was comparable to midsummer in Germany. Only Br. Joseph tried to ride for an hour on the first day during the midday heat, but the following days he walked like the others.

The first three days everything went fine. We raised our umbrellas against the sun and at midday stopped on the road to grab some water, mixed it with wine, and ate our bread. A good woman from Gauhati, a Catholic called Burns, had provided us with some beef for the first two days. The other days we had some cheese with bread. At the end of each day, we stopped at the so-called *Dak-bungalow*, meaning the post house. Because there were no guesthouses in the area, the British government had set up lodging houses at the distance of a day's journey, under the care of a guard. At the first one we received nothing. The large double beds were covered with just a sheet and there were no pillows or blankets. The traveller needed to provide these as well as a mattress if he wanted one. Our habits served as pillows and our coats as covers. At the second and third post house we were served rice with curry. The curry, served with chicken, was the traditional hot spice according to Indian custom. There was no bread. Whoever has eaten a little chicken knows that four men do not get a lot from it, but we were quite satisfied and in a good mood.

The situation changed on the fourth day. Br. Joseph, who was born in Baden, proposed that one of us should stay with the carriage while the others went ahead to prepare the house so that we could sleep there. Fr. Broy had built another little house in Shillong where he lived from time to time, which was supposed to be the new residence for the

missionaries. This was a good idea because in this way we would not need to pay for another overnight shelter.

As the commander of this little group, I accepted my soldier's proposal since I am open to anything that can save some of the alms given to us by the faithful. Br. Joseph remained with the carriage and the three of us walked ahead. Everything was fine. We exercised our legs as much as we could and at lunchtime we cheerfully sat down at a fountain that bubbled from the rocks.

We had been told that Shillong was situated at the 64<sup>th</sup> milestone from Gauhati. I commented that one English mile is equal to about 1,600 meters, a bit more than one and a half kilometres. We had already passed the 63<sup>rd</sup> milestone when we reached a village from which two paths diverged. I took the left one, but Fr. Angelus suggested that we should take the right path because the telegraph lines passed that way. I willingly let myself be guided and thanks be to God I was not alone because I would have gotten lost. We continued walking and asking (not speaking the native language) by pointing down the direction of the street: 'Shillong?' Their nodding assured us that we would soon be in Shillong. Suddenly, we passed a milestone with the number 2 written on it. What did that mean? We must have taken the wrong way. We turned around and reached a street full of people and thought that we should now be on the right way. Again I asked, pointing at the street: 'Shillong?' They again nodded their heads. We continued walking, but Shillong did not seem to appear. We were tired and rested a few times and arrived at the 5<sup>th</sup> milestone. Above it was a sign showing the way to the *Dak-bungalow* Upper-Shillong, the post house of Upper-Shillong. Now we have found it! We are in Upper-Shillong, the city above Shillong. We arrived at the post house to ask for further information. The women did not understand a word we were saying. She answered laughing and nodding to all our questions and signs that we wanted to eat something. Finally, a man arrived who spoke some English. He told us that we were on the road to Cherrapunji and needed to go back about five miles to reach Shillong.<sup>6</sup> He also gave us some eggs. We were very hungry, so we refreshed ourselves with the eggs and returned as fast as our tired legs could carry us. At around 7.30 p.m. we arrived in a village and met a young man. "Is this Shillong?" "Yes." He spoke English. We quickly recounted our misfortune and asked him whether

he could lead us to the Catholic missionary house. “The house of the padri?” I thought he meant the Catholic faithful and replied “Yes.” He willingly led us until we reached a Protestant church. “This is the church of the padri” – “It cannot be this one because the Catholics do not have a church here.” – “Yes, they are Roman Catholics.” – “No, it’s impossible.”

He continued searching and did not find anything. We walked around the city for about 15 minutes. One should not compare Shillong with a European city, in which many houses are tightly built next to each other. The houses in Shillong were scattered all over the place, surrounded by forests, gardens or trees. Despite its mere 3,000 inhabitants, it took an hour to cross.

People had recommended that we find a certain Dr. Costello who is also a Catholic. But our leader couldn’t find him. “I ask you, could you lead me to the next house where an Englishman lives!” He did so. I knocked on the door and [the one who answered] was very friendly. After he heard my story and understood what we wanted, he immediately invited us to join him for dinner, which had just been made. We gladly accepted the invitation. The lady of the house was nowhere to be seen – supposedly she was not feeling well. Five lively children all stood around the table. The eldest, Charles, was nine-years-old. Two servants were serving the table. We squeezed into our places at the table. But what had happened to Br. Joseph with the oxcart? This was the only worry clouding our contentment. “After dinner I shall lead you to your future home,” the friendly gentleman assured us. His name, Igual, should also be mentioned because it is right to praise good people. After we had eaten and drunk and said grace in front of the amazed children of the Protestant household, he took two candles and matches and led us to the near-by missionary cottage. Fr. Broy who had built it, had already sent advanced news of our arrival on Thursday and had instructed the doorkeeper to open the door. No one could see light in the house. “Everything is dark, the house will still be closed.” But look, there was light. “Someone is there!” It was Br. Joseph who had arrived with the oxcart long before, and who had also found the house but only after having asked four people without success.

Missionary Fr. Broy only came to Shillong once a year. Only three Catholic families and three individual Catholics lived here. The house

was very inconspicuous. There were only two rooms. The door of the entrance was smashed, as was the padlock to the doors – they didn't even need opening because they already stood open. Nor was it necessary to close them, because there was nothing in the house to take. Br. Joseph said: "I found everything open and not a soul to be seen." The stove was destroyed and many other things were ruined. It could not have been otherwise. Now, after gratefully saying goodbye to our friendly host, we quickly set up a place to sleep. Our white habits served as pillows, some used laundry as cushions and coats for covers. In our habits we laid down on the bare floor. The night was bitterly cold; Shillong is situated high up in the mountains, so we froze quite a bit after the day's sunburn.

In the morning, we quickly set up a poor altar to say our first Holy Mass in Shillong. A door served as the altar table; linens as the antependium. Books were put beneath the cross. During Holy Mass, our friendly host from yesterday sent us tea, cake and bread so we could enjoy a delightful breakfast. After Mass ended, a servant arrived who spoke Khasi and some English. A Catholic from Gauhati had been so kind as to send him.

"Would you like to be our servant?" I asked him.

"Yes!"

"How much do you want?"

"20 Rupees per month."

"That is too much for us; we are not Englishmen but poor missionaries."

"I have a family and need to feed them."

"You will have to do all types of work, otherwise we do not need you. Our brothers also do all types of work. Do you want to?"

"Yes."

I then went to buy the necessary cooking implements along with Br. Joseph and the servant.

For now we shall interrupt Fr. Otto's thorough report about their arrival to this residence. The missionaries had left Rome on January 17, at 11:30 p.m. and they had arrived at their ardently desired destination, Shillong, on February 27 at

7:30 p.m. Despite the difficulties of the journey, the mood of the superior was reflected in a letter by Fr. Angelus Münzloher, who wrote to his superior in Rome the day after their arrival:

May God be praised and thanked! We have happily reached the destination of our journey after having been led by a protective arm. Our heart rejoices because now we can carry out what we have longed for: to work in the Lord's vineyard. The Lord even saw to it that we have accommodations here because Reverend Fr. Broy had already built a little house where he stayed during the difficult season. He called it the House of Good Hope. It is empty, so we are now busy furnishing it so we can live in it.<sup>7</sup>

The superior's thoughts were also focused on this. On March 6, 1890, he reported to the cardinal prefect of Propaganda Fide about their journey and continued:

We have an apartment in danger of collapsing in Shillong consisting of two rooms. We use one of the rooms as the chapel, and the other is for us priests. We will add two more little rooms for the two brothers. We are still without furniture because we cannot find a carpenter. All of the workers are busy building the house for the provincial governor. We stand during our meals like the Jews during their exodus from Egypt. We sleep on the floor and must bear the greatest restrictions, but we gladly and joyfully endure everything because we have been found worthy to spread God's Kingdom and we hope to be able to save souls.<sup>8</sup>

While the apartment in Shillong was already ramshackle, it nonetheless accommodated them and provided a roof over their heads, though it contained no chair, table or bed. They began by making a table. Soon this was done. They made it out of an old door from a goat shed. With the help of a rack, it was leaned against the wall at one end, and the other foot was made from a piece of board. Since they had no chairs, the table needed to be high so they could eat, read and study standing up. It took longer to build the beds, but Fr. Otto could do something even in this regard. He saw that the natives used two stands, which could be joined together with a large sailcloth [a hammock]. The advantage of this was that the beds could be folded up during the day and put into a corner. No mattresses were needed; one simply slept on the sailcloth. But it was impossible to sleep without blankets so they needed to buy some. As Fr. Otto later told his Bamberg friends:



It is quite necessary for us to have blankets because we are in the mountains and up to today, May 15, it has been almost always windy and bitterly cold at night. And since the rainy season it has been cold and damp. I need to add my coat and habit as blankets, but often my feet are still freezing. For the moment we do not suffer from the Indian heat. Of course, it is completely different in the Assam Valley where an oppressive heat prevails. The papers often report on people who die of sunstroke, especially many Europeans.<sup>9</sup>

Apart from the blankets and the sailcloth, the bed also had a little pillow filled with pine needles. A certain type of pine tree was indigenous to the Khasi Hills, whose needles are softer and longer than those of our pines at home. For the thrifty superior these needles made a welcome and cheap filling for pillows. With these, the place to sleep had been set up. This was some progress after sleeping on the floor for the first three weeks.

It still took a long while until we got our chairs, so we took our meals standing for one month. 14 days later, the door we used as a table was replaced by a real table. One should not forget that our Khasi are not yet carpenters. When we first tried to get chairs we found two Khasi carpenters who worked for almost three days to produce a simple chair with four legs and a backrest. And what a fine specimen they produced! The legs, backrest and seat were so thick and bulky that I could not lift the chair with one arm. We sent them away and instructed our Khasi servant to find more skilful and diligent workers. It took eight days until they arrived. They are a bit better but not at all what they are supposed to be.<sup>10</sup>

In this way, they slowly managed to furnish the apartment with necessities. In no way did this dampen the mood of the ascetic little group. Fr. Otto wrote:

We are cheerful and happy in our poverty particularly as God has already begun to show His mercy through it. This evening, two young Khasi men aged 19 to 20, who had graduated from the local governmental school here and have been studying Latin for three years, inquired about being taught the Catholic faith. In exchange offered to teach us Khasi and Bengalese. The older one in particular showed a great desire and repeatedly expressed how glad he was to have found Catholic missionaries. Seeing our poverty, he said: "You now want to be poor without any pomp or luxury so that you will be rich in the other life!"

They already used some Christian expressions because they had read Protestant Bibles. I pin great hope on these young men, and am extremely delighted and thankful to God from the bottom of my heart. Now we should pray that the divine mercy will support their good will and that they will reach complete understanding!<sup>11</sup>

**(Endnotes)**

- 1 Letter from Fr. Hopfenmüller in Gauhati to Fr. Jordan, February 21, 1890.
- 2 Archive of Propaganda Fide. Fr. Hopfenmüller's reports to Cardinal Simeoni, March 6, 1890; March 31, 1890. *Indie Orientali* 1892, *Scritture Riferite nei Congressi* vol. 37
- 3 Letter from Fr. Otto to Fr. Jordan, January 9, 1890.
- 4 *The Apostolic Prefecture Assam*. By Fr. Angelus Münzloher, SDS, p. 28f.
- 5 Cf., Off to Shillong by Fr. Superior Otto Hopfenmüller. BV, *Entertainment Supplement*, April 4, 1890, No. 14.
- 6 The misunderstanding derived from the fact that the city of Shillong is called Laban amongst the native inhabitants, which is the name of a near-by village. The missionaries could not have known that. For the natives, Shillong is a 6,450- foot high mountain peak near the city, which is a holy place for them and the seat of the God Shillong. The British named the city founded by them Shillong after the name of the mountain. (Cf., Becker, "The Nongkrem-Puja in the Khasi Mountains" *Anthropos*, volume 4, 1909, pp. 893ff.).
- 7 AGS, Letter from Shillong to Fr. Jordan, February 28, 1890.
- 8 Archive of Propaganda Fide. *Indie Orientali* 1892. *Scritture Riferite nei Congressi* Vol. 37.
- 9 BV, *Entertainment Supplement*, June 13, 1890, no. 24.
- 10 *Idem.*, p. 97.
- 11 Letter from Shillong to Fr. Jordan, March 6, 1890.

## 17. Pastoral Care in Assam

As pointed out by Cardinal Oreglia in Chapter 13, the Province of Assam comprises three different areas: the Assam Valley in the north, the Surma Valley in the south and the mountain range between the two valleys.

Gauhati, Assam's capital at that time, is situated in the Assam Valley and was home to a religious community of 32 Catholics, Europeans and half-castes called Eurasians. About 107 Catholics of the same composition lived scattered in 13 different places in the Assam Valley. An additional 220 native Catholics lived on two tea plantations. These were called *Kols* and they had immigrated from Chota-Nagpur to earn their rice as *kulis* [i.e., workers] on Assam's tea plantations. Fr. Hopfenmüller reported from Shillong to the cardinal prefect of Propaganda Fide on March 6, 1890, that Fr. Broy had not been able to do much for them because he did not speak the language,<sup>1</sup> although he had visited the other Catholics from Gauhati for pastoral care. Upon the missionaries' arrival, Fr. Broy accepted to remain at the mission temporarily to supply pastoral care in the Assam Valley.

A small community of 20 faithful existed south of the mission, in the so-called Surma Valley, which was mainly made up of British civil servants or military personnel. These Catholics gathered for prayer service in a major's house. The major wrote to the missionaries after their arrival and urgently requested occasional visits by a priest.<sup>2</sup>

Furthermore, a rather closed community of 90 faithful lived in a near-by village called Bondashill. These were Christian natives who spoke Bengali, former soldiers who had immigrated long before and had founded the village. They lived separately from the surrounding pagans and Muslims, and in a certain way formed a Christian caste of their own. The downside was that they remained true to their traditions and hence proved to be poor prospects for conversion. As the administrator of Dacca, Fr. Fallize, had told the new missionary superior of Assam from the beginning, relationships in the community were quite difficult because great tension prevailed among the Christians. Furthermore, a Muslim had taken possession of a piece of land that belonged to the mission. A court case was about to begin over it, and one of the community members was to pay the court costs.<sup>3</sup>

Bondashill possessed a small dilapidated chapel. A catechist had been hired to teach religion to the children of the village. Fr. Hopfenmüller recognized immediately that one of them needed to learn Bengali in order care for this community. For this he chose Fr. Angelus. More missionaries were to be sent in the years to come, and once they arrived he would begin working with them in the southern part of the mission.<sup>4</sup>

The middle part of Assam Province lies in the mountain range between the valleys. Here the only base for Catholics was in Shillong. The Catholic community was made up of no more than 20 faithful, including children. Most of them were Europeans or Eurasians along with a few Catholic servants from other Indian regions. Such was the situation of the Catholic communities in Assam. The church rarely had followers from among the native population. Christianization had not yet begun among them.

With his usual zeal, Fr. Otto threw himself into pastoral care for the Catholics living in Shillong. On the first Sunday after his arrival he invited them to Mass. Two ladies and one man came. Dr. Costello, the manager of the local telegraph office and a lukewarm Catholic, had left on a trip, and a Catholic woman was prevented from coming to Mass and receiving Communion by her Protestant husband. When Ms. Costello saw that the missionaries had only one empty room and that the other one served as the chapel, she and the Catholic governess, Miss O'Shea, asked in astonishment: "But do you want to stay here?" – "Yes," was Fr. Otto's calm reply. "We missionaries are satisfied with anything; we need to be toughened up."

After the Gospel reading, Fr. Otto read a short address in English because his fluency in English was not yet sufficient for him to preach extemporaneously. He presented himself as the new superior of the Apostolic Prefecture of Assam, explained the purpose for which they had come, how the bad example of some European Christians was an obstacle to converting pagans, and urged them to support the efforts of the missionaries by prayer, by setting a good example, and by other types of assistance.

After Mass, three of Ms. Costello's servants brought in a table, chairs and some food. The table and chairs were on loan. Although the chairs were made of wicker, and so low that they could not use them to write on or to eat upon, at least the missionaries could use them to rest in from time to time.

The man who had attended morning Mass returned that same afternoon with more chairs. Now they had at least a chair for every missionary. The man was a government civil servant. He and his Presbyterian wife had married in the Anglican rite and their children had been baptized by a British minister. He apologized for the fact that no priest had been there. “What would I have done if my child had died without being baptized?”

Fr. Otto pointed out that anybody could baptize in such cases, but that it would be better for a Catholic father to baptize his children himself instead of calling a Protestant minister. With a Protestant baptism, there was a danger that they would later fall for Protestant heresy. “The situation was an excuse for you,” Fr. Otto added, “but later you will admit that you did wrong. In the meantime, the issue can be taken care of if you are of good will and want to become our friend. Do you wish to send your children, of whom the oldest is only five years old, to our school and church and let them be raised Catholic?” The clear answer was: “Yes!”

“Do you wish,” the superior continued, “to repeat your marriage vows in front of a priest and two witnesses so that everything will be correct?” The question was answered with another “Yes.”

“I see that you are of good will from the way you brought us chairs and from your attendance at Mass. Therefore, I hope that everything will turn out well with God’s grace and that we shall become good friends.” The conversation ended with these words.<sup>5</sup>

To fire up the lukewarm, Fr. Otto did not hesitate to visit them in their homes. He soon convinced the chairman of the telegraph office to come with his sons to Mass, from which he was usually absent. One son was 13 years old and the other was 18. Neither of them had received Holy Communion or learned the catechism. The superior repeatedly visited their father and asked him to send his other children to him so he could teach them. His six-year-old daughter and eight-year-old son came a few times, but then stayed away. There was nothing to do about the older boys. After Fr. Otto had repeatedly pressed the father to send them, the father talked himself out of it by saying that in a few months time he would send his children to a Catholic institute in Agra where his eldest daughter was married. In a letter to Fr. Jordan Fr. Otto writes:<sup>6</sup>

On the Feast of St. Joseph, I went to visit a Catholic official who had his children raised Protestant. He was at his club so I had him called.

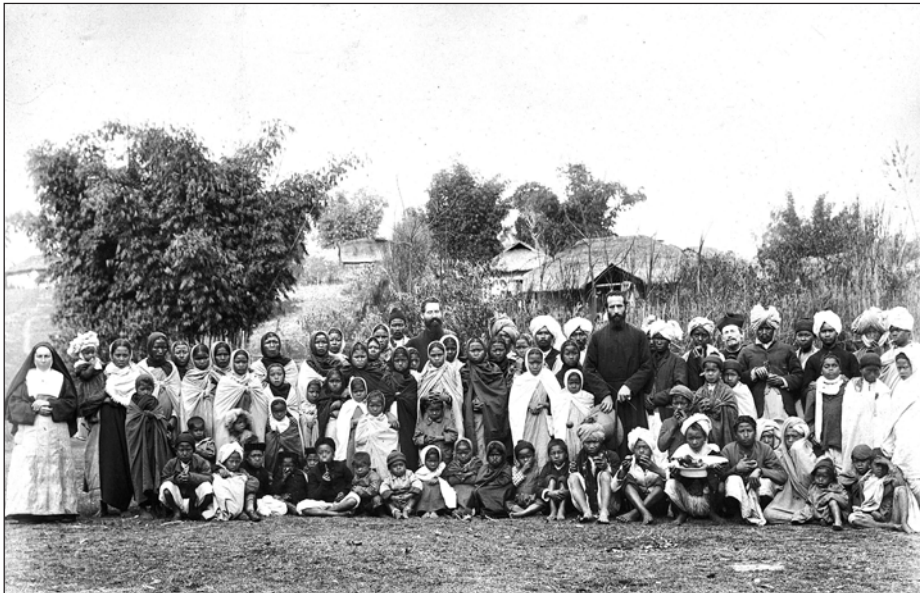
He promised to come out but did not appear even after I waited for him for half an hour. In the meantime, I talked to his wife, who had been a Presbyterian missionary sister, and had been educated in a girl's high school in Hyderabad. A rather meaningless discussion ensued with her, which reminded me again of the necessity of thorough theological study. "We are all Christians," she said, "one's denomination does not matter." When I took her at her word, saying that then it should not be a problem for her to let her children be raised Catholic if it did not matter to her anyway, she commented: "The Presbyterian confession is better." Having ended this subject, we moved on to the Bible. Of these things, she said: "What would my family say!" At the end, I asked her for a meeting with her husband and she promised to arrange it. We will see whether she keeps her promise. One can see how much suffering this tiny flock must bear.

I tried twice to visit another Catholic who had stayed away from Mass thus far, but I never met him since he was hardly ever home. I left word for him to come to me, but until now I have not seen him.

Fr. Otto urged his Bamberg friends to include these and all lost sheep in their prayers.

Fr. Broy informed me that of the 129 European Catholics living scattered among the 5 million unbelievers in Assam, a large number have died or have become more or less indifferent and unchristian. There was the example of a man in Dhubri who used to be Protestant. To marry a Catholic woman he converted to Catholicism. After that he fell away again. After his wife died he wanted to marry his Catholic sister-in-law with whom he shares a house, and therefore, to become Catholic again. These people do not deserve the name Catholic and I refuse to accept them if no thorough and serious penitence takes place. I see that the wheat and the weeds grow next to each other in God's wide world. God needs to be forbearing and patient with humankind; indeed, with all the godlessness existing on earth, His compassion needs to be as high as heaven. But good wheat can still be found everywhere and from this we hope for a good harvest for the kingdom of light and love, because our Lord Jesus Christ reigns.<sup>7</sup>

To make the poor chapel more appropriate for Mass, the superior put his shoulder to the wheel whenever he was free from his other activities. As soon as he was



The first conversions



Fr. Chrysostomus Mayr, SDS, with Khasi catechists

able to find a carpenter, Fr. Otto had him make an altar, four pews, a confessional grill and a little cabinet for church items. This way, the room no longer looked empty or uninviting. Flowers and candles had to do the rest. On Easter a more solemn Mass could be celebrated for the first time. Fr. Hopfenmüller describes the Easter celebration.

We held our first High Mass. Fr. Angelus celebrated; Br. Joseph and I sang the choral Mass. After the Gospel, I gave a short sermon in English. I was comforted to see one more woman in our community who until then had not come to Mass because supposedly her husband would not tolerate it. Furthermore, our community had grown by four more native servants of the governor, who had just returned to the province from his travels. A Catholic family of goodwill from Gauhati has also been transferred here. The man is an official clerk. In the afternoon we sang our vespers alone with no participants. Even though we celebrated Easter with scant festivity, my soul was filled with cheerful Easter rejoicing. Christ has risen from the dead, my salvation has been completed, the world of the flesh has been defeated, and I can become glorious like my Jesus: these thoughts passed through me despite the humble solemnity.<sup>8</sup>

Just as every missionary feels a painful melancholy at the lack of solemn and uplifting Masses like those in our churches back home, especially the first time living under the poor and simple conditions of missionary life, so this feeling took root in Fr. Hopfenmüller. He expressed it in a letter which he wrote from Shillong addressed to his successor back in Seußling on March 25, 1890.

I feel the urge to write a special letter to my dear friends of my former parish, to show my gratitude for the enormous love and willingness to sacrifice that they expressed during my last visit. Their alms contributed to the ship that carried us over the ocean, to the train that transported us from there, and finally to the oxen that pulled our luggage while we got sunburned walking next to it. With all my heart, I again wish to thank everyone who, through prayer and alms, has shown and continues to show his love to God, to other souls, and to me, God's unworthy servant.

When one lives in a pagan country without any public church celebrations, with no churches, no bells, no altar, no baptismal font, no confessional, no pulpit, no pictures, no candlesticks, no decorations, no



banners, no processional cross or many other things, living in a small humble room, simply reading a low Mass in front of three or four participants – then one really understands what people possess in Christian countries. What a joy it is to be Christian, to possess the holy faith and the entire fullness of church graces and ceremonies! What a shame and responsibility it is when Christians do not use all of these treasures of the faith to sanctify themselves and become happy on earth and blessed in heaven. What a shame it is when, despite all the good deeds of Christianity, they live in godlessness, sin, and vice, and only do what their low carnal appetites desire! They will be deprived, damned, and unhappy here and for eternity, and rightfully so. Oh, I urge my former parishioners, for the sake of the love they have demonstrated to me, to love God above anything, to observe all His laws, to obey their lawful pastor forever and in every regard, and in this way to be blessed.<sup>9</sup>

If it was already difficult to persuade the existing Catholics to attend Sunday Mass, it comes as no surprise that they never attended other religious events. No one ever showed up for Mass on workdays, nor for evening Mass even though Fr. Otto had called on them to do so. “We are alone at evening Mass, but this is no reason to stop holding it.”<sup>10</sup>

It did not go much better during May Devotions. A special joy prevailed in the little missionary house on May 1. Missionary Fr. Broy from Gauhati had made them a small tabernacle as a gift. From this day on, they could reserve the Blessed Sacrament in it and celebrate Benediction. May Devotions took place at 6:30 p.m. every evening in May. The husband and wife of a secretary’s family only showed up three times after having been transferred from Gauhati to Shillong. Next to the family of the servants to Dr. Costello, they had been one of the most committed families. So our missionaries needed to hold their May Devotions alone in front of the altar decorated as much as possible with garlands and roses.<sup>11</sup> They were destined to the same fate during the time of the Sacred Heart of Jesus Devotions in the month of June.

To excuse themselves some said: “Your chapel is too small, there is no space!” In the meantime, the chapel had never been so full that other people could not fit because there had never been more than 12 people at once.<sup>12</sup>

From my description, friends at home will recognize that Catholic immigrants here are not necessarily the best Catholics. Yes, even in this region, the experiences of other missionaries have confirmed that Catholic and Protestant Europeans are merely obstacles to the missions. Their dulled sense of religion as well as the other areas of their life which only know leisurely pleasures and always seek reasons to indulge them can never set a good example for the native people. Moreover, the actions of these so-called Christians hardly exhibit Christianity, or better, its beautiful heavenly side. Only the life of renunciation practiced by missionaries can act as a counterbalance. We need to be able to say to the natives:

“Look at our life. This is the true Christian life which Jesus taught us and of which He was a living example. This is heavenly Christianity which brings peace and eternal life. Our countrymen are only called Christians, but do not distinguish themselves as such by their deeds. Do not get annoyed by them and do not allow bad Christians to prevent you from recognizing the good, heavenly, seed of gold.”

Nonetheless, it is sad that the situation is the way it is, and even at home there are many people like this who offend those who are not part of our church. Our priests and good, moral, and spiritual Catholics back home must strive all the more to save the honour of God and of Christ and to present Christianity in its spiritual and heavenly beauty to the world.<sup>13</sup>

It was particularly painful to Fr. Hopfenmüller that only six people from his little community in Shillong were fulfilling their Easter duty. The others would have had enough time to do so since Eastertide in India lasted through Trinity Sunday. This happened despite his continuous rebukes. It was no better in other parts of Assam where great coldness and indifference prevailed in other hearts.

Even here, many do not want to fulfil their Easter duty. Our reverend superior intends to threaten them with excommunication. Some of them do not even come to Mass on Sunday. What a sad situation!<sup>14</sup>

It was good that it never came to excommunication. Most likely that would have resulted in the opposite of the hoped-for effect. After a longer stay in Assam, Fr. Otto would have become more understanding toward the strange character of the half-castes born and raised in India. Self-discipline was not their strongest

trait. Their entire being leaned more toward laxity, indecisiveness, and instability. Furthermore, there was longstanding religious neglect. Previously, it had only been possible for them to attend Mass once or twice a year. By doing so, they believed they had fulfilled their duty. This only reinforced their superficial way of life. Such behaviour could not be changed all at once. One could only hope for improvement over time by being patient and loving, along with frequent instruction and rebukes. The same church practices also applied to the English who moved to Assam. They were not sterling either. But in later years, good Catholics could be found among the civil servants and tea planters who not only loyally fulfilled their religious duty but also supported the activities of the mission as best they could.

Fr. Hopfenmüller applied his usual zeal to improve the community entrusted to him. Fr. Angelus, his companion and sharer in the initial difficulties of the Assam Mission, recounts:

The first thing he tried to do was to rekindle the spirit of piety in Catholics living in Shillong. He was particularly keen to bring back to the right path those who had completely forgotten and neglected their religious laws, especially regarding Mass and the reception of the holy sacraments. Nothing was too difficult for him. He often went from door to door to convince them and to show them the serious situation they were in. When he could not go personally, he wrote long letters. I once found a letter he had addressed to a Protestant woman. In it he encouraged her to live with her husband in peace and harmony.<sup>15</sup>

The less satisfying his pastoral work among the existing Catholics proved to be, the more Fr. Otto set his hopes on the native population. It was for these he had travelled to Assam in the first place to preach the Gospel to them. Where to begin from among the 63 different peoples of Assam was decided by local conditions. Shillong, nestled in the heart of the Khasi Mountains, was to be the centre of the mission. The native people living there called themselves Khasi. The missionary activity was to begin especially among them in order to build strong support for the mission. "If we cannot build up a community of Khasi, then we are useless here," was Fr. Otto's point of view.<sup>16</sup> Full of hope, he dispelled the occasional depressing shadows with a bright and joyful picture of a young, eager community of native Christians. He outlines his vision in an essay to his countrymen in Bamberg:

While the old Christians and Catholics show themselves ungrateful toward God's love and let the heavenly dew of mercy fall on infertile ground, crush it, and let thorns and weeds grow over it, Jesus' heart, which only wishes to make people happy and blessed, desires other and better souls who are grateful for his grace. These crowns, which are disdained by sterile hearts, will be given to others. I took the liberty of publicly saying this to our few Catholics in my sermon on the Feast of the Ascension of Christ. I pointed to the story of the 40 martyrs. They stood naked on a frozen lake to freeze to death. Suddenly their guard saw 39 crowns floating down from the sky. Where is the 40<sup>th</sup>? Behold, the answer to the riddle became quickly apparent. One of them cowardly jumped into the warm bath which had been set up next to them as a temptation. Thus he lost the crown and his hope-for continuation of life. Additionally, his body could not handle the sudden change from cold to heat. But the King of Magnificence didn't want to prepare a crown in vain. He found someone else worthy of it. At once, the guard was enlightened; he took off his clothes and stood with the martyrs. I firmly believe that this is one of the reasons why God has particularly awakened the zeal for missions among us good Catholics at this particular time. His loving heart desires substitutes for the dried up tendril branches. The Khasi people appear to me to be predestined by God to enter the ranks of Catholic people, as was the good fortune of our own ancestors 1,000 years ago. Their great-grandsons still participate in it. I have sufficient reason for this belief. What I have seen and heard until now justifies my hope.<sup>17</sup>

### **(Endnotes)**

- <sup>1</sup> Archive of Propaganda Fide. *Indie Orientali* 1892. *Scritture Riferite nei Congressi* Vol. 37.
- <sup>2</sup> AGS. Letter from Fr. Otto to Fr. Jordan, February 15, 1890.
- <sup>3</sup> Letter of Fr. Otto to Fr. Jordan, February 9, 1890.
- <sup>4</sup> Letter of Fr. Otto to Fr. Jordan, February 15, 1890.
- <sup>5</sup> BV, *Entertainment Supplement*, April 4, 1890, No. 14, p. 57.
- <sup>6</sup> AGS. Letter from Shillong, March 23, 1890.
- <sup>7</sup> BV, *Entertainment Supplement*, April 4, 1890, No. 14, p. 57.
- <sup>8</sup> Letter from Shillong to Fr. Jordan, April 8, 1890.
- <sup>9</sup> Original with Dean Schramm in Hirschaid. Published in BV, April 28, 1890, No. 95.
- <sup>10</sup> Letter from Shillong to Fr. Jordan, March 23, 1890.
- <sup>11</sup> Na ki lum Shillong. By Fr. Otto. BV, *Entertainment Supplement*, June 13, 1890, No. 24, p. 98.

- <sup>12</sup> Letter from Shillong to Fr. Jordan, June 1, 1890.
- <sup>13</sup> BV, Entertainment Supplement, June 13, 1890, No. 24, p. 98.
- <sup>14</sup> AGS. Fr. Angelus Münzloher to Fr. Jordan, June 1890.
- <sup>15</sup> AGS. Letter from Fr. Angelus in Gauhati to Fr. Jordan, October 15, 1890.
- <sup>16</sup> Letter from Shillong to Fr. Jordan, June 1, 1890.
- <sup>17</sup> BV, Entertainment Supplement, June 13, 1890, No. 24, p. 99.

## 18. Missionary to the Pagans

One finds many special characteristics among the numerous mountain dwelling people in the heights of Assam which distinguish them advantageously from the Hindus and Muslims living in the valley and from the rest of India in general. Not only are they stronger, simpler, more upright and independent than the others, but their customs and outlook allow them to live with fewer difficulties after the introduction of Christianity. They lack the caste system entirely, which is a large obstacle to missionary activities in the valleys of Assam and other parts of India. The status of women is also completely different. The Khasi woman is not required to spend her days secluded in a house; to the contrary, in some parts she is more respected and influential than the man. The monogamy prevails in most parts. Polygamy is unknown. These conditions naturally facilitate missionary activity and are very beneficial.

It was a good idea Fr. Hopfenmüller had to begin their missionary activity with the mountain people, in particular with the Khasi tribe who lived in the midst of all of them. His entire effort was aimed at learning their language. “Our next task,” he wrote in his first report to *Bamberger Volksblatt*, “is to learn the Khasi language. Furthermore, we need to perfect our English to exercise our pastoral care among European Catholics and to be able to deal with the remaining Englishmen.”<sup>1</sup>

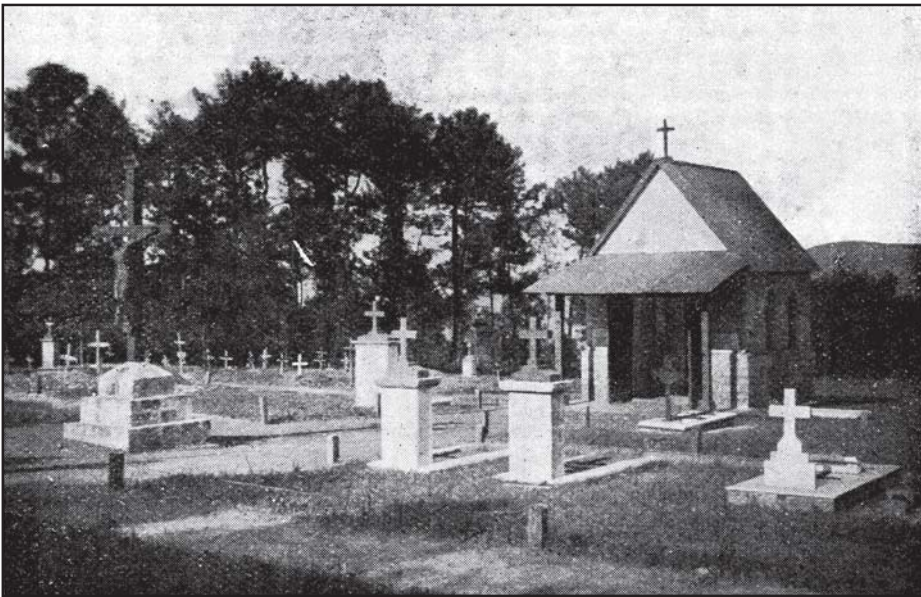
Already on March 6, 1890, he informed the cardinal prefect of Propaganda Fide that he had instructed Fr. Angelus to learn Bengali so that he could work in the southern part of the mission among the Bengali people; he himself was to learn Khasi to begin evangelizing among the mountain peoples.<sup>2</sup> While Fr. Angelus found a Bengali to help him learn the language, Fr. Otto had the aid of the Khasi-servant he had hired to cook and take care of household work.<sup>3</sup>

The books published in Khasi by Methodist missionaries were also very useful to Fr. Hopfenmüller. About 50 years earlier, the Methodists had settled among the Khasi people. They already had a number of followers, as well as churches, chapels and several schools.

Even if heresy is an obstacle and an evil, on the one hand, stealing souls from God’s heart, in this case it still has its purpose in God’s plan. I found grammar and textbooks, pieces from the Holy Gospel and a songbook in Khasi, which was of excellent use during my studies. Of



Salvatorian Sisters with orphanage girls



The catholic cemetery at Shillong

course, we will have to compete with the preachers and followers of this Calvinist-Methodist sect in educating the Khasi.<sup>4</sup>

Because the Khasi lacked any type of literature or alphabet, the preparatory work done by the Protestant mission naturally was of great help.

It was also very useful to have Fr. Broy remain in Assam for the time being. The latter not only took care of the Assam Valley, over Easter he also offered to care for the Christians in Bondashill and Silchar in the south of the mission. Furthermore, he was authorized to confer the sacrament of Confirmation. Upon Fr. Broy's request, Fr. Hopfenmüller asked the cardinal prefect of Propaganda Fide if he could continue to do so in the future. Fr. Broy had received and exercised such authorization since he was the only priest in Assam. After the reorganization of ecclesial structures in Assam, no one knew if this permission was still valid. Cardinal Simeoni replied on May 12, 1890, that it would be wise to continue operating under the authorization until they had got to know the places and customs. Fr. Hopfenmüller exercised the office whenever he believed it best and notified Propaganda Fide. According to tradition, places where no bishop is present were only supposed to have one priest authorized to confer Confirmation.<sup>5</sup>

Fr. Hopfenmüller welcomed letting Fr. Broy continue this work for as long as he remained in Assam. This way he could more thoroughly dedicate himself to studying the language. His entire day was dedicated to learning Khasi as Fr. Angelus reported:

He worked ceaselessly from early morning to late in the evening, not wasting a single minute. He awoke at 5 o'clock in the morning and after having washed, he threw himself onto the floor. Lying with his face on the floor he said his morning prayer. Following this he knelt through his devotions in the chapel, which were then followed by Holy Mass which he read reverently. He usually prayed a bit more after breakfast. Then he began studying, something which he undertook wholeheartedly, while praying for the aid of the Holy Spirit. This request was granted to him in a special way because it was strange how quickly he learned Khasi at his age. After three to four weeks he could already communicate quite well with the servant. His studies were only interrupted at 10 o'clock when he visited the Divine Saviour in the Blessed Sacrament. At 12:00 he made his examination of conscience, followed by lunch. He always tried to find a useful way to spend



recreation through deep and informative conversation. He did not know what it meant to be gloomy or to let his head hang down. He always knew how to cheer us up with innocent jokes and cheerful stories. Following recreation he did his spiritual reading, which often lasted more than an hour. Then he continued studying until evening prayer, followed by another examination of conscience and the rosary. After dinner, when he was already tired, he usually wrote letters. At times he worked so hard that he fell asleep while writing.<sup>6</sup>

Learning the language consumed much of Fr. Hopfenmüller's day. He dedicated all his time to this task as far as it was possible given the religious exercises and the prevailing customs of religious life. He wrote jokingly to his friends in Bamberg about this: "Up until now, I have used my time to memorize the strange sounds of the Khasi language in my old brain. It is more difficult than chopping wood and threshing grain!"<sup>7</sup> Nonetheless, he managed to acquire a good knowledge of the language due to his perseverance and dogged energy.

To better prepare himself for his work among the Khasi, Fr. Otto also familiarized himself with their customs and habits, using every occasion to learn more:

On Saturday I heard the sound of bigger and smaller drums several times. I asked our Khasi servant what this meant. He told me an old man had died. The drums are the equivalent of our bells tolling for the dead. On Saturday, I also noticed a large bonfire near our house. The servant said: "The Khasi generally burn their dead. The old man is being cremated."<sup>8</sup>

All the things the superior learned about the life and activities of these people during his short stay is a sign of his interest in the work he was doing, but also of the diligence with which he tried to get closer to them by observing and learning more about them.

The Khasi are not a wild people but a bit more cultured, though they are still on a low level. Agriculture and some commercial activity already exist, as well as a bit of trade in native products. Trade in European things is mostly in the hands of Hindus and Muslims who have settled among them. The Protestant missionary schools have already resulted in a number of educated Khasi who speak English and are often used as lower-level civil servants of the British government. Their clothes are proper and decent. They either wear shirts with jackets or a white

cloth around the upper part of the body. A skirt reaching down to the knees covers the lower part of their bodies. They are naked only from their knees down. The more wealthy people also wear socks and shoes. The women wear long gowns down to their feet. Over all, the people are poor but not desperately poor. One rarely finds a beggar among them. Only those truly unfit to work go begging. We once saw 22 houses burn down. I asked the servant whether it was not a custom to collect alms in such a case. "No," he replied. "Do they have fire insurance?" I continued asking. He answered, "No." I asked: "What do these people do to reconstruct their homes?" He replied: "The wealthy find their own means, and the poor satisfy themselves with simple huts." Indeed, it is like that. The huts of the poor are simple shacks made of reeds and wood, coated by a mix of mud and cow dung and covered with long blades of grass. Even our little house, which is made of stone, has a thatch roof. The wealthy build with stone and cover with metal; all houses are one-storey to resist the frequent earthquakes better. One earthquake occurred on the night of March 8 to 9, 1890. When I awoke I heard the plates rattling and the windows and walls trembling. At first, I thought it was a storm howling outside, but the storm stopped howling and the rattling and trembling continued. The following day we were given confirmation that an earthquake had caused the shaking.<sup>9</sup>

The people live very simply because they are poor. The poorer ones rarely eat meat. Nor do they know bread. Just rice cakes. They do not have grain or barley. Wheat is imported from outside and is very expensive. As in the rest of India, their staple food is rice. They also eat potatoes and grow other field crops and vegetables. The people carry fish-shaped baskets that taper to a point at the bottom while a wide band tied around the basket is placed around the forehead. This is how they carry the basket on their heads.

Their customs are simple. Like anywhere else in the world, there are good and bad people. Over all, their customs are good. They live with only one partner in marriage, which is a great advantage, though they usually get married quite early: the men between age 16-18 and the girls from 14 to 16. This is a nuisance that brings with it another, namely, the bad habit of frequently running away and divorcing. In general, they are very honest. This was better before the British took possession of their country, as a missionary told me who passed through the area twice.

“When I came to Shillong for the first time 20 years ago, I asked whether there were Khasi in prison. The answer was ‘No.’ When I came for a second time, the reply to my same question was, ‘Quite a few.’ Rich Englishmen needed the Khasi as servants. The Khasi saw the luxurious life, desired the same for themselves, and were tempted to steal. The Europeans have also ruined the tribe with regard to chastity because they seduced several women into indecency.”

The Khasi are healthy and strong. A Bengali man told me that when they want, they can do the work of five men. But their will is lacking at times, so they are quite lazy. In particular, one bad habit is widely diffused that impedes a working spirit. It is chewing pan leaves (pepper leaves) coated with slaked lime and mixed with betel nut. This mixture has a strong taste, similar to the tobacco chewed in Germany in such an offensive manner. Every Khasi, man or woman, large or small, carries his pan, betel and a box of lime in a little pocket. Mixing it up takes up a lot of time, and detracts from work. Since they chew almost constantly, this is a continual distraction during work time. They do not count their waking hours according to time but according to the number of betel they have chewed along the way. Its juice colours their lips dark brown and their teeth so they do not stand out nicely against their dark skin. This particularly disfigures the women. Apart from that their features are not unpleasant; they just generally have wide faces. One tempting drink for the many drinkers is called *kiad*, a sort of liquor made from rice.

Their religion is not actually idolatry insofar as they do not have idols. Instead they have a superstitious fear of evil spirits called *ksuid*, which are worshiped as gods which they placate with sacrifices so they will not harm them. They do this particularly when they are ill. Several men in every community understand and take care of these sacrifices, but they are not actually priests. They correspond to the type of people often found in Christian countries who apply unauthorized blessings and superstitious customs. They sacrifice chickens and goats. One terrible type of superstition prevailing in all their religious concepts is snake-worship, although only practiced by a few people. The extremely poisonous speckled cobra is kept in the house and worshiped as a goddess. By doing this one is supposed to gain prosperity. In serious matters, the snake needs to be pacified with human blood. A woman was found murdered a short while ago. The people suspected that she

had been killed by one of these snake worshipers in order to give human blood to their household snake. It is the people's religious need, but they only need to be shown the true light.

Leaving out the things Fr. Otto did not yet know with precision, this shall be enough to demonstrate his efforts to comprehend the peculiarities of the Khasi people.

He did not learn the language, customs, and habits for his own edification, but as an aid in conversion. As soon as he progressed further in the language, he used it in everyday activities. Religious activities needed to be the beginning of the missionary process of converting the locals. This foundation came before all else. After a few weeks the eager mission superior began to translate the "Lord's Prayer" and the "Hail Mary" into Khasi.<sup>10</sup> Because of his great love of singing, Fr. Otto later translated a few songs into Khasi. It was a great pleasure for him to sing with the other brothers after a meal during recreation. In his mind, he already saw himself practicing them with a crowd of newly converted Khasi.<sup>11</sup> Fr. Otto invested the greatest amount of work in translating the catechism into Khasi. On April 16, 1890 he reported:

I have taken a 15-year-old Khasi into our house who has been educated a bit in English. I want to teach him and later to use him as a teacher. I hope he will be useful. Pray with me that it will work out! With the help of this young man I am now translating the catechism. We have already translated two lessons and I think it is usable.<sup>12</sup>

He reported this in greater detail to the cardinal prefect, saying that he had based his translation of the English catechism on a copy received from the Archdiocese of Calcutta and had only added a few questions from his catechism at home that he believed suited the Khasi. Furthermore, he had appended morning and evening prayers, the "Angel of God," the prayer for receiving the sacraments of Penance and Eucharist, the awakening of the three divine virtues, as well as prayers during Mass. An elderly educated Khasi would then go through everything again, in case it contained mistakes. Expressions which could not be translated into Khasi he either left in Latin, for instance "sacrament" and "baptism," or in English, like the word for "Mass," etc.<sup>13</sup> The work progressed well due to the superior's restless eagerness. It was already the end of May.<sup>14</sup> On August 4, 1890, he reported to the cardinal prefect of Propaganda Fide that the printers of the Jesuits in Calcutta had edited the catechism, and the first sheet had already been printed.<sup>15</sup> As soon as he had finished this task he began translating *Schuster's*

*Bible Stories*. By mid-August he had managed to complete the Old Testament and had almost finished *The Life of Jesus and the Blessed Virgin Mary*.<sup>16</sup>

All the while, Fr. Hopfenmüller never let his direct contact with the pagan world lapse. The arrival of the new missionaries in Shillong had caused such a stir that the natives had come out to meet them, partly because they were curious, partly because they wanted to exploit them, and partly out of interest in their religion. The editor of *Bamberger Volksblatt* gave more information about this on June 10, 1890:

Yesterday, we were delighted by a second letter from the father superior of the mission in Shillong, our beloved friend, Dr. Hopfenmüller, to which he added a long article for the newspaper. We will print the article in the next entertainment page. The writing is dated May 16, so it took 23 days to arrive. We inform the missionary's large circle of friends what he wrote in his letter to us:

“My life is still rather monotonous here: studying, reading the catechism, praying, observing. The solitude was interrupted by frequent visits from the Khasi in the beginning, now fewer, by those who wanted to see the new missionaries. Protestants as well as pagan Khasi came almost daily to visit us during the first two months. Partly they came out of curiosity and partly to get to know the difference between Catholic and Protestant doctrine. This prepares our missionary activity in a special way as it awakens and preserves interest and curiosity for our work. The attitude of many of them assured us of success once we will be able to preach in their language. Our poor cloistered life particularly won over the simple Khasi for us. It stands in sharp contrast to the life of the married Protestant missionaries who enjoy living in luxury. I have good hope, but if I only had greater means! Then I could easily win teachers among the educated Khasi, because if I want to have a teacher, I need to pay him; many have already offered their services in this regard. Continue doing your utmost for our mission and Society and do not forget us in your prayers! I think of you daily. My state of health is excellent. You would hardly recognize me. Just like the other missionaries, I already have quite a beard.”

A number of young Bengali lived among the natives of Shillong and worked as clerks in the government offices because they spoke English. Some of them also came to visit the new missionaries. Fr. Otto reported on them in a letter to the general superior, Fr. Jordan:

From time to time some small waves occur in our quiet life of preparation from contact with the outer world, a foretaste of our future life. Joyful excitement and hope alternates with disappointment. The two young men I told you about have already cooled to us. They spoke beautiful words, a Bengali characteristic, but their actions did not correspond. I later found out that one of them was Bengali and Muslim. For this reason, he always defended Islam. After that, he stopped coming. He is still very friendly, but I have lost any hope of converting him. Many others have come by in the meantime awakening hope in us. Ten young men, pagan Khasi, and Methodists came to visit and listen on Easter, inquiring about the difference between Catholics and Protestants. A young clerk from Bengal, a Brahmin, came to visit us offering to help Fr. Angelus with his Bengali; he has already given him two lessons. In return, he wished to learn Catholic principles. During the two conversations I had with him, he proved to be a perfect rationalist. So I have little hope of converting him, but I again realized how necessary a thorough training is for a missionary in India. I want to pass on to you the following conversation:

Me: Do you believe in the existence of a perfect God?

He: Yes.

Me: That God's revelation is necessary?

He: No. I think a conscience is sufficient that knows the difference between good and bad. God sends me out into the world and gives me the necessary light of conscience.

Me: That is not enough. First, human reason and the conscience can err. The different religions have opposing opinions on reality; some believe some things to be good while others believe them to be bad and vice versa. For example, Muslims believe in polygamy and believe it to be allowed by their conscience. Christians detest polygamy. Second, there are many truths in heaven and on earth that we cannot all recognize by using our conscience. It is true that conscience lets us recognize the holy and just God. Up to a certain point, our conscience teaches us the difference between good and bad, but it does not provide absolute security and does not teach us everything. Security and all the truth mankind needs require God's revelation.

He: Different opinions are prejudices acquired from birth onwards. Furthermore, we all have something in common.

Me: It is true that some basic ideas can be found everywhere. They stem from Adam's original revelation as the enduring truth. The things we have in common are few; the things dividing us are an inextricable tangle. God cannot like that the little truth is mixed with so much falsity and diversity. There can only be one truth that must be willed by God for mankind and is therefore revealed.

He: God reveals Himself from time to time especially through wise and holy men.

Me: Right, you are moving toward the correct way of thinking. That is also our belief. Not in a sense that God speaks audibly from heaven, but rather in the way He reveals Himself through His patriarchs, prophets and lastly through His own Son.

He: Even Hindus incarnate themselves ten times.

Me: Yes, this is my point. It matters that one can point to people and prove that God became man through them. We can prove that. Is it also possible for you?

He: I will think about it for the next time we speak.

The next time it was clear he got precious little out of the previous session. The conversation turned to the world's pleasures and passion. It proceeded as follows:

He: I read in your Bible that Christ once cursed a tree. Is that sanctity? What fault does the tree have if it does not bear any fruit?

Me: That is only a parable to show that his disciples should not only have a name and leaves but also fruit; that they harvest a curse without fruit.

He: Christ just wanted to show his power, but what is great about a man who kills his own pigeons to show his power over them?

Me: When somebody doubts my ownership, to prove that I am the master is it not reasonable and necessary to slaughter and eat what is mine without anyone having the right to object to it? In order to overcome the Jews' doubts that he was God's son, He

needed to show His power over life and death. This would not have been necessary without them.<sup>17</sup>

The interest Fr. Otto often found for religion and his own zeal did not permit him to rest or to try to appear in public as soon as possible. The translation of the catechism had been completed and he had become fluent in English. He was thinking about renting out a room to hold religious talks for the educated natives — in English for the time being. Soon, a favourable occasion presented itself. The deputy district official of Shillong, a wealthy Khasi called Jeebon Roy, asked him for help to send his sons to the Jesuit college of St. Xavier's in Calcutta. The rector did not want to take pagans into his home. The issue was resolved so that at least one of the boys could attend the day school, as it is called in India. This meant that the boy did not live in the college but in a private home outside the college like our students, and went to school from there. Fr. Hopfenmüller managed to enrol the other son in a different college. When their father came to thank him for his efforts and to ask him to recommend his son in Calcutta to the rector's and professors' special care, he also offered him a room he owned that he could use as a school. "I was extremely delighted by this," Fr. Otto recounted, "but due to my previous experiences, I asked for the rental cost. 'For one year, I ask nothing apart from your keeping the room in good condition. For that period of time, you can figure out how to organize your affairs.'"<sup>18</sup> That was the pagan official's reply.

After this obstacle had been removed, Fr. Hopfenmüller immediately began to put up notices that he would hold talks in this room given to him gratis by the highest official of the Khasi people.<sup>19</sup> The success unfortunately did not correspond to his efforts. He reported on it to the cardinal prefect of Propaganda Fide:

At least now I could do a little to spread the Catholic faith. Twice a week, I held religious classes for educated native men in English on the convincing concepts of our faith. I had little success. Despite the fact that I had publicly announced it, only five people came to the first meeting, most of whom were students, so I did not even begin. The second time I was determined to begin. Twelve people showed up. The third time, seven, and yesterday I had eight people. Five of them left in the midst of the discussion.<sup>20</sup>

Fr. Hopfenmüller believed that the reason for this was in the public school system, where no religious education was taught and where pupils only received the poison of indifference to religion caused by mixing Protestants, Hindus, Muslims,



Animists and other religious adherents. He was aware that not much could be hoped for by following this path.

Whoever believes that one can immediately take big steps as a missionary and make a display of a large number of baptized after only a few weeks should come here and try. He will experience that God's work progresses slowly. Yesterday we read the apostolic story at table of how St. Paul preached in the large city of Athens in Greece, whose language he spoke and read very well. His success was that only a few people began to believe. The others laughed at him and said: "We want to hear you another time!" Even here I have experienced that religious indifference from people raised in missionary or government schools. Just as in Bavaria, St. Paul's word can be applied: "God does not choose many wise people from this world, but instead chooses the foolish." We also need to follow Christ's law: To preach the Gospel to the poor. They are the most capable, gifted and willing to assimilate it.<sup>21</sup>

From the start, Fr. Otto had turned his attention to beginning his missionary activity among the simple and modest Khasi people and hoped that a good harvest lay ahead of him. On March 31, 1890, he wrote to the cardinal prefect of Propaganda Fide:

I find the Khasi people in good form. Many youth and adult men have come to visit us and to see the new missionaries. They are very friendly and seem to be well-disposed toward our cause, giving us hope for good fruits.<sup>22</sup>

Satisfied, the cardinal prefect replied to him on May 30, 1890: "The news you inform me of, indeed holds out the prospect of great success in good works in the future. This hope is further raised in me by your piety and zeal in spreading the faith."<sup>23</sup> To his friends in Bamberg, Fr. Hopfenmüller wrote in the same vein:

The prospect exists of the Khasi accepting the Gospel and the Christian truth once the genuine one is preached to them by Catholic missionaries and provided the latter, through their Spartan and hardworking lives, always set the example of a blessed and righteous Christian life.<sup>24</sup>

His hope for a successful outcome of the missionary work among the Khasi took different turns in the many letters he wrote. He was always eager to undertake the work and give shape to the cardinal prefect's wish that "the seeds of the Christian faith should take root there and develop robustly" (letter from

May 12, 1890). After having studied the Khasi language for months, he hoped to begin his activity at the start of September.<sup>25</sup> The first catechism in Khasi was to be completed by then to facilitate his work among the people.

### (Endnotes)

- <sup>1</sup> BV, Entertainment Supplement, April 4, 1890, No. 14, p. 58.
- <sup>2</sup> Archive of Propaganda Fide. Indie Orientali 1892. Scritture Riferite nei Congressi Vol 37. Letter from Fr. Otto, March 6 & 31, 1890.
- <sup>3</sup> Letter from Fr. Otto in Shillong to Fr. Jordan, March 23, 1890.
- <sup>4</sup> BV, Entertainment Supplement, June 13, 1890, No. 24, p. 99.
- <sup>5</sup> Archive of Propaganda Fide. Lettere e Decreti della S. Congregazione e Biglietti di M. Segretario 1890, Vol 386, No. 1646.
- <sup>6</sup> AGS. Letter from Fr. Angelus in Gauhati to Fr. Jordan, October 15, 1890.
- <sup>7</sup> BV, Entertainment Supplement, June 13, 1890, p. 99.
- <sup>8</sup> BV, Entertainment Supplement, April 4, 1890, p. 58.
- <sup>9</sup> BV, Entertainment Supplement, June 13, 1890, p. 100.
- <sup>10</sup> Letter to Fr. Schramm in Seußling, March 25, 1890.
- <sup>11</sup> Letter of Fr. Angelus in Gauhati to Fr. Jordan, October 15, 1890.
- <sup>12</sup> Letter to Fr. Jordan.
- <sup>13</sup> Archive of Propaganda Fide. Report from Shillong of May 28, 1890. Indie Orientali 1890, Scritture Riferite nei Congressi Vol. 35.
- <sup>14</sup> Letter from Shillong to Fr. Jordan, May 28, 1890.
- <sup>15</sup> Archive of Propaganda Fide, loc. cit.
- <sup>16</sup> Ibid., Report of Fr. Angelus to the Cardinal Prefect, December 5, 1890. Indie Orientali 1890, Scritture Riferite nei Congressi Vol. 37.
- <sup>17</sup> AGS. Letter from Shillong, April 8, 1890.
- <sup>18</sup> BV, Entertainment Supplement, August 29, 1890, No. 36, p. 147.
- <sup>19</sup> Letter from Shillong to Fr. Jordan, July 22, 1890.
- <sup>20</sup> Archive of Propaganda Fide. Letter from Fr. Otto, August 4, 1890. Indie Orientali 1890. Scritture Riferite nei Congressi, Vol. 35.
- <sup>21</sup> BV, Entertainment Supplement, August 29, 1890, No. 36, p. 147f.
- <sup>22</sup> Archive of Propaganda Fide, loc. cit.
- <sup>23</sup> Ibid., Lettere e Decreti della S. Congregazione e Biglietti di M. Segretario 1890, Vol. 386, p. 340, No. 2349.
- <sup>24</sup> BV, Entertainment Supplement, April 4, 1890, No. 14, p. 58.
- <sup>25</sup> Letter to Fr. Jordan, July 22, 1890.

## 19. First Construction Worries

Fr. Broy had constructed the little mission house in Shillong to use for only a few weeks in the year, to rest a bit in the cool mountain air and to provide European Catholics with a place to celebrate Mass. The seldom-used chapel held no more than 15 people. Fr. Broy had never needed more space for the few Catholic Englishmen and Eurasians. However, the house was absolutely insufficient and unsuitable to be the centre of missionary activity among the Khasi. It was situated in the so-called “European quarter” of the city, the “gentlemen’s quarter,” so it would have been impossible to attract natives there. Due to the expansion of Shillong, it was of the utmost necessity to move closer to the homes of the native people in order to be active among them.<sup>1</sup>

Fr. Hopfenmüller believed the existing house could be used to accommodate orphans.<sup>2</sup> But in any case, it was necessary to construct a proper residence for the missionaries, a chapel and a school, as well as a little convent for sisters.

This is the minimum we need, but even this will cost 28,000 to 30,000 Mark, and up to now I don’t even have a twentieth of such an amount. God will help us. Once we have the means, we will surely have a rich harvest with the grace of God.<sup>3</sup>

Fr. Hopfenmüller repeatedly emphasized the importance of sisters for a girl’s school to educate Khasi girls and to convert women. That is why he asked for at least three sisters to be sent along with the other new missionaries arriving in the fall of 1890.<sup>4</sup> The British as well as the native population wanted sisters. The British wanted them to set up a college with a boarding school for their own children, as they had in many other parts of India. “For the time being, I would be satisfied to have sisters who could teach religious education to the Khasi girls and some basic educational knowledge.”<sup>5</sup> He got what he wanted. But the need for a British boarding high school for girls was met only after years of hard work in the construction of the Loreto Convent for English Ladies in Shillong in 1908.<sup>6</sup>

In addition to his construction plans, Fr. Hopfenmüller pointed out in a letter to the superior general that he knew he also needed to procure resources to hire teachers and catechists, as well as to maintain the school and the orphanage.<sup>7</sup> The worries of his new office all rested on his shoulders and were soon visible. Through the utmost thriftiness he tried to collect all the financial means available for the missionary tasks. He was open to whatever savings could be made, and

he never bypassed the smallest opportunity to use not only the actual missionary alms but also the disposable assets of the Society given to him for mission purposes.

Several times he complained disappointedly in letters to his superior that the expected Mass stipends had still not arrived.

We urgently need these alms. You will not believe how one is impeded in the mission at every turn without money. If we could only have alms of 90 Mark per month, it would be 1,000 Mark per year, and with that we could at least construct a little chapel, a school, or a small mission house.<sup>8</sup>

He requested a regular posting of Mass intentions or, if this were not possible, at least quick notice so he could turn to his Bamberg friends— something he had been forced to do for some time.

To interest the government in constructing the school he paid a visit to the provincial governor. But he gave him little hope for a subsidy since there were already enough Protestant missionary schools in Shillong.<sup>9</sup> Thus he set great hope in receiving construction support from home.

Our dear friends from home will have to take care of finding the necessary means for construction, just like they gave us the means for the expensive journey and for our maintenance in the first few months.<sup>10</sup>

He also turned to the Ludwig Missionary Society in Munich and to the Francis Xavier Society in Lyon with a request for bricks.

Fr. Otto viewed building a chapel as the most urgent matter. To this end he had two Khasi master builders draft a construction plan. They were rather inexperienced in such things and even their second plan did not satisfy the builder-owner. Hence, Fr. Angelus Münzloher began drafting a plan.<sup>11</sup> The estimated cost gave the superior a scare. The chapel with a little tower was 5,319 Rupees (1 Rupee = 1.40 Mark), whereas it would have been 4,211 Rupees without the tower. He had already collected 176 Mark for a bell and asked the superior general at the beginning of June to buy it for him and to have it sent to Assam so it would be there in time for the consecration of the chapel in four months.<sup>12</sup> Since with that amount of money they couldn't buy a heavy, a simple truss would be sufficient. This opened the way for accepting the less expensive building estimate without a tower. But even that was a worrisome bill for Fr. Otto.

If I were to receive 5,000 to 6,000 Mark from Munich, along with my money it would hardly be enough to build a little church. How are we going to have the means to build the school, orphanage, and convent for the sisters, as well as a residence for us to be near the chapel?<sup>13</sup>

But his pious outlook never left him despite such difficulties.

From the list of those giving alms to *Der Missionär* I see that our Bamberg countrymen have not forgotten about us, even though I could use tenfold what I receive. But I say heartily that God provides for everything, and I think to myself: God will be satisfied with whatever we are able to do. We will do our best as far as God's grace permits and we will let God take care of the rest. We plant and water and God will make it grow. We lend our hand and God will lead and direct it.<sup>14</sup>

His trust in help from above and from his Bamberg friends was not in vain. After a short time he was able to write a cheerful letter:

I am delighted that my friend Schmitz<sup>15</sup> published my last report in *Bamberger Volksblatt* informing my friends, relatives, and all other zealous souls participating in spreading the true light of the activities of a missionary, his pains and needs, his joys and amusements. He is always cheerful and delighted when he sees that precious human souls can be reeled in, or when someone gives him a line, a string, or other fittings to cast his spiritual fisherman's net in which to catch the little fish. On the contrary, his heart bleeds and is dismal when he finds many stale Christian fish in his net or when he sees millions of fish outside the net until the huge shark, the devil, killer and liar from the beginning, circles around them, swallowing them in his immense and insatiable jaws of hell.

My report begins in a cheerful manner because I can relate that my last sigh and moan has been comforted. Along with the *Volksblatt*, which my friend kindly sends to Shillong so I can know a bit about home, I received a note that contained a good amount of Rupees. I was already extremely worried about how to procure the means for the church since the master builder had asked for 4,000 Rupees as well as an advanced payment of 1,000 Rupees, while another 1,000 was to be paid after the second, third, and fourth months. I only had 1,000 Rupees. I thought: we have to begin! When it is time for the next payment God will send what is necessary. Behold, a good, anonymous person felt God's spirit in her heart; she wished to make a sacrifice for God's Kingdom, her soul wanted to collect treasure for heaven and so she went to the bank and sent what was needed to construct

the church. May the Redeemer in heaven bless her a thousand times with heavenly goods for what she has given from her earthly goods! From this event I see that God moves hearts with one poor word, and that is why I am delighted to write another report *Na ki lum Shillong* (From the Hills of Shillong).<sup>16</sup>

From the beginning it was quite difficult to find a suitable building site near the Khasi huts. Without such a site one could not even begin to think about building. The mission house lay in an area the British had taken over from the Khasi princes when they established Shillong. The land adjacent to it was property of the Khasi king, the so-called S'iem of Myllem. Fr. Otto decided to ask him personally for a site for the mission. So he had a Khasi servant ask the king when His Majesty could visit him. S'iem condescended to promise that he would visit the next day.<sup>17</sup> This promise was drawn out a bit. First, because the word "immediately" has a different meaning in India than it has for us. But also because his three-year-old son died and the funeral rituals had begun.<sup>18</sup> In the end, he came and offered two construction sites from which to choose. The mission superior recounted:

Dazzled by the splendour of the royal name and the image connected to a royal majesty and its generosity, I did not dare ask the price. In broken Khasi, I stuttered some words of thanks for his magnanimous offer. Later, the scales were removed from my eyes about the place of a Khasi-king since the British had occupied the land. The splendour has faded since "king" is a title without meaning. He is only a shadow of a king who has little to do with decision-making. That is why he no longer possesses much wealth; indeed, one could say he is not even as wealthy as a lord of a manor or a big landowner back home. Whoever thinks of palaces and splendour such as Herren-Chiemsee, Hohenschwangau, Charlottenburg, and the like, will be thoroughly disappointed. When I went to visit him, I found his apartment was smaller than one of a simple farmer back home. Many houses are more spacious and luxuriously furnished in my former parish than was his palace. A large stack of boards was piled up in front of the house, which makes one assume that a carpenter lived there. A simple, large, rough, unpainted farmer's table stood in the middle of the room, just as the Khasi carpenters make them. His bed is a rack covered by a cloth. Wooden benches of the same height stand around the table. One or two slightly better chairs with backrests made of reed, one of which he offered for me to sit, seemed to be designated for more distinguished

guests. No whitewashed walls, no glass windows could be seen – only an opening. There was also no ceiling. One could see the rough roof beams overhead.<sup>19</sup>

The rights and income of a Khasi king have been substantially restricted since the arrival of the British. They now have half of the independence they used to enjoy. Their jurisdiction over their subjects is limited to smaller crimes. The larger ones are brought before an English judge. They can no longer sentence people to death. Their income, with which they are supposed to support themselves, their numerous relatives and advisors, is mainly made up of taxes on land and property, the sale of its products at the market, and fines.

Let us return to the sites offered by our Khasi king, Mutt. Both of them were situated in the part of Shillong that was most densely inhabited by the natives, the so-called Maukhar Village where the king also had his residence. Nothing was to come of either site. The royal advisory committee did not approve of giving the first one because according to the Khasi custom, their dead were burned at that site. The inhabitants then objected to giving the second site because some memorial stones of the dead were located there and, furthermore, sacrifices of goats, chickens, and pigs were made at that site. Thereupon, the king proposed a third site, which was situated a bit outside the village of Maukhar. It was quite a large area and offered sufficient space for the mission's buildings.

While saying good-bye to the king, I asked him to be lenient with the traditional annual tax because he was a rich king and we are only poor missionaries. Meanwhile, I was still under the delusion that we would receive the site for free. The following morning, the servant came with the message that I should pay annually 50 Rupees. I was astonished. My astonishment grew when I later received notice that the owners of the site did not want to give consent. The king did not even own the site. He was only the highest sovereign prince and as such could ask for an annual tax.<sup>20</sup>

The reason the owners refused to sell the site was because they thought the fathers would ask for more land after they had the first site, like the Protestant missionaries had done. And if this were to happen then they would lose their fields.<sup>21</sup> So nothing came of this site, and the royal help had been requested in vain.

Since the requisite land still had to be purchased, Fr. Otto asked the building contractors to look for some. They soon found something that seemed suitable to the missionary. So he commissioned them to buy it. His servant and the building contractor led the negotiations. The day was spent surveying the land and then recording it before the king. When Fr. Otto showed up that day, the king's advisors told him that the purchase could not take place. One man had objected to it because his wife did not approve. The property belonged to an entire family clan, as is common among the Khasi. According to Khasi law, the woman, not the man, was the property owner. The building contractor and the servant told the superior that the latter had paid the cost to the man in the presence and with the consent of his wife. But then three Protestants had gone to the man to change his mind, convincing him to come up with the lie that his wife did not want to give her consent, and that they would buy the site themselves. On this occasion, Fr. Hopfenmüller gave his first speech in Khasi and explained to the king:

It is impossible that the wife was not aware of this, since the man had taken the money and filled out the receipt. I cannot change anything if they later come to regret it. I am not the kind of man with whom one can play around; I will have my right. If someone has changed the man's opinion, they shall know that they will not be able to prevent the construction and that I will find a site for it.<sup>22</sup>

Nothing could be done against the woman's will. When the purchase price was returned the missionary was astonished to discover that both his servant and the building contractor had deceived him. In a mutual agreement they had declared that the land price was 60 Rupees higher than its actual price. They gave the requested amount to people who could neither write nor read. The amount was 60 Rupees higher on the receipt and they had divided the balance between them. Fr. Otto got his money back. He recognized the untrustworthiness of the building contractor in time and the servant had to look for a new position.

For the fifth time, they now had to look for another site. Fr. Otto went to the king's nephew who was a bit better educated and also spoke English and Bengali. According to Khasi succession law, he was the future king. The successor was always the nephew and not the son. At the royal nephew's house, the superior also met the future king's 14-year-old sister who was presented to him as the crown princess.



I was able to come up with enough Khasi to tell her: “You must be the best-behaved girl of all the others because the queen needs to set an example for everyone.” Her friendly smile and nodding showed me that she understood. On the exterior, she only differed from the other Khasi girls by a necklace made from huge coral pearls which is worn on festive occasions by other wealthy Khasi men and women.<sup>23</sup>

The missionary superior then began negotiations with the king’s nephew to purchase the land. Finally, the king’s nephew promised Fr. Otto that he would give him a site that would be suitable for his purposes. It was partially covered with corn and pine trees and cost 250 Rupees. Furthermore, he requested to be hired as building contractor. Fr. Otto now believed he had reached his goal. “Tomorrow,” he wrote on July 22, 1890, the purchase of the site will be taken to protocol.”<sup>24</sup> But in the end their plan once again failed to come to fruition. Even this incident did not put Fr. Hopfenmüller in bad humour. “Perhaps God has other plans. I see God’s providence in everything, even the smallest circumstance.”<sup>25</sup>

When, years later, one looks back to this period one has to admit that it was indeed a fortunate act of providence that the plans of those times were never carried out. Even if the selected sites would have been sufficient for the initial projects, they would have been completely unsuitable and insufficient for later development. Furthermore, they were all situated in Maukhar Village, where the Methodists had settled years ago, and in a certain way, believed they had a certain level of control there. Had the Catholic missionaries settled there, it would undoubtedly have aroused their passionate opposition, as was already apparent.

A fortunate solution for a site finally presented itself in 1891, when Fr. Angelus Münzloher managed to purchase a large piece of property in the opposite part of Shillong, adjacent to the Khasi village of Laitumkhra. It was a long low hill, densely overgrown with pine trees. Due to the city’s expansion, it was about half an hour from Shillong bordering the governor’s park. The property was acquired for 5,000 Rupees from the English general, Hopkinson, who was living in England at the time. In this way, the issue of finding property for the Catholic mission in Shillong was effectively solved. Here, there was enough room to build a small city. The sisters who arrived in January 1891, were given the little mission house. Another house nearby was rented temporarily for the missionary priests and brothers.<sup>26</sup> During that same year, construction began on a mission

house and a convent at the newly purchased property. The old mission house was sold to a good Catholic man called Delanougerede, whose family had given land to the mission in Gauhati.

**(Endnotes)**

- <sup>1</sup> Letter from Fr. Otto in Shillong to Fr. Jordan, May 1; June 1; and July 3, 1890; also BV, Entertainment Supplement August 29, 1890, No. 36.
- <sup>2</sup> Letter of June 1, 1890.
- <sup>3</sup> BV, Entertainment Supplement, June 13, 1890, No. 24, p. 100.
- <sup>4</sup> Letter from Shillong to Fr. Jordan, July 22, 1890.
- <sup>5</sup> Letter from Shillong, April 16, 1890.
- <sup>6</sup> Cf., Salvatorianische Mitteilungen 1909, Nr. 3, p. 43; 1910 Nr. 1, p. 12f.
- <sup>7</sup> Letter from Shillong, April 16, 1890.
- <sup>8</sup> Letter to Fr. Jordan, June 1, 1890.
- <sup>9</sup> Letter to Fr. Jordan, May 15, 1890.
- <sup>10</sup> BV, Entertainment Supplement, April 4, 1890, No. 14, p. 59.
- <sup>11</sup> Letter from Shillong to Fr. Jordan, May 28, 1890.
- <sup>12</sup> Ibid., July 3, 1890.
- <sup>13</sup> Ibid., June 1, 1890.
- <sup>14</sup> BV, Entertainment Supplement, June 13, 1890, No. 24.
- <sup>15</sup> Hopfenmüller's successor as editor of Bamberger Volksblatt.
- <sup>16</sup> BV, Entertainment Supplement, August 22, 1890, No. 35, p. 143f.
- <sup>17</sup> Letter from Fr. Otto to Fr. Jordan, April 16, 1890.
- <sup>18</sup> Ibid., May 1, 1890.
- <sup>19</sup> BV, Entertainment Supplement, August 22, 1890, No. 35, p. 144.
- <sup>20</sup> Ibid., August 29, 1890, No. 36, p. 146.
- <sup>21</sup> Letter from Fr. Otto in Shillong to Fr. Jordan, July 3, 1890.
- <sup>22</sup> Letter from Fr. Otto to Fr. Jordan, July 22, 1890.
- <sup>23</sup> BV, Entertainment Supplement, August 29, 1890, No. 36, p. 145.
- <sup>24</sup> Letter, cf., ftn. 213.
- <sup>25</sup> Der Missionär, 1890, No. 17, p. 135.
- <sup>26</sup> Der Missionär, 1891, No. 2, p. 11.

## 20. A Life of Sacrifice

Fr. Hopfenmüller strove to be a living example to the natives of renunciation, mortification of the flesh, and of a Christian life of personal sacrifice. By now he had advanced quite far through his practice of humility, although he often said that he felt rich in comparison to the poor and undemanding Khasi.<sup>1</sup>

Fr. Marchal, the Vicar General of Calcutta, once told me that on his arrival, Fr. Otto was not very happy with the life led by the Catholic missionaries there. He did not believe it was compatible with his image of St. Francis Xavier's missionary way, but neither did his concept of a rigorous life match what Fr. Marchal thought one should possess as Christ's apostle in such a hot place as India. In the opinion of the Vicar General, the missionary experience included heavy sacrifices that Europeans in India should not overdo. Instead they should allow themselves some relief from the rigors of sacrifice in order to stay alive in the steaming climate and to remain healthy and fit for work. That is why Fr. Marchal admonished Fr. Otto: "My dear superior, if you want to live in India according to your ways, you will not stay alive for even half a year." Fr. Otto must have been thinking about that when he wrote to the general superior Fr. Jordan:

Some gentlemen have advised us not to overdo it with our lifestyle of poverty and sacrifice. I believe we will find the middle way, and with God's grace the necessary intelligence so that the flesh will not be pampered too much, and the body will receive the necessary food and adequate care.<sup>2</sup>

In general, Fr. Otto was convinced that most people ate too much and that they would be healthier if they curbed their food intake.<sup>3</sup> Studying the Indian people's religion reinforced his view. He summarized his thoughts about the matter in "A Penance Sermon about Fasting to his Fellow Countrymen in Europe," which was published in *Apostlekalendar*, 1891.<sup>4</sup> He was astonished by the extent of physical self-mortification that informed Indian religion.

I cannot explain it otherwise than that the devil, who is God's monkey in everything, spurs on his idol worshipers to outdo and outbid true, healthy, and moderate physical self-mortification by distortions, thereby obstructing the path of the Christian religion. I am thinking of the physical self-chastisement of Indian penitents who never say a word, never dry themselves in the cold season, but intentionally let themselves be rained

upon; during the hot season they sit between four bonfires, standing on one leg or on tiptoe all day, keeping their arms extended without ever letting them down, keeping their fists clenched until their fingernails cut into the flesh, or piercing their cheeks and bodies with rings.

To this point only do I wish to direct attention to the Christians of our time, so they will be ashamed. Among them, I observed a great fear of fasting. Protestants have already dismissed and rejected it as self-sanctification. Many Catholics do not even keep the church's rule of abstinence on Fridays, believing they are unable to live without a roast or a piece of sausage. Even less observed is actual fasting, the commandment of satiety once a day. Excuses are found that provide them with an apparent right to indulgence and a salve for their conscience.

To these I call out: Christians be ashamed of yourselves! I myself am ashamed. I may not be able to accuse myself of sinning against the Laws of the Church for fasting. With God's grace, I can add that I do only a little bit more as a member of an order, but still I am ashamed not only when I see how the saintly early Christians fasted, but above all when I see how pagans fast.

Fr. Hopfenmüller now pointed to the Hindus of the higher casts who were strictly forbidden to eat meat or drink alcohol, with the most severe fasting exercised during different occasions, be it for penitence, as an expression of grief, or to attain spiritual virtues, all of which far surpassed Christian fasting, or at least equalled the greatest fasting of Christian saints. He also pointed to the fasting practices of the Jews, Muslims, Buddhists, and some of the ancient Greeks and Romans. From all this he draws a practical benefit for Christians to restrain the palate and deter weakness, softness, and carnal desire.

It was understandable that due to the superior's views, satisfying bodily needs was reduced to a minimum in the mission house in Shillong. Out of the need to save money, three meatless days were planned from the beginning. On other days, meat was served only once a day. They completely abstained from alcohol.<sup>5</sup> Instead they drank tea with their meals, something that was quite inexpensive. It was still too dangerous to drink only water, especially unfiltered water. At lunch and dinner they ate rice. For lunch, they had a little meat or a pancake along with a bowl of soup.<sup>6</sup> Feast days were observed quite strictly.

At the end of May, Fr. Otto bought a cow since there was still plenty of grass growing around the mission house. He purchased it along with its calf for 25 Rupees, about 35 Mark. She was a bit wild, ran away a few times, then returned to eat and was difficult to get back into the cowshed. One morning she broke through the shed built of reeds and clay and lay dead in front of the shed bloated and with outstretched legs. Perhaps she had died from running around and eating.

Well, it was God's will that we should not have a cow. By saving, we will come up with the 25 Rupees for the cow, plus 2 Rupees for burying it. For example, we will not have breakfast today, on fasting days, or on other feast days. This already saves a few Annas (cents). Likewise, I have already reduced our bread ration to save more because bread is the most expensive item here and rice is as filling as bread anyway. We are not starving, but neither do we live in luxury.<sup>7</sup>

Even if breakfast were only a cup of tea and a piece of bread, leaving it out completely would not have been good for Europeans working in the Indian climate.

Along with fasting, Fr. Otto continued with other mortifications of the flesh. He only left the house if it had something to do with pastoral care or the mission. He never took walks simply for relaxation.

In that part of the world, no day passes without rain. He wrote once at the beginning of June.

We do not see the splendour of spring blossoms here in May as in Germany; in June we do not see colourful meadows; in July we do not see the comforting sight of swaying cornfields. Our daily view is of thin grass with the rare flower and the monotony of scattered pine trees. A walker who has time –something that cannot be said of us– can look at the English gentlemen's lovely gardens and revel in the flower gardens in front of other houses. Nature is not very charming once one has become accustomed to the sight of lofty mountains. Meanwhile, we are not here to please our eyes or the other bodily senses. We are here in the service of the Crucified One and we await our feast for the eyes and heart in heavenly pastures, at the sight of the Triune God who lives in inaccessible light.<sup>8</sup>

Fr. Otto was a shining example of virtue to his subordinates. Every Friday he humbly accused himself of every possible error, kneeling before his confreres, continuing to use every occasion to exercise self-mortification. He soon felt at

home in the foreign land and did not feel the slightest desire to return to his home country, though he enjoyed hearing from home and was delighted when the weekly post brought news from there.<sup>9</sup> Apart from the Society's magazines he also regularly received *Kölnische Volkszeitung* and *Bamberger Volksblatt*. He always left these and other letters lying around for some time before opening them, wanting to deaden his curiosity. He immediately opened only the letters from the motherhouse in Rome. "He probably did this for our sake," said Fr. Angelus in a letter to Fr. Jordan on October 15, 1890.

Fr. Angelus, Fr. Otto's loyal companion from the beginning, was not able to handle the severe way of life over the long run. Already in May he began to suffer from heavy palpitations. He often had sleepless nights and felt exhausted and weak during the day. Fr. Otto attributed his condition to heart disease, for which the thin mountain air was not good. The doctor also advised him to stay in the valley.<sup>10</sup>

Responding to Fr. Hopfenmüller's earlier reports, Fr. Jordan, the superior general, expressed his worry that in Shillong one could go a bit too far with severities and that some better and richer foods should be adopted. Even though Fr. Hopfenmüller had been used to the severest way of life for all of these years, it was difficult for him to adapt to the needs of others. He believed he could expect from them all the things he achieved through self-denial and self-mastery due to his own strong willpower. This was the same tendency others had often seen in him during his former work as pastor. But he was always immediately willing to submit to the requests of the superior general.

We shall see whether better food will alleviate Fr. Angelus' complaints; this would immediately overcome my objections. In the meantime, I have yielded to my own desire to see him well and have permitted him to take what he wants.<sup>11</sup>

Another time Fr Otto wrote humbly to the superior: "You do not need worry about my sensitivity when you admonish, reprimand, or rebuke me. I know too well how frail and weak I am."<sup>12</sup>

When Fr. Angelus' health deteriorated after Pentecost, the superior sent him down into the valley of Gauhati.

I was not feeling too well during my last days in Shillong. I was only able to say Holy Mass up to communion. Then I was forced to leave the chapel because I felt dizzy. Since this condition lasted so long, I

called for a doctor. I was afraid of heart failure. The doctor told me that my condition was not that dangerous. My palpitations were only caused by my physical weakness. A doctor from Gauhati had said the same thing. He said I should eat more nourishing food.<sup>13</sup>

With time, solicitous care, and better food the illness subsided. On July 22, 1890, Fr. Otto was able to report:

To my greatest delight, I see how worried you are for the well-being of your brethren since your heart was so fearful for Fr. Angelus. Meanwhile, he is, thanks be to God, doing better and we will soon meet half way between Shillong and Gauhati to go to Confession. To get there, he has about nine hours to walk and I have about ten.<sup>14</sup>

While Assam's first missionary priests took great pains to do their pastoral work and their tiresome preparatory studies with only frugal meals, the two brothers, Joseph Bächle and Marianus Schumm, did the same through dedication to hard work. Since there was plenty of land around the house, they planted a vegetable garden soon after their arrival.

Seeing the brothers working in their white habits attracted and astonished people. Curious spectators often watch them dig the soil to lay out the garden, prune trees, wash and cook. Even the English are quite astonished by it.<sup>15</sup>

It was indeed quite remarkable to see Europeans doing manual work due to the strange Indian social customs with its complicated caste system. This issue gave the superior something to consider, as he wrote to the general superior:

My attention has been called to a dubious fact regarding the brothers' activity. Ordinary work is seen to be something humiliating in the ruling caste system. Only the lowest and most despised caste carries out certain activities, like taking away dirty water and cleaning the bathrooms. If the brothers were to carry out such tasks in their habits, the same low opinion would fall on other priests wearing the same clothes. The brothers in Calcutta only perform the so-called "classy work" and do it in their civilian clothes. I objected by saying that there was no caste system in Shillong. They pointed out that many Hindus and Muslims from the valley also lived there and that they too have their caste prejudices. What to do, says Zeus. I think I will try to do it as it is done in Europe. If I encounter trouble, I will ask you again. We

do not need to show consideration for the Hindus and Muslims, if the Khasi are not offended by it.<sup>16</sup>

In fact no negative consequences occurred among the Khasi, a people without a caste system, and the missionaries continued wearing their habits at home.

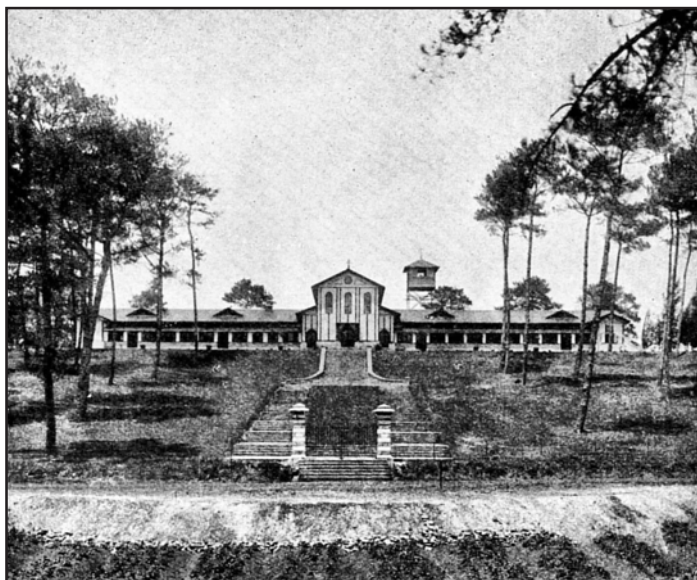
After Fr. Angelus had moved to Gauhati, the superior sent Br. Joseph to him. He stayed with Br. Marianus in Shillong. This good and pious brother tried to live entirely in the spirit of penitence and self-denial like his saintly superior. But this did his body no good. On July 3, 1890, Fr. Hopfenmüller reported to his superior in Rome: “Br. Marianus has been suffering from swollen feet for some time. The reasons for it cannot be found. The pain eased-up after rubbing them with ethyl alcohol, but his legs are still weak.” Br. Marianus was as humble as his superior. At Fr. Jordan’s wish, Fr. Otto asked him if he wanted more or better food. “No, to the contrary I notice that I feel much better when I eat less,” he replied. Fr. Hopfenmüller wrote about their life to his friend, Mr. Schmitz, editor of *Bamberger Volksblatt* on July 22, 1890:

Our missionary life is still very monotonous. Br. Marianus, whom you know, and I are alone in our house. I study, pray, watch, read, work on the catechism as well as on biblical stories in the Khasi language, while also organizing conferences in English for educated people; he cooks, digs, plants, waters, mends and does other work. Doing all these things we are physically well, spiritually satisfied, and happy in the joy and comfort of Jesus Christ, which the world cannot give but is given only through solitude with God.

He continued:

You will see all the things one experiences in a missionary post by these examples of small incidents that have happened to us. When there were still four of us, we wanted to have a goat for milk. I bought a goat with a kid for 7 Rupees. The next night a leopard broke into the stable and carried away the kid. Since the goat gave only a small amount of milk, we decided to buy a cow. Said, done. The next day, the cow lay dead and bloated in front of the stable. Some time later, I opened the stable in the morning and found that the goat had been stolen; now we only have the dead cow’s calf, which we raise. One needs to see God’s hands in the little things because not even a sparrow falls from the sky without the will of the heavenly Father. With even greater effort, I tried





Divine Saviour Church in Shillong



Interior of Divine Saviour Church in Shillong

to get back the money we had lost. We now live in such simple and poor conditions that Marianus and I hardly spend more than 7 Annas (70-80 cents) for food. Some bread, and often not even that, bread-soup, rice, peas, beans, potatoes, cups of tea that were given to us, as well as some fruit, make up our diet. But we feel quite well.<sup>17</sup>

Fr. Otto had found a true like-minded soul for his sacrificial life in the simple Br. Marianus. They both strove to dedicate themselves to the Lord as burnt offerings, to mortify themselves, to live for Christ, to assume troubles and deprivations in order to delight themselves in the hereafter and to implore the Lord's blessing upon the pagan world through sacrifices and self-mortification. The superior once wrote from his mission to his parishioners in Seußling: "Let us all continue, each in his own place, to be good servants of God so that we will hear some day: 'Well done, my good and faithful servant, enter the joy of your Lord!'"<sup>18</sup> He did not know any other desire; he was completely consumed by this aspiration.

#### **(Endnotes)**

- <sup>1</sup> The Apostolic Prefecture of Assam by Fr. Angelus Münzloher, SDS, p. 31.
- <sup>2</sup> AGS. Letter from Shillong, February 21, 1890.
- <sup>3</sup> AGS. Letter to Fr. Jordan, June 1, 1890.
- <sup>4</sup> Apostlekalender 1891, p. 39ff.
- <sup>5</sup> BV, Entertainment Supplement, April 4, 1890, No. 14, p. 58.
- <sup>6</sup> Letter to Fr. Jordan, June 1, 1890.
- <sup>7</sup> Letter to Fr. Jordan, May 28, 1890.
- <sup>8</sup> BV, Entertainment Supplement, August 29, 1890, No. 36, p. 148.
- <sup>9</sup> Letter from Shillong to Fr. Jordan, March 23, 1890.
- <sup>10</sup> Letter from Fr. Otto to Fr. Jordan, May 28, 1890.
- <sup>11</sup> Letter from Fr. Otto, June 1, 1890.
- <sup>12</sup> Letter from Fr. Otto to Fr. Jordan, July 22, 1890.
- <sup>13</sup> Letter from Fr. Angelus in Gauhati, June 1, 1890.
- <sup>14</sup> Letter from Fr. Otto to Fr. Jordan.
- <sup>15</sup> Letter from Fr. Otto to Fr. Jordan, March 6, 1890.
- <sup>16</sup> Letter from Fr. Otto in Gauhati, February 21, 1890.
- <sup>17</sup> BV, August 26, 1890, No. 193.
- <sup>18</sup> Letter to Fr. Schramm in Seussling, March 25, 1890.

## 21. The Master's Call

Amid all Fr. Otto's pastoral efforts —his restless preparations for converting the Khasi people, his worries over the purchase of a suitable building site, and building the necessary mission buildings— the voice of his Lord and Master sounded in his ears, calling him from his life that had been so rich in work, trials, and sacrifices. Like many who first arrived in India, he let himself be deceived by the seemingly European climate in Shillong. This was easily understandable.

At their arrival, it had been bitterly cold in the mornings and at night. "Since we have been here, there has been a continuous strong wind and at night it is so cold that we freeze."<sup>1</sup> Thunderstorms began in mid-April which brought a welcome cooling that slowly turned into the rainy season. But even during these days the missionaries were plagued by heat.

All of June the weather here is rainy and cool. There was a bit less rain the last few days, but no excessive heat. Surely it is not as hot as in Germany now. But Fr. Angelus wrote from Gauhati that it was so hot there that they only need to cover themselves with a linen sheet at night. I needed two woollen blankets to protect myself from the cold at night.<sup>2</sup>

Nonetheless, the climate was an oddly Indian one. If the sun came out, it would blaze quite strongly. It was dangerous to be exposed to its rays without protective headgear or at least a light hat. Even when the sun was hidden behind clouds, it could still do much harm to an inexperienced European. Fr. Otto believed he was able to expose himself to the sun without a hat when he walked up and down the garden, praying the breviary or studying.<sup>3</sup> This was dangerous for him, as it had been for many previous missionaries. On Sunday, August 17, he was overcome by a feeling of sickness. He had to hold on to the altar while saying Holy Mass in order to not fall down. Br. Marianus asked him if Fr. Angelus should come up from Gauhati or whether he should call a doctor. Fr. Otto answered no to both questions. He believed it was something temporary and that he would be all right with the help of some household remedies. But his condition deteriorated. On Tuesday, he could only say Mass with the greatest effort. That same day, he had already partially lost his senses. When the doctor arrived the next morning, he was unconscious. And so he slumbered into eternity. His body, weakened from penitence and self-chastisement, was unable to offer resistance. On Thursday, August 21, 1890, he breathed out his pure soul at 12

o'clock noon. According to the doctor, he had suffered from inflammation of the brain, which had been brought about by sunstroke.<sup>4</sup>

At his departure for the mission, Fr. Otto once told his friends at home that he wished to be active as a missionary for 20 years and would then like to die a martyr's death; but if God wanted something else then he would also be satisfied.<sup>5</sup> Indeed, God did want something different. With the large field of activity ahead of him, just like St. Francis Xavier on the island of Sanzian, everything was prepared to announce to the poor Khasi the light of the Gospel and the grace of the Redeemer. But he was destined to close his eyes to this life in a lonely mission hut at the height of his manhood at the age of 47, without having converted a single soul, without a priestly brother at his side, without receiving the comfort of the Holy Sacrament or having been able to confer his ecclesial authorities on another.

As soon as the assistant medical director, Dr. Costello, noticed Fr. Otto's worrisome condition he telegraphed his colleague Dr. Mullone in Gauhati so that he would inform Fr. Angelus. While he was busy preparing for Mass on August 21, Dr. Mullone came to him and told him he must leave immediately for Shillong because the superior was dangerously ill. The doctor immediately got a horse-drawn carriage which raced up the hills in a wild gallop, frequently changing horses. The unexpected news filled Fr. Angelus with anxious worry. He arrived in Shillong at 4 o'clock in the afternoon. But he no longer found his beloved superior among the living.<sup>6</sup> He put his painful feelings into words in a letter to the superior general on August 22, 1890:

Something I never imagined has occurred. Our sincerely beloved Reverend Fr. Superior has died. If I had not seen it with my own eyes, I would think it was a bad dream. You can imagine our pain. Tears are in my eyes. We are orphans. Oh my dear Reverend Father, how painful this is for us! I cannot describe it. What shall we do now? Please send us a new superior because we are still children. The one thing consoling me is that he celebrated the Octave of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin in heaven because he lived like a saint.

On the afternoon of August 21, Fr. Otto was laid to rest in the general cemetery for Europeans in Shillong. A simple wooden cross marks the place where his remains await the resurrection.



Commemorative stone at the cemetery chapel in Shillong

In grief and sadness, the bereft subordinates returned to the mission house. After such a loss, the place seemed to have become even poorer. It was a great blow for the entire Assam Mission because of Fr. Otto's importance. His personality had encouraged the smooth operation of the mission. He had removed and bravely overcome the first obstacles. He had founded the Assam Mission, had given it direction and skilfully advanced it. His manifold relationships solved the difficult financial issues of the first period and procured financial support for the first mission buildings. He created the first foundation for the conversion of the Khasi, paving the way for its mission. The Khasi would have made fast progress under such an apostle.

Some sad experiences might have been spared the mission under his leadership, but in light of the fact that our Lord willed otherwise, we can only accept the inexplicable ways of Divine Providence in silent wonder. Fr. Otto left the mission a precious legacy: his sacrificing and saintly life. This was of lasting value and made a deep impression on the natives, which was in turn a great advantage for the work of conversion. His intercession with God for the Khasi people, whom he loved and wished to convert to Christianity was not useless, even though his early departure caused a delay in the work.

The few words Fr. Angelus telegraphed to Fr. Jordan, informing him of Fr. Otto's death, caused great shock to the Motherhouse. The news was unexpected since they had not even been aware of his illness. In every possible way they tried to interpret the message as a case of a mistaken identity, but the few shocking words left no space for ambiguity: "Fr. Otto dead. Angelus." Anxiously they awaited further letters, which did not arrive until mid-September, and left no more room for doubt.

Fr. Angelus reported that Fr. Otto and Br. Marianus had gone even further in their severities in the last months after being left alone in Shillong. They had satisfied themselves with the worst rice, the kind the natives feed only to their chickens. They rarely ate meat.

With decisive zeal, Fr. Otto continued the edifying life he had lived under your eyes in the Mother-house. His full attention was always turned to our rule: self-sanctification and the sanctification of others. His zeal to save souls enabled him to overcome every difficulty. His faith in God made everything easy for him. You should consider it an honour to have had such an exemplary son.<sup>7</sup>

Up to the very end Hopfenmüller kept his love for the Society he had joined after long consideration. Once he wrote:

I am delighted by the news of our increasing growth with the new foundation in Tivoli. Likewise, I am happy about the news in *Der Missionär* reporting one or another sign of life.<sup>8</sup>

At another time he wrote:

I am delighted that the Society is making such good progress. I hope it will gain a foothold in Germany and will get a Motherhouse in Rome. May God bring the recent efforts to a good end! I pray for this particular request and ask you and the Motherhouse also to pray for the fulfilment of the intentions of the mission.<sup>9</sup>

Daily I pray that God's blessing may always increase our Society in number and spirit. May He help carry your worries and troubles and reward them with success!<sup>10</sup>

Fr. Hopfenmüller always tried to stay in close contact not only with his religious superiors but also with his ecclesial superiors. He sent no less than four extensive

letters to the Cardinal Prefect of Propaganda Fide within six months. The childlike tone with which he inform the father of the mission of his worries and requests, plans and difficulties, progress and joys distinguished his letters from everyday business correspondence. Upon receiving notice of the mission superior's death, Cardinal Simeoni wrote to Fr. Angelus Münzloher on January 21, 1891:

I deeply regret Fr. Otto Hopfenmüller's early death, a man whom I knew as someone who distinguished himself by his many excellent gifts. I hope you and the other missionaries there will make the same effort carrying out your office for the best of the people.<sup>11</sup>

But trials were not to end with the superior's death. As was already mentioned, Br. Marianus suffered from swollen feet. His situation did not improve. After Fr. Otto's funeral, Fr. Angelus took care of what was necessary in Shillong and then returned to Gauhati for a few days where some tasks required his presence. He left Br. Marianus in the care of Dr. Costello and sent Br. Joseph up from Gauhati to Shillong. A serious attack of dysentery, which is often deadly for Europeans in the tropics, was added to the pain in Br. Marianus' feet, and he was taken to hospital. He smiled at the efforts to cure him, saying they were unnecessary since he was going to Fr. Otto in heaven. His weakened body was unable to resist the grave illness. On August 30, his pure soul breathed its last. He was terribly emaciated and his hands and feet were swollen, but the peace of heaven spread over his lean countenance. Again, Fr. Angelus was called back to Shillong by the news of death.

Chapter eleven already related how the good and deeply spiritual Br. Marianus had come to religious life and the missionary vocation. He was from the village of Lehsten belonging to the parish of Mistendorf in Lower Franconia. He was always loyally attached to Fr. Hopfenmüller, who had been his leader and advisor.

After only nine days, he followed our unforgettable superior to eternity. Both were like-minded, especially concerning rigor, but in all their zeal they had forgotten about caring for the body. Br. Marianus was a noble and pious soul. He distinguished himself with his simple heart, love for poverty, punctuality and conscientiousness in following the rule of the order. One always found him satisfied and happy. He did everything he was asked without grumbling, no matter how difficult the task. His love for the Most Blessed Virgin was admirable. He hardly ever put aside the rosary. He held it in his hand even while working in the garden or carrying out other activities. He held it in his hand during his last breath.

Even the Protestant doctor at his bedside was amazed. “He seemed quite happy and satisfied. I never heard a single complaint from him about the pain caused by his illness.” Just as the two men competed in striving for perfection on earth, they will do the same in heaven, praising the Lord. We had no other choice than to accept the first hard disasters with the attitude of surrender to Divine Providence, which demanded these two great sacrifices from our young men in order to imprint on the mission the sign of the cross.<sup>12</sup>

In order to do all that was humanly possible to prevent such heavy losses in the future, Fr. Angelus did not forget to give the newly-arriving missionaries some warnings along the way. Still scarred by the painful ordeals, he wrote to Fr. Jordan:

One has to be very careful in India and listen to those who have been here longer and have acquired experience. This shall be said to the new missionaries. The Jesuits in Calcutta have already lost four missionaries this year. One usually visits India during the good season and refuses to believe it is that bad. For this reason, one continues to do the same activities and strains as in Europe, thinking that the behaviour of others is too soft and exaggerated. Indeed, if one did in Europe what is done in India they would be teased. What would people think if they saw a monk with a parasol! But this is a necessity here. One cannot force a European’s physical constitution to become used to the sun. Especially in this regard, I wish to point out something to the missionaries going to Shillong. Throughout the year it is almost always cool there, which makes one believe it is not all that bad, and that one can walk up and down the garden without wearing a hat. That is a great delusion! The sun is the Indian sun, which casts its rays straight down.

Our black habit is way too thick for the valley area. Missionaries in India wear cassocks and pants made of thin white canvas. One also needs to get a hat, which must be worn when going out into the sun. The black [Roman] hat can only be worn in the morning or evening.

Another important and difficult issue is food. It is a delusion when a European believes he can live like a native. Shillong has taught me this. The church had its reasons when it limited the rules for fasting for Europeans in India. One needs to eat decently. It is also God’s will that we maintain our health in order to work hard for the salvation of souls.



One may allow the missionaries a bit of latitude: they have enough of a cross and pain to bear. One needs to be careful and forbearing here, otherwise it will be impossible to replace the missionaries with enough successors.<sup>13</sup>

**(Endnotes)**

- <sup>1</sup> Letter to Fr. Jordan, March 6 & 23, 1890.
- <sup>2</sup> Letter from Fr. Otto, April 16 & July 3, 1890.
- <sup>3</sup> Letter from Fr. Angelus in Calcutta to Fr. Jordan, September 5, 1890.
- <sup>4</sup> Letter from Fr. Angelus in Shillong, August 22, 1890; *The Apostolic Prefecture Assam*, p. 22.
- <sup>5</sup> AGS. Letter from Elise Traut in Kronach, August 10, 1892.
- <sup>6</sup> Letter from Fr. Angelus in Shillong to Fr. Jordan, August 22, 1890.
- <sup>7</sup> Letter from Fr. Angelus in Gauhati to Fr. Jordan, October 15, 1890.
- <sup>8</sup> Letter from Fr. Otto to Fr. Jordan, July 22, 1890.
- <sup>9</sup> Letter from Fr. Otto to Fr. Jordan, July 3, 1890.
- <sup>10</sup> Letter from Fr. Otto to Fr. Jordan, May 28, 1890.
- <sup>11</sup> Archive of Propaganda Fide. *Lettere e Decreti della S. Congregazione ecc.* 1891, Vol 387, p. 45, No. 39.
- <sup>12</sup> *The Apostolic Prefecture Assam* by Fr. Angelus Münzloher, SDS, p. 29f.
- <sup>13</sup> Letter from Calcutta to Fr. Jordan, September 5, 1890.

## 22. The Echo at Home

The news of Fr. Otto's death deeply affected his home country. At the superior general's request, Fr. Thomas Weigang wrote to the parish priest of Seußling on August 22, 1890, informing him of the sad news.

We ask that you remember the soul of our brother at the altar who was unfortunately called from his apostolate so early, and to ask his former parishioners to remember him in prayer.

The chronicle of the parish at Seußling bears the following notice:

Fr. Dr. Otto Hopfenmüller's death brought much mourning and grief to all the people who had had the blessing of knowing this excellent priest. His life of sacrifice and his heavenly virtues give us cause to hope that he celebrated the Octave of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin in heavenly bliss. A solemn funeral service took place with a vigil, a funeral Mass, and prayers of commendation in Seußling on August 26, in the presence of the entire parish community, which owes so many good deeds to their former pastor.

*Bamberger Volksblatt* published a detailed report on the memorial services in Seußling on August 26:

Widespread dismay and deep grief was caused here in the parish following the arrival of a letter on August 25 from the Catholic Teaching Society in Rome with notification of the death of Reverend Fr. Dr. Otto Hopfenmüller, superior of the Catholic Mission in Assam. Many former parishioners broke out in loud lament upon hearing the news and cried hot tears for their much beloved and unforgettable shepherd.

Today, at 8 o'clock in the morning, a solemn memorial service consisting of a funeral Mass, and prayers of commendation took place in the local parish church, in which the dear man had prayed so often for his parishioners, many of whom [Fr. Otto's] sacrifices restored to the church. The church was tightly packed with the faithful whose serious expressions and dignified demeanour mirrored their sincere pain. With heartfelt prayers for the noble priest's peace of mind, they paid a grateful tribute for all the good deeds, spiritual and worldly, they had benefited from. Teacher Rauh did everything possible to enhance the celebration

of the Mass through dignified decoration of the altar, and well chosen music for the ecclesial Requiem Mass, paying Fr. Otto due tribute together with the other teachers of the parish who did not hesitate to participate in the choir. We hope that just as the loyal shepherd thought of his former parishioners in a far away country by writing and sending greetings to them, he will also intercede for them at God's throne. His noble priestly image of virtue will never leave the hearts of those who had the blessing of knowing and associating with him, while the thought of him will always keep them full of admiration and desire to follow his example according to Psalm 111:7: "The righteous will remain in eternal remembrance."<sup>1</sup>

The news of his death was so unexpected and abrupt that nobody in Bamberg wanted to believe the first notice either. *Bamberger Volksblatt* mentioned the message from Rome under the headline: "Is Rev. Fr. Dr. Otto Hopfenmüller Dead?" The article said:

This is the source and evidence for the sad news that we already published in yesterday's issue and that has left a painful scar on the city and the entire archdiocese. When we received notice of his death, we could not believe it and instead wanted to assume that Fr. Angelus had died. Despite the fact that the message was very precise, we still believed that it may have been a case of mistaken identity, and we wanted to hold onto this believe and wait to print the obituary until further news arrived. When Fr. Otto had reported on Fr. Angelus' illness, he mentioned that he was healthy and well. Out of love and enthusiasm for our friend we did not want to believe that he was dead until we were forced to do so, based on further news.<sup>2</sup>

Fr. Angelus' letter a few weeks later, mentioned previously, left no room for doubt. On September 20, *Bamberger Volksblatt* printed the confirmation, and the following issue dedicated words of warm recognition and grieving love to its selfless editor:

It has become a distressing certainty: Fr. Hopfenmüller is no longer among the living as of August 21. Renunciation and self-sacrifice, apostolic zeal and restlessness, and tiresome spiritual and physical work have made an unexpectedly quick end to his promising work and efforts. Even before he himself foresaw it, the Lord called him away from the scenes of this life and placed him among the chosen ones. The news of

his death has filled us with deepest pain. The departure of no other friend has touched us as much.

After information on the biography and work of the deceased, *Volksblatt* continued:

While carrying out the most diligent work and activities, he was overcome by an inexorable death for the suffering of his confreres, friends, and the Christian people. With Fr. Hopfenmüller's death, the pride and joy of the Bamberg clergy was gone. He was attached to his home diocese with love, even when he was in the most distant country. In his last letter he wrote to us:

May God give the diocese an upright and decisive shepherd that they and the Church of Bavaria sorely need! By now, he has probably already been named.<sup>3</sup> I pray for him since he is also my shepherd since I have not yet left the diocesan association.

With Dr. Hopfenmüller's death, the pride and joy of the Catholic Teaching Society was also gone. He had received many talents from the Lord, had completed his studies in an outstanding manner, and had earned a doctorate in theology. He was a model of piety, asceticism, and pastoral zeal. He possessed truly apostolic courage and tenacity. Everything he said and wrote was rooted in a firm belief in God and was based on an unshakable faith in Him. Everything he undertook and did was aimed at honouring and glorifying God and the wellbeing of mankind. He will be remembered with love among his confreres, the Archdiocese of Bamberg, and wherever he stayed and was active, and the highest degree of gratitude will follow him to his grave.

He was known as one of the most capable clergyman of the diocese in regard to his knowledge and effectiveness. The only thing one could complain about is that the diocese could not offer him a position which might have kept him here corresponding to his talents and erudition. Many of us think this way, but God decreed and wanted something else. The things the deceased would have done or achieved in a given ecclesial position, he did and achieved on a different path in life which he was destined to follow and did follow: He was an apostle and lived like a saint – he fulfilled his vocation of becoming like God.

Who would have imagined the sudden demise of the speaker who spoke so enthusiastically about his vocation and his plans during his last visit in the [Journeyman's] Association house and *Kasino*? Surely none of his listeners. Now his mortal remains already rest in the soil of those natives to whom he had wanted to preach the news of the salvation, the pagans he had wanted to lead into the fold of the church. Let us hope that his body will become the foundation and corner-stone of the church he wanted to build there, and that this house of God will become the starting point for the beneficial proclamation and spread of the Gospel. May God do this!

Shortly before his death, the deceased delighted the readers of *Volksblatt* with a longer report about his missionary life, activities and plans that was printed in the entertainment section. He was still very attached to his home and to the paper. In the cover letter to the above-mentioned article he wrote us:

“May God continue to bless the newspaper so that it may prosper, and to bless you so that your work at *Volksblatt* can be of use and help to the truth of Christ, and thereby to the salvation of souls and the general public happiness. I pray for you and all my friends.”

We took over *Volksblatt* from the hands of the deceased on November 10, 1876. He had called it into life in 1872, first as a weekly paper and then as a daily paper from 1875 on. He founded the paper recognizing the spirit and needs of the time, edited it for many years, and remained a loyal friend and contributor. The continued existence and prosperity of the paper had always been dear to his heart, and for that he endured a number of difficult situations over the years. That is why he worked and prayed for it to be successful. May God reward him for this! He concluded his last letter to us with the words: “Continue to pray for me and remain loyally supportive of your friend, Fr. Otto Hopfenmüller.”

We wish to comply with the deceased's last wish and ask our friends and readers to remain loyal, helpful friends to the Mission in Assam so that from the heights of heaven our blessed departed friend will see his handiwork rise and flourish. May he now rest from all the troubles, work, and sufferings of this life! May he rest in peace!<sup>4</sup>

In remembrance of him, *Bamberger Volksblatt* also printed a short biography of the deceased as well as pictures. The profit from it was sent to the Assam Mission.

A solemn Requiem was held for Fr. Hopfenmüller in the cathedral of Bamberg on September 22, which was attended by a number of outstanding people from the spiritual and lay communities, as well as numerous faithful. The report on this memorial celebration ended:

The sympathy and grief shown everywhere in this city and archdiocese is great. Already during his lifetime, Fr. Hopfenmüller knew how to earn everyone's greatest respect. Now that he is no longer among us, Christians show their love by laying wreaths on the steps of the altar, which they were unable to place on his far-away lonely grave, as a sign of their highest regard for the beloved deceased. Sincere prayers for the peace of mind of the deceased rise up to God, remembering the admonition of Scripture: "Do not withhold your love from the dead!" (Sirach 7:37).<sup>5</sup>

In St. Martin where Fr. Hopfenmüller had been active as the chaplain for 11 years, a solemn Requiem was celebrated for him and sung by the teachers. A symbolic tomb was erected. Numerous parish members of all ranks participated. The sermon the deceased had given there had indeed become a farewell address.<sup>6</sup>

The curate of Reichmannsdorf also loyally remembered the deceased father of the poor. The committee of the Voluntary Society for the Care of the Poor from Sassanfahrt and Köttmannsdorf dedicated an obituary to him which said:

It is impossible for us as a sign of our love, to lay a flower or laurel wreath at the grave of the blessedly deceased Fr. Superior Dr. Otto Hopfenmüller in a distant pagan land. Instead we see it as our duty to express our feelings in this way. He really was a loyal, concerned, and caring father to everyone – especially to the poor, to support whom he founded the Society for the Poor. He was also a keen and indefatigable doctor of souls, an untiring worker in the Lord's vineyard. Innumerable are the tears he dried, innumerable the steps he took for his children, the poor. How many families he save from ruin by the Society for the Poor! The Redeemer of all good is in heaven and to Him we implore and appeal for the soul of the deceased. His name is surely registered in golden letters in the book of life. He fought the good fight. May he

rest in peace! But his works and our childlike love and gratitude will follow him to the far-off grave.<sup>7</sup>

There was great pain and mourning at the news of Fr. Otto's death at Reichmannsdorf. His longstanding, loyal helper Ms. Margaretha Spies, wrote about it:

The crying and sobbing was similar to the death of both mother and father together. When I heard the news of his death, I didn't know whether I should say: "Oh Lord, give him eternal peace," or, "St. Otto, pray for us!"<sup>8</sup>

In places where he had been active, there was the widespread opinion that with Fr. Otto's death a saint had passed on. A future Assam missionary, Fr. Valentinus Kartte, wrote to the superior general, Fr. Jordan, with this in mind:

In all the villages I have been to in the Archdiocese of Bamberg, Reverend Fr. Otto is still generally remembered. Some of his friends have told me that they honour him as a saint and some of them have requested his intercession for help.<sup>9</sup>

Several years later, the newly ordained Fr. Engelbert Heilmann, reported similarly:

The day before yesterday and yesterday, I gave my priestly blessing to the former parishioners of blessed Otto Hopfenmüller in Seußling. I heard quite a few edifying things about him. His parishioners have not forgotten him. One person had keenly supported him in his efforts and had sent him her last cent after his departure to Assam. While collecting wood, a branch from an evergreen tree fell on her and took away her eyesight. In her helplessness, she turned to blessed Otto Hopfenmüller and her prayer was immediately answered.<sup>10</sup>

When a new chapel was built in the cemetery of Seußling, the parish priest wanted to illustrate true Christian death in two images. One depicted the death of St. Francis Xavier and the other the martyrdom of St. Philomena. The painter who had been asked to do them knew Fr. Hopfenmüller well and gave St. Francis Xavier's face the features of Fr. Otto. In his zeal, he wrote in a halo around the image: "St. Otto, pray for us!" though he had to change these words into an appeal to St. Francis Xavier. But to the great delight of the parishioners, the features remained those of Fr. Hopfenmüller and to this day they remember

their loyal, caring and unforgettable shepherd who gave them bread and whose virtuous example remained alive and effective for them.

**(Endnotes)**

- <sup>1</sup> BV, August 28, 1890, No. 195.
- <sup>2</sup> BV, August 26, 1890, No. 193.
- <sup>3</sup> The archbishop of Bamberg, Friedrich von Schreiber, had died on May 23, 1890.
- <sup>4</sup> BV, September 22, 1890, No. 215.
- <sup>5</sup> BV, September 23, 1890, No. 216.
- <sup>6</sup> BV, September 24, 1890, No. 217.
- <sup>7</sup> BV, October 14, 1890, No. 234.
- <sup>8</sup> AGS. Letter from July 19, 1896.
- <sup>9</sup> AGS. Letter from Weismain, August 22, 1891.
- <sup>10</sup> AGS. Letter from Prinzberg to Fr. Jordan, August 1, 1914.



## Final Thoughts

The missionary work that had been started by Fr. Otto Hopfenmüller among the Khasi was continued by his undaunted brothers, the German Salvatorians. No mass conversions took place among these people. External conditions never favoured this; nor did the character of the naturally deliberate, tradition-bound mountain people or their social institutions. Obstacles arose everywhere, especially from the much older and more developed mission of the Methodists, who used every means to set up schools in the villages, and who in no way wanted a Catholic mission near them. They opposed all peaceful development by the Catholic mission.

Deaths, illnesses, and trials of many kinds also obstructed the missionary task. They had hardly overcome the initial difficulties when an earthquake folded up all the mission buildings like a house of cards, buildings which had been erected with so much difficulty.<sup>1</sup> Procuring the necessary means to rebuild churches, chapels, mission houses and convents, schools, high schools, orphanages, etc., took great strength and effort.

Due to all of this, only one stone could be placed upon another, slowly and with difficulty, as an internal task of the Christian community. Nonetheless, a group of Christians had formed which would certainly delight the heart of any missionary. The local people are clever and well educated. Anyone who attends a Catholic Mass in the Khasi Hills nowadays will be astonished, surprised, and edified by the people's behaviour, modesty, piety, and attentiveness. One sees none of the superficial or flighty things that can often be found in other places. Such a community would have given great joy and satisfaction to the great deceased missionary Fr. Otto Hopfenmüller. The hopes he had set on converting the tribe have made a promising and delightful beginning.

In the meantime, Shillong, where Fr. Hopfenmüller had seen such poor beginnings, has turned into the powerful centre of the entire Assam Mission. At the start of 1915, there was a nice church with one spacious residence. The Sisters of the Divine Saviour maintained the orphanage as well as a school for Khasi girls, along with a domestic school. There was also the St. Anthony orphanage for Khasi boys and a secondary school led by a missionary. On Sundays and feast days, two Masses were held, one for the English-speaking population and another for the Khasi, with a missionary celebrating each of them. A horticulture and

craft school provided for the practical education of the boys. Its different branches were headed by five missionaries from the order. Fieldwork and horticulture, dentistry, carpentry, and shoemaking were taught here. The little missionary print shop published all kinds of writings as well as a monthly paper in Khasi called *The Christian Family*. The mission ran the Umlyngka Farm, about one hour away from the main station, which engaged in agriculture and silk worm farming. Some English ladies maintained a large girl's school with a boarding school in Shillong. The Irish Brothers' School also ran St. Edmund's College for boys with its boarding school. The foundation in Raliang rivaled the one in Shillong, where next to the mission three Salvatorian sisters ran an orphanage for boys and girls.

In the entire area of the Khasi Hills, including Synteng and War that belong to the same tribe as the Khasi, there exist: six main stations, eight substations, 20 outposts, 21 catechists, 21 elementary schools, six pharmacies for the poor, and two houses to accommodate the sick and elderly.<sup>2</sup> Thus a solid foundation has been built so that the promising task of converting the Khasi can progress well.

In the summer of 1914, as a final project meant to conclude the building period after the long and difficult years in the Khasi Hills, a Catholic cemetery was planned in Shillong. Though they have had their own cemetery for many years, it was enlarged threefold with the purchase of adjacent properties. Due to the differences in elevation on the property, the entire plot needed to be lowered a bit. A lovely decoration was added to the little mortuary chapel in the centre. On the outer left wall underneath the roof, a small marble plaque was dedicated to the first superior of the Assam Mission. The simple text reads:

**In pious remembrance of Fr. Otto Hopfenmüller, Dr. Theo.,  
Superior of the Assam mission,  
Born May 29, 1844, died August 20, 1890.  
May he rest in peace.**

At the beginning of August 1914, I returned with some confreres from the cemetery where we had planted and watered cypresses and weeping willows. On the way home I said: "Thank God, now the building period is finally over; it has cost us so much time and effort, and now we can throw ourselves into the conversion work with all our energy." A messenger then came rushing toward us from the mission. "England has declared war on Germany," was his bad news. Serious worries about the future came over us. They were to be realized

in a way we never could have expected. We too became victims of the growing belligerent tensions. In July 1915, we were forcefully removed from our mission so it could be converted to a prisoner-of-war camp. Still we had managed to organize the cemetery, put up the monument to the first missionary superior, and plant weeping willows around it. They may also be mourning with us for the past, but the slender, rising cypress is a symbol of calm hope and confidence. It points up to the heavens, which in the end govern all earthly things, and where the young mission will find a firm hold and secure support regardless of the storms.

Not a single Catholic Khasi stood by Fr. Hopfenmüller's bier to mourn the dead priest. But subsequently whole crowds have followed him into eternity signed by the blood of the Lamb. On our departure in 1915, we left behind us 2,238 baptized and 432 catechumen Khasi who watched our withdrawal from the mission with tears and lamentations. Through the intercession of the first hopeful and enthusiastic apostle for the conversion of the Khasi, may the grace of the Divine Saviour see that their numbers and merits will always increase.

**(Endnotes)**

- <sup>1</sup> Cf., The Apostolic Prefecture Assam by Fr. Angelus Münzloher, SDS, p. 70ff.
- <sup>2</sup> Cf., Annual Report of the Assam Mission, Der Missionär 1915, No. 3, 4, 5 & 6.



Reburial of Fr. Otto on July 1, 2001 at Shillong Cathedral – Fr. Andrew Urbanski, SDS, Superior General (left) and Fr. Artur Chrzanowski, SDS, Superior India (right) carrying the remains of Fr. Otto.



The new memorial for Fr. Otto next to Shillong Cathedral

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