

Foreword

In the writings of a founder of a religious order, one naturally seeks to learn of the man and his ideas, the original charism and the evolution of the spiritual doctrine, and what pertains to the history in general, as well as the details about the foundation.

The first five volumes of Father Chaminade's correspondence give us quite enough information in this respect, and we are entitled to wonder whether these letters, hitherto unpublished, will add substantially to what we already know.

The various writings on the "Life of Father Chaminade" and the works on "The Last Years of Father Chaminade" inform us of events concerning the Society of Mary from 1844 to 1850; they contain large excerpts from authentic documents and, now and then, well-structured syntheses. However, these are not devoid of a great deal of personal interpretation and are *a priori* in favor of certain theses and in disfavor of others.

We know that at the end of his life, Father Chaminade found himself engaged in a defensive struggle in order to protect the charism he believed he held from God from distortion and dullness, and in an offensive action against those he held responsible for these ills. He made use of various weapons—doctrinal, juridical, and spiritual—and never yielded an inch of ground in the belief that not only was he in his unmistakable right but also, above all, that he had an imperative duty to fulfill.

This situation carried in itself the risk that we would concentrate excessively on the polemic aspect of the correspondence, or simply discreetly close our eyes to domestic affairs thought better left alone. Yet the letters from 1844 to 1849 present a genuine interest, and the *felix culpa* of our Marianist history allows us to perceive rather new aspects in the character of this Superior General who was removed from office, and of this Founder forced into something comparable to exile by his own progeny. The battle seems to reveal a man with a far stronger character than we suspected, and his charism is made of a richer blend than we thought.

The Founder's conscience impelled him to follow at all costs the orders received from God. His spiritual heritage never suffered from sentimental softening nor from the old-age weaknesses. His allegiance to the charism granted him made him even renounce the work of his own creation. If the controversy stirs up muddy waters sometimes and does not spare Chaminade, the man, from being soiled a little, it is true, though, that it never engulfed his intellectual, psychological, moral, or religious faculties.

These documents also reveal to us the last of the Founder's doctrinal teachings on Marianist charism. True, the Society of Mary is affected, yet paradoxically it gains the victory, thanks to her Founder, who helps her fashion a finer identity in the loyalty to Mary's spirit, at the service of the faith and of the Gospel. Beyond the juridical debate, the charism stands out as the true gift of God to the Society of Mary and to the whole Church.

Time and perspective now help us view Father Chaminade's combat position as a pulpit from where his moral conscience and doctrinal teachings radiate, and the Declaration of the Heroicity of Virtues has officially acknowledged the holy nature of his life. Since the General Chapter of 1976 invites us to take concrete steps in order to convey better our Marianist heritage, the decision to complete the publication of the letters is a compelling one.

In this task, our primary concern was to publish integrally all the texts in our possession today, without attempting an exegesis of synthesis.

This responsibility was carried out by Brother Michel Perrin and Fathers Émile Weltz and Pierre Humbertclaude, who made use of the work already done by Father Henri Lebon and Brother Roger Bréard especially, who took pains to read the letters one by one, while comparing them with the originals. We owe them our heartfelt thanks.

Our second concern involved our duty as historians: to recast a person in his proper time so as to explain his views in the context of the doctrines then prevailing. In this respect, letters, better than any other literary form no doubt, offer insight into their author's spontaneous reactions, his moral anxieties, and his inner mental reservations. There again, we followed the methodology used by Father Henri Lebon in the first five volumes of the letters. Indeed, the reader is not usually in a position to know what the Founder's correspondent wrote. He is, therefore, unable to grasp the whole scope of the document he reads; in such circumstances, in particular, deep-rooted spiritual states of mind are difficult to understand entirely on the basis of expressions; for instance, certain creeds, some tense mental occasions, some forms of despondency, juridical developments, open statements of allegiance followed by sudden qualms about the hierarchy, fervent declarations and, finally, pleadings in private or public polemics. It is Father Vincent Vasey who, with his usual competence, undertook the thorough study of each text in order to place them in their proper historical and psychological context.

Finally, our third concern is to understand the meaning of the Marianist charism in the final expression given to it by the Founder in his correspondence from 1844 to 1849, on the basis of rectifications, new developments, and corrections. Who is going to take it upon themselves to find out the full extent of the charism? The answer lies with all of us, members of the Society of Mary. We know that it will enable us ever to improve the distinctive traits of our own spiritual identity and of our missionary vocation.

Rome, January 1, 1978

Ambrogio Albano, SM
Director of AGMAR

Preface

The last of the five volumes of Father Chaminade's letters was published more than forty-five years ago. Two hundred and eighteen letters and *pro memoria* of his, however, remained unpublished, as well as a number of documents prepared by Father Chaminade to defend his cause before the Sacred Congregation of Bishops and Regulars. These documents came to light in the course of investigations in view of the Cause of Beatification of the Servant of God. The Marianist Center of Research (CEMAR) and the Marianist General Archives (AGMAR) have thought it opportune to put all of these unedited writings at the disposition of Marianists to complete the publication of the letters begun in 1930.

The question naturally arises: "Why were these letters not made public sooner?" A reading of the letters that are now being offered to the Marianist Family suggests a number of reasons to explain the delay.

The letters tell the story of the controversy that separated the Founder from his Assistants and sons, Caillet, Roussel, and Clouzet during the first period, February 1844-October 1845; from Fathers Caillet, Chevaux, and Fontaine, and Brother Clouzet after the Chapter held at Saint Remy in October 1845; and finally provoked his definitive break with the Society in the summer of 1848.

Father Lebon and the General Administration of the time probably saw few advantages to be gained by bringing out in the open all the details of the battle that raged from early 1844 to January 22, 1850, the day the Founder died.

Besides the polemical nature of the correspondence, other reasons might have persuaded the non-publication of the present collection of letters. At first glance, it would seem that there is little spiritual value in these letters. This lack, however, is more apparent than real. They do not, indeed, present the classic idealized hagiography of a hundred years ago or, for that matter, the lives written through the centuries in exaltation of the saints; but they do depict the heroic stand of the Founder for the sake of conscience. To know Chaminade completely, these letters, too, must be known. His deliberateness has often been praised, and his submission to Providence and endless searching for God's will admired. All of this is here in the letters and much more. Letters, more than any other form of writing, reveal the man; and letters written under stress, in the heat and excitement of strife, tell more than any other kind of letter what is in a man. There is edification here, but only for one who weighs and meditates and, like Ulysses, has lived much and knows something of the sinuous and, at times, tempestuous ways of human hearts. In his vindications Father Chaminade uses measure; the tone is even, and when he thinks it might be strident, he apologizes for it. Charity and zeal move him; love for his sons, unswerving devotion to duty, and withal an extraordinary degree of simplicity and honesty in his dealings. He communicates his correspondence to all concerned; he hides nothing, even what tells against him.

Paul Bonnefous, Father Chaminade's secretary from 1845-47 and again during the closing months of his life, had a fiery temperament, with a mind captured by subtle elucubrations, or as some would put it, a mere fool; nevertheless, he had some intuitions that come, perhaps, only to poets, lovers, and fools, for as the Poet says: "They are all of imagination compact." He said that if ever the cause of Father Chaminade would reach Rome, he would be attacked for not being prudent. That is what happened. But he did

think of canonization and, what is more, he said about the bruited rumor of Roussel's¹ and his own ascendancy over Father Chaminade, the following:

Father Roussel said one day, "I can make the Good Father do what I will." He would have spoken the truth had he added, "provided his conscience allows him to." Truly, the Good Father reaches this very point of condescension in order to be all things to all men. That is all there is to the pretended ascendancy of Father Roussel on the Good Father, and also of the ascendancy that I myself exert on him. The Good Father is drunk with the wine of the practice of humility and of divine love, of the wine of evangelical childhood. Whenever he has an opportunity of lowering himself, he takes on the way and simplicity of a child.²

From time to time, also, the Founder's great devotion to the Mother of God breaks forth; from the depths of his isolation, we make out the great light that led him on. But all of this spiritual splendor is hidden in a vast mass of worrisome discussion of texts, of meaning of words, of repetitions, and logic-chopping, that invite the reader to seek out more rewarding pages.

Finally, the objection, which perhaps carried weight when the publication of the letters was interrupted, that it is useless to stir up controversy, *quieta non movere*, might still prevail to postpone to an even later date the publication of these letters. The controversy between the Founder and his sons left a rift in the Society for decades; is there any point in opening old wounds?

An answer from the Gospel might justify the publication. The truth shall make you free. If anyone still has hidden suspicions about the last years, about the Founder, the present collection of letters furnishes them with the material to form a personal judgment. But whoever takes up the study must remember that he is not the first either to decide in favor of the Founder or against him. Typical of studies on the question are the essays of Father Klobb and Father H. Lebon. Father Klobb's presentation of the facts is a devastating attack on the Founder's position and ends in the exaltation of Father Caillet and his adherents.³ Father Lebon made a critical reading of this work and wrote a long two-volume work, based principally on the present correspondence, to demonstrate that the Founder was right in vindicating the authenticity of his first oral resignation, his rights as Founder, his pretensions to correct abuses, proprietorship of his property, and the right to leave what was his to whomsoever he wished.

At this distance in time, after the declaration of the heroicity of virtues of the Founder, it seems that the letters of his final years can be published without any of the inconveniences that might have arisen forty-five years ago had the letters been continued up to the death of the Founder. Anyone reading the correspondence of 1844-50 will understand why the Cause of the Founder experienced so many and such serious

¹ Concerning Fr. Roussel's ascendancy, see Fr. Leo Meyer on the question of the revelations of the mystic of Niederbronn, Elisabeth Eppinger, Foundress of the Soeurs du T.S. Sauveur. Letters to Fr. Chevaux, July 14, 1848 (AGMAR 8.3.65), to Fr. Chaminade, Aug. 18, 1848 (AGMAR 8.3.88).

² Bonnefous to Fr. Caillet, Mar. 29, 1847 (AGMAR 16.6.6).

³ Fr. Klobb changed his mind in the last years. See the testimony of Father Stephen Bernard, Director of Caudéran: "*Nous avons fait fausse route; la dernière partie de l'histoire du P. Chaminade est à refaire. Nous avons des documents qui ne laissent aucun doute. Il (M. Chaminade) avait raison dans ses revendications; l'histoire de ses dernières années reste à écrire.*" (Rêves, 1904; *Positio super virtutibus*, p. 426, in AGMAR 1852.26)

objections on the part of the Promoter of the Faith. If the solid grounds for the declaration of the heroic virtue of Father Chaminade were not evident to the Society of Mary, little wonder that outsiders had difficulties in mastering the complexities of the last years and of coming to the conclusion that the Servant of God practiced the cardinal and moral virtues in a heroic degree. All would have been so simple if the Founder had renounced his rights, such as they were, and, to use his own term, disappeared into his nothingness. But he did not, and he could not. He explained why he could not imitate Saint Alphonsus Liguori. His case was not the same. On the surface he showed himself a rebel to his superiors, to the bishops, to the nuncio of Paris, and to two decrees of the Holy See, but he was a hero of conscience, as was Joan of Arc. He is a saint for our times when human rights are trampled, justice is not done, adversaries refuse to affront those they accuse, and the right of being heard is denied. Rarely in the history of the West has such a hero of conscience appeared beyond the ken of modern Galilees. He is a martyr of conscience. He knew that conscience binds, indicates an obligation, and commands death rather than infidelity. He could well be the patron of moral conscience, illuminated by faith, especially confronted with authority that has become unfeeling and hard.

Readers must properly focus their interpretation of the letters and must keep in mind that Father Chaminade was eighty-three years old when the conflict opened in February 1844. During the period that followed, his health failed slowly but inevitably, and his physical condition in 1847 alarmed some of his contemporaries, including Brother Auguste,⁴ who expressed his preoccupations about the Founder. Chaminade's eyesight became so weak that Father Caillet obtained for him from the Archbishop of Bordeaux the privilege of celebrating the Mass of the Blessed Virgin instead of the Mass prescribed by the liturgical calendar.⁵ After the serious sickness of 1847 and in the period immediately before his end, he did not celebrate Mass at all. During the entire 1844-50 period, he was unable to attend to his own correspondence by himself. There are only four autograph letters during the entire period, and these are short missives. He had to depend on secretaries and, for nearly two years, on an erratic one, the oft-mentioned Paul Bonnefous, who contributed not only to the transmission of Father Chaminade's thought, but who volunteered at times his own considerations to the dictations he received, so that it is necessary to distinguish sometimes what is of Father Chaminade and what is of Bonnefous.

Despite the breakdown of his physical health, his mental powers remained vigorous and alert. His intellectual strength is all the more imposing when the reader recalls that he was presented as a man of impaired faculties in the confidential pro memoria of the General Administration, which was written for the bishops by Father Roussel. But he demonstrates in his correspondence an extraordinary subtlety, a power of distinction which sometimes reaches the point of sheer hairsplitting. At times he bears all the marks of an acute advocate, a quality altogether indispensable, in his disputes with Bordeaux's illustrious jurist, M. Faye, in his exchanges with the keen mind of Father Fontaine, in his discussions with the over-careful, analytical, and even scrupulous spirit of Father Chevaux, all three the advocates and defenders of Father Caillet.⁶

⁴ Letter of Bro. Auguste to Fr. Lalanne, Jan. 21, 1847 (AGMAR 8.2.260).

⁵ Chaminade, *Letters*, no. 1468 to Msgr. Donnet, Jan. 2, 1847; vol. 7, p. 101.

⁶ *Alia Nova Positio*, pp. 55-56; Lalanne, *Notice historique*, p. 73. See his *Mémoire, Inquisitio Historica*, p. 350; Simler, *Vie*, Last years; *Positio super Virtutibus*, p. 424.

In one of his pro memoria for the rehabilitation of the Founder, Father Lalanne recalls his own unfavorable judgment, which adopted the fixed-idea thesis, and says that this was out of respect for Father Caillet and his authority, and adds: “a fixed idea, a mania is an abnormal, pathological state. It is a kind of alienation of the mind. But it is evident that throughout the entire period that the controversy raged, M. Chaminade had the full use of his intellectual faculties. All this time, and especially towards the end, he drew up his own pro memoria. He affronted his adversaries and their lawyers. No one ever called into question the validity of his acts” (Jan. 5, 1867: AGMAR 13.8.292). What characterized the Founder was not a fixed idea but a dominant or leading idea, which is something altogether different. Furthermore, his ideal did not incapacitate him for a considerable amount of pastoral activity. For weeks at a time, he gave conferences to the novices of Sainte Anne. Father Chaminade kept saying—but who believed him?—that he was solely insisting because he was obliged to; from a human point of view, he had nothing to gain but much to suffer.

His unending struggle to prevail is a work of grace. He himself realized perfectly well the odds against him, yet he could not say the struggle naught availeth. His own summary is the only explanation of his unwearied effort to be faithful to his mission:

What do I gain from this? Nothing in the natural order except headaches and work at my age, 87½ years. I will gain a great deal in the spiritual order. I will not have abandoned the institutions God has ordered me to found. If I have succeeded, this is due to God’s grace, and it will be by God’s grace that they will manage according to God’s merciful designs.

They will say to me, “But are you not too old to do anything?” Monsignor, in my prime I could do nothing, no more than I can now; I needed divine grace. Will this grace have lost its power now? “But God has chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise” [1 Cor 1:27].⁷

The Present Edition

Father Lebon not only edited the published five volumes of the *Lettres de M. Chaminade* (1930), covering the years 1790-1844, but he also prepared an edition of the letters from 1844 to 1850. In establishing the manuscript for the last six years of the Founder’s life, he followed the same method and the same criteria he used in the published volumes.

Those who have compared the edition of the five volumes with the existing archive material know that Father Lebon omitted a few letters in the published letters. Observant readers of those volumes also noted that, at times, he passes over certain passages in the letters, indicating the omissions by dots. A curious reader who has the occasion to read the originals in the archives discovers without too much effort the reason for the omissions in the published letters. One may agree or disagree about the decisions made by Father Lebon, but it can be said that nothing substantial for the purposes the Society had in publishing the correspondence of Father Chaminade was sacrificed. The primary purpose was to present Father Chaminade as he was, in flesh and blood. Through his letters he can be seen and heard as he goes about his daily work. The motivation of

⁷ Chaminade, *Letters*, no. 1488 to Msgr. Jerphanion, Sept. 25-27, 1847; vol. 7, p. 248.

his life, the will and glory of God, the cult of Mary, lies patent to the attentive reader. It is in the letters that his doctrine is grasped. There you meet Father Chaminade without any intermediary and without any posture or ulterior motive. All the purposes are described in the introduction.⁸

The omissions that seemed necessary or prudent to Father Lebon do not distort in any way the figure or doctrine of the Founder. The most meticulous historian who would publish every jot and tittle of his correspondence will have sympathy for Father Lebon's decisions and appreciate his discretion, especially when he takes into account the ideas and standards of the period.

True to his method, in the edition of the 1844-50 letters that he prepared, Father Lebon omits entire documents, drops certain passages without in any way destroying the validity of the whole. What is contained in the omissions is read elsewhere in the documents prepared.

About 1970, Brother Roger Bréard, at the request of the Postulator of the Cause of Father Chaminade, undertook to complete the edition of Father Lebon. He typed *Compléments apportés au Recueil des Lettres de M. Chaminade*. When he had finished the period 1844-49, he completed the five published volumes, adding passages where omissions were made and typing for the first time certain letters or memoirs that were left without transcription.

In the course of the Apostolic Process of the Founder's Cause, research was made for correspondence forwarded to Rome by the Founder or his adversaries during the controversial years (1844-50). The search even led to the discovery of the report of the Consultant of the Sacred Congregation, Giovanni Corboli Bussi, and the documents on which he based his decision against the Servant of God. The indefatigable Father Lebon typed or had typed the photocopies from the Vatican Archives and assured the fidelity of the transcription with his *Concordat cum originali*, November 23, 1935.

The present edition of the letters, which includes the writings of the 1844-50 period, presents the work of Father Lebon and of Brother Bréard. Father Wertz and Father Humbertclaude checked the French text once again, and the text now offered is as correct as human frailty allows.

Father Lebon, as has been mentioned, prepared instructions, sometimes a more detailed history of the circumstances, to introduce each letter. Sometimes he gives his appreciation of the mental outlook and psychology of the Founder and points out the influence of third parties, for example, the interference of his secretary, Paul Bonnefous. At other times, he describes the Founder's physical condition, sickness, and loss of sight. He does not fail to indicate the strength of the Founder's mind, his acuteness, and his persevering and determined will.

For the most part, Father Lebon's work remains intact. Some changes are made. His personal comments are reduced, and references to the archives or letters where his citations or remarks can be found or substantiated have been given. The additions made are, for the most part, taken from his *Dernières années du Bon Père Chaminade*, a detailed history in two typewritten volumes based almost exclusively on the correspondence now being published.

This work moves on from letter to letter, though from time to time, the author breaks the flow with short essays on the subject of the character of Father Caillet and his

⁸ See Chaminade, *Letters*, vol. 1, pt. 1; i-vii.

treatment of the Founder, a biography of Bonnefous, a notice on the secretaries of the period, attempts at analysis and judgment on the events about which the letters are concerned.

After the publication of these letters of the Founder's final years, the passages missing in the first five volumes will be published because the material is ready, thanks to the work done by Brother Bréard.

Vincent Vasey, SM

Rome, July 12, 1977

Our Lady of Good Counsel

The Beginning of the Conflict

May 24, 1844 to June 23, 1844

After the resignation of Father Chaminade on January 8, 1841, the council of the General Administration appointed Brother Clouzet to represent it and to confer with the parties concerned, Father Lalanne and Auguste Brougnon-Perrière and Brother Mémain. They ended their lengthy discussions on July 6, 1841, with the selection of an arbiter, M. Ravez, who was to pass judgment. The next morning Brother Clouzet returned to his community of Saint-Remy. Father Roussel undertook the defense of the Society of Mary in a series of memorandums, a method adopted by everyone concerned. Not satisfied with contesting the complaints Monsieur Auguste had leveled against Father Chaminade, Father Roussel claimed he owed 35,000 francs to the Society of Mary. He used the same tactics against Father Lalanne and Brother Mémain.

The dispute dragged on; finally on February 10, 1844, M. Ravez gave his verdict (Agmar 6.2.24). The Assistants were condemned on every point, and Father Chaminade's conduct in signing the agreement with Monsieur Auguste was vindicated. Father Lalanne was declared not liable for the loans to the Sainte-Marie boarding school, but he was obliged to repay the Society of Mary for the funds it had advanced for Layrac.

It must be remembered that the Society of Mary had not been informed of Father Chaminade's resignation during the 3 years of the judicial process. Father Roussel says to the Mother Superior of the Daughters of Mary, Mother Saint-Vincent, "We have announced only one thing to the Society, that is, that Father Chaminade has withdrawn from the Administration. . . . I urge you to observe great discretion" (June 14, 1841; Agmar 16.4.163). In the circular convoking the Chapter of 1845 (Agmar 51.1, 51.2), Father Caillet admits this again. "By common consent, we were waiting for the results of the arbitration." Perhaps they did not inform even the Archbishop of Bordeaux about the resignation because during this time he dealt with Father Chaminade as Superior General of the Society of Mary (letters no. 1274 and no. 1291); on the other hand, both Father Chevaux and the Archbishop of Besançon were aware of the situation.

The matter dragged on, and Father Chaminade was not able to name his successor. There was bickering over the delays. From Father Roussel's letter of December 12, 1844 (Agmar 7.3.87) we learn that Father Chaminade wanted to normalize the government of the Society of Mary, but the council opposes this move, especially Father Roussel. Father Chaminade complains that the council decision concerning the election and stipulating that Father Chevaux would become Superior General, Father Caillet, Head of Zeal, Father Fontaine, Head of Instruction, and Brother Clouzet, Head of Temporalities had not been implemented (letter no. 1308 to M. Faye; letter no. 1383 to Archbishop Donnet). Father Chaminade resigned himself to patiently awaiting the end of the legal process; meanwhile, he clung to his reservations and to his right to appoint a successor.

"February 10, 1844," relates Father Roussel in the Confidential Memorandum (Positio, p. 42), "the decision of the arbiter hit us like a thunderbolt." The same day, he scolded Father Chaminade that "we have been condemned on every point, and this because of your letters" (Positio, p. 55). The next day, members of the council asked Father Chaminade what they should do. According to Father Roussel, the beginning of all the trouble for the Society of Mary is found in Father Chaminade's reply. In the Confidential Memorandum he explains the conduct of Father Chaminade; "Father Chaminade underwent a sudden and profound revolution . . . he is a changed and different man" (Positio, p. 55). According to this tale, the general public interpreted the change as "a lack of openness and good faith" on the part of Father Chaminade (Positio, p. 56). For its part, the council preferred to attribute it to a "physical weakening, the result of his many labors and his advanced age."

From February 10 until May of 1844, Father Chaminade's opposition to the convocation of a General Chapter continued and intensified each time the council proposed this. Father Roussel drafted the following resolution on May 8 in the name of the council, "Extract from the Minutes of the Council of the General Administration During the Vacancy of the Generalate. Meeting of May 8, 1844."

Under the presidency of Father Caillet, Head of Zeal, and in the presence of our Venerable Founder and Father and of Father Roussel, Head of Instruction, Brother Clouzet being absent on business,

our Venerated Founder explained

(1) that because of the resignation of the Superior General of the Society of Mary and conformable to Article 482 of our holy Rule, the time has now come to regularize the general government of the Society of Mary according to the stipulations of the Constitutions and the Civil Statutes;

(2) that he intends to make use of the privilege contained in Article 482, which gives the General who resigns the right to designate his successor, if he has reserved that right;

(3) that for the appointment of the Assistants, he also intends to make use of the privilege contained in Articles 479 and 480, which state that to be valid, their election must be approved by the superiors of the central houses and of the smaller establishments by a majority of two-thirds of those who would have voted at the General Chapter.

The Council, considering

(1) the great difficulties, the dangers, and the considerable expense which the convocation of a General Chapter in the present circumstances would entail;

(2) the right which our Venerable Founder has to designate his successor because in giving his resignation, he has had the intention to use that right;

(3) the futility and the great hardships which accompany a General Chapter convoked only for the election of the General Assistants; and on the other hand, the ease with which their appointments can be made regular and canonical by observing the prescriptions of Articles 479 and 480;

accepts the proposal of our Venerable Father and Founder, who is willing to take upon himself the choice of a successor and the appointment of the General Assistants. Because of the urgency of the situation, it asks him to hurry the preparation of this important work; it decides to send a copy of this resolution, duly signed and approved by Fathers Caillet and Roussel, to their colleague Brother Clouzet for approval and comment.

*Done and decided at Bordeaux in our central house
in the month, day, and year indicated above.*

Signing the register: G. Caillet, Father Roussel

True copy. Father Roussel

(Agmar 7.2.241).

It should be remarked that there is no trace of this text in the register of the council; this is how Father Roussel operated.

Father Chaminade took his time to reply.

Finally he wrote to Father Caillet. He objected to the contents of Article 3; he saw that by invoking the Constitutions, Father Roussel was distorting the spirit of his "plan" by applying to the appointments of the Assistants by Father Chaminade the rules governing their reelection by the Society of Mary. He feared Father Roussel was preparing a loophole for a possible return to the Administration, and his conscience could not approve. That very day, May 8, sensing more and more the danger to which the conduct of Father Roussel was exposing the Society of Mary, Father Chaminade had a serious discussion with him, at the end of which he asked for his resignation. Father Roussel promised to give this, but later did nothing (see letter no. 1298 to Brother Clouzet).

Father Chaminade spoke to Father Vergne about the resignation which had been promised but never given (letter March 12, 1845; also Positio, p. 119, Agmar 1852.29). “He [Father Chaminade] urges him [Father Roussel] to retire to the Madeleine and to resign as Assistant for Instruction because he clearly sees that the scandal could not remain secret; he urges the two other Assistants to agree to this. Father Roussel leaves for Réalmont, does not resign, and the two Assistants support his stand.” (See letter of Father Roussel to Father Chaminade at Sainte-Anne, May 8, 1844; also Positio, p. 15, Agmar 1852.29).

* * *

1294. To Fr. Georges Caillet, Bordeaux

May 25, 1844, Bordeaux

Copy, Agmar

My dear Son,

In view of the urgency of the business which claims our attention, I willingly agree to yield to everything for the sake of peace, as you say, and therefore I accept the resolution of the council of the General Administration of May 8.

I only ask that there be a change in Article 3, that for the appointment of the Assistants there will be a question only of reelection and confirmation, and not of indiscriminate nomination. The reason for this change is that because they are dispersed, the members of the General Chapter have no authority other than to reelect and confirm; to act otherwise will give rise to protests, and the difficulty will not be solved, but aggravated.²

* * *

Disturbed by Father Roussel’s threats, Father Caillet turned to Father Bouet and urged him to influence Father Chaminade to accept the view of the council (letter no. 1298 to Brother Clouzet, May 29, 1844). Father Chaminade sent Father Bouet a copy of the preceding letter.

²The modification requested by Fr. Chaminade was perfectly justified, as we can see from Article 477 of the Constitutions of 1839. Here are the articles of the Constitutions to which reference will be made later.

476. The reelection of the Superior General is an accomplished fact when the majority of the members by right to the General Chapter, having been consulted, are in favor of it

477. The reelection of the Assistants General is an accomplished fact when the majority of the members of the Chapter, having been consulted, are in favor of it.

478. In both cases, a two-thirds majority of the members who have been convoked for the election in the General Chapter is required.

479. If the Superior General resigns, purely and simply, without proposing a successor, the procedure is the same as in the case of a death.

480. If the successor he proposes is accepted by the Council and by the superiors of the central houses, he is by that fact invested with all the authority of the Superior General until the convocation of the Chapter, which is to take place after the tenth year of the generalate of his predecessor.

483. The General Chapter confirms or rejects the election.

1295. To Father Bouet, Bordeaux¹

May 25, 1844, Bordeaux

Copy, Agmar

My dear Son,

I am sending you a copy of the letter which I believed I should and could write to Father Caillet. He replied verbally that he could not give me a definite answer until next Monday.

Consequently, I am not going to Sainte-Anne this evening, and probably not for the beautiful feastdays. However, I will postpone my letter to Brother Clouzet and take all other precautions.

Continue to pray and see if it would not be good to pay a short visit to Father Caillet, who does not cease to be one of my specially cherished Children, even though you have become his confidant. Rebirth in Jesus and Mary is an admirable thing.

Please accept, my dear Son, this token of my affection and respect.

* * *

For biographical details about Father Bouet see text following letter no. 207 and the statement made about him by Father Chaminade in letter no. 1299 to M. Faye and letter no. 1379 to Fr. Léon Meyer. At this time, Father Bouet was the confessor to both Father Chaminade and Father Caillet. Father Bouet confirms this judgment in a letter about Father Chaminade on August 20, 1855 (letter no. 1295, Agmar 7.2.252). Note that Father Bouet returned this letter to Father Chaminade, adding encouragement and the advice, "Yield, my dear Father, yield; I trust that God will take your gesture into consideration." Father Chaminade then wrote to Father Caillet, a letter later called his "second resignation."

1296. To Fr. Georges Caillet, Bordeaux

May 26, 1844, Bordeaux

Copy, Agmar

My dear Son,

I felt obliged to send Father Bouet yesterday evening a copy of the letter which I sent to you. I did not ask for an answer; however, he wrote at the bottom of my letter which accompanied the copy, "Yield, my dear Father, yield; I trust that God will take your gesture into consideration. Father Joseph."

My dear Son, I believe I have opposed the views of the council only because of a duty of conscience; but because Father Bouet believes duty should stop there, and he even causes me to hope for a reward, I revoke the letter I wrote to you yesterday and ask the council to proceed in the business of my resignation as if I were physically dead; do not consult me about any of your actions in this matter.

However, I am at your disposal for anything which might interest you; nothing will lessen the very true devotedness which is in my heart for you.

* * *

¹See letter no. 1294, note 1.

Later, in a memorandum to the pope dated February 26, 1845, Father Chaminade explained the meaning and the intention of this “second resignation.”

I believe these last propositions. . . ; I ask the Council to proceed in the business of my resignation as if I were physically dead; do not consult me about any of your doings in this matter . . . they would be regarded as a threat. . . . They were gratefully received, as a blessing. The Head of Zeal came the next day, May 27, to fall at my feet to show his gratitude. . . . I received him rather coldly and explained to him the pain which I experienced over his ever-growing illusions. . . . I then understood that I had made a false move and that I had placed into the hands of my adversaries another weapon to be used against me. (Agmar 2.7.1368-2; Positio, p. 65-66; Agmar 1852.27).

However, I did not think the problem had no solution. On May 28, I informed my confessor of the serious illusions which I believed I detected in the Head of Zeal, hoping that if he recognized them himself, we could confront them together. I wrote to the Head of Temporalities, telling him to disregard my letter of May 26.

Before writing this “second resignation,” Father Chaminade had expressly reserved to himself this recourse to Brother Clouzet, an “integral member of the Council, without whom nothing can be accomplished.” Brother Clouzet did not reply. Father Chaminade had only one choice, “to protest against this abuse before it was agreed by the council in session” (Positio, p. 66). The next letter reveals the thoughts and actions of Father Chaminade two days after the “second resignation.”

1297. To Father Bouet, Bordeaux

May 28, 1844, Bordeaux

Copy, Agmar

My respected Son,

After the remarks and the charitable advice which you had the kindness to give me Friday evening during the conversation we had after my Confession, I wrote to Father Caillet the very next day, and I accepted all that these men could ask of me. I excluded only one point, not because I objected to the formalities but because I wanted to modify it in such a way that I would not be acting directly against the Constitutions, an action I could not perform without sinning, and sinning gravely.

The next day I was surprised, my dear Son, to have my letter returned to me. I opened it to see if there was a reply. I found this. “Yield, my Good Father, yield; I hope that God will take your gesture into consideration.” I understood then that your intention was not that I do what my conscience forbids, but that I abandon every influence over the council of the Society and that I withdraw from it; that you consider it a much lesser evil for the Society of Mary that its direction would be given to the council; and that those evils you had been told to expect would come to pass without fail.

I do not wish to be the judge in my own case; I wrote immediately to Father Caillet, reporting your decision to him. I revoked my letter of the previous evening announcing an obstacle to their plans for an election; I would be no more active than a dead man.

This second letter seems to have pleased Father Caillet. I gathered as much from some questions in the letter he sent me yesterday morning.

The serious illusion under which Father Caillet is laboring and which he is promoting in Father Roussel, and no doubt in Brother Clouzet, is deplorable.

You see, my respected Son, that we must continue to pray.

Everything cannot be ended until I write to Brother Clouzet; he is an integral part of the council of the Administration, and I will do so at once. According to the Constitutions, Father Caillet is named vicar general, but only in union with his entire council.

1297-2. Brief Account of the “Second Resignation”

After May 28, 1844, Bordeaux

Copy, Agmar

A Brief Account of the “Second Resignation” of
Father Guillaume Joseph Chaminade,
Superior General of the Society of Mary.

First Question. If this “second resignation” is pure and simple and truly valid, why did Fathers Caillet and Roussel and Brother Clouzet not make use of it? Why did they not accept it at the meeting of the council of the General Administration? Why did they not call for the convocation of a General Chapter of the Society?

The reason is quite simple and very evident; it was not as pure and simple as they cunningly supposed. Furthermore, it had been legitimately contested from the beginning.

Second Question. This “second resignation” is similar, they say, to the first of three years ago, absolutely authentic and quite legal, therefore, etc.

The reply is equally very simple and evident. The first, to which they compare the second, while valid and legal in itself, has been tainted with treason and could therefore be used only to deceive; the proof of this is developed historically elsewhere.

*

The Story of the “Second Resignation”

On May 24, 1844, Father Caillet was at Sainte-Anne [the novitiate of the Society of Mary, 15 minutes from the Madeleine, the central house], where he found Father Roussel in a highly agitated state of mind and threatening to withdraw from the Society. He returned to the Madeleine and told me of his fears. I told him not to be surprised by this talk.

I had asked Father Bouet to visit me. On his way here he met Father Caillet, who described all the evils which would befall the Society if I did not give in to Father Roussel. Father Bouet was terrified at this; he came to my room and, having heard my Confession, spoke to me earnestly about the agitation of Father Roussel and the conviction both held that I should yield. I replied in substance that I would yield all that my conscience would permit. Father Bouet departed. It was night.

The next morning, the Vigil of Pentecost, I wrote the following letter to Father Caillet. [*Here the letter 1294 of May 25, 1844, is recopied.*]

Then I wrote to Father Bouet and sent him a copy of the above letter which was destined for Father Caillet. [*Here the letter 1295 of May 25 is recopied.*]

Father Bouet’s answer was written at the end of my letter, which he had returned. “Yield, my Good Father, yield; I trust that God will take your gesture into consideration. Signed, Father Joseph.”

On May 26, 1844, which was the Holy Day of Pentecost, I wrote the following letter to Father Caillet. [*Here the letter 1296 of May 26, 1844, is recopied.*]

This second letter to Father Caillet is the one called the “second resignation,” about which the coalition of my Assistants made such an uproar by comparing it to what they call my “first resignation.”

I believed I should inform Father Bouet about this letter which I wrote to Father Caillet to show him how I was following his advice. [*Here the letter 1297 of May 28, 1844, is recopied.*]

Father Bouet’s answer. When he returned my letter, Father Bouet wrote at the bottom, “Jesus, Mary, Joseph. My answer was unequivocal, yield.”

This was the answer which caused the great commotion and which distressed the entire Society, except for Father Caillet and his two colleagues.

* * *

After this, as Father Chaminade has just indicated, he sent Brother Clouzet this letter, one of the most important, to clarify the events of this period—the “second resignation” with its consequences and its drawbacks, the Roussel matter and Fr. Roussel’s future place in the Society of Mary, the discussion about the election by secret ballot (see the Constitutions, Articles 478-83; also letter no. 1294, note 2), and the interference of Father Caillet in the internal forum through his pressure on Father Bouet.

1298. To Bro. Dominique Clouzet, Saint-Remy

May 29, 1844, Bordeaux

Original, Agmar

My dearly beloved Son,

Perhaps you already know that I have resigned as Superior General, so purely and simply . . . just as it was always desired, so that the General Administration could conduct business as though I were physically dead. This form of resignation seems to have pleased your two colleagues on the council of the General Administration, in spite of the consequences which must follow and the serious problems they will have to face.

These are the consequences to be expected.

(1) That I may no longer, even in conscience, be part of the council;
(2) that the General Administration can only proceed with the election of a Superior General and of the Assistants by holding a General Chapter. I have made known these consequences before giving my definitive resignation.

These are the very serious disadvantages which may result.

(1) The great expense caused by holding a General Chapter, especially if they invite the Archbishop of Besançon to preside, as was proposed in council;

(2) the serious disruption caused by bringing to the Chapter the directors of small establishments¹ at a time when they should be at the head of their communities, gathered in the central houses.² Furthermore, the disservice caused by the absence of these directors from those houses, filled more or less with novices, and especially by the absence of the priests in charge of the church of the Madeleine, the Sodalties, and the novitiate of Sainte-Anne;

(3) the suspension of all current business, or confiding it to those in whom someone may not have complete confidence. As far as the Madeleine is concerned, along with the current business it is necessary to include the general activities;

(4) the surprise of both the entire Society and of the public, especially in Bordeaux, that a General Chapter should be held more than 4 years after a resignation which made it an obligation for the General Administration to hold it with the least possible delay. This is the type of delay which caused us to be considered by the Court of Arbitration as comedians who apparently brought upon themselves a very severe sentence, a sentence which was just, however, because according to the conviction of the judge and of the defense the resignation had been nothing but a farce. I have listed here only the principle disadvantages; all of them have a solid function and a history which it is not always appropriate to tell.

¹According to the Constitutions of 1839, all the directors were members by right of the General Chapter.

²For the annual retreats.

(5) I can add a fifth disadvantage, which I hope to be able to remedy. The Superior General of the Society of Mary is also the Superior General of the Institute of the Daughters of Mary, as well as of the Third Order because of his title as spiritual Father. Their Constitutions were approved at the same time as those of the Society of Mary. In order not to alarm them, I wish to continue to govern them, and I am convinced that I have the power and the duty to do so.

My resignation, however it may be qualified, was accepted provisionally by the council, but it cannot have its complete effect until it is accepted by the Society. At this time it has not been made public, and this cannot happen without you.

After the appointment of the new Superior and of his Assistants, they³ can see whether the General Administration will continue to govern the Society in the true spirit of faith. I have promised them a visit before my death, precisely to strengthen them in faith and to oversee the government of the Institute and of each of its Daughters according to faith. It was with this intention in mind that I had hoped to visit all the establishments of the Society. I have no other ambition on earth but this, and I believe God is prolonging my life only for this reason, and also, no doubt, to give me the time to do penance. These two aspects of the Divine Goodness of Mercy are perfectly in accord. All founders of Orders generally had much to suffer, and all these sufferings, borne in a spirit of faith, can serve as penance.

The four people I wanted to have appointed, and who would have been chosen without fail by the members by right to the General Chapter, are the same people you three had proposed to me: Father Chevaux, General; Father Caillet, Head of Zeal; Father Fontaine, Head of Instruction; and Brother Clouzet, Head of Temporalities.

Soon after your departure, we three met in council. Father Roussel spoke of the same candidates very pleasantly, and he immediately added, "As for me, I am being sent to Saint-Remy." I replied at once, "Your presence is more necessary at the Madeleine, both for yourself and for the others." He understood me and said nothing more. In particular, I caused Father Caillet to understand that Father Roussel could not be employed as the superior of any establishment, and with all the more reason at Saint-Remy, our most important and largest establishment.

My dear Son, you will ask me, "But why do you not have the election, or elections, by secret ballot, as Father Caillet suggested and to which you so strongly agreed, just as it has been done twice by the Daughters of Mary on two occasions which were as serious as those in which we find ourselves?"¹

Do not think I have pointed out to you all the disadvantages. I am telling you that this method can be used only for provisional elections,² and that the method I would use, or which the council could use, was necessarily that of proposing the four names, or at least the names of the three Assistants.

But then Father Roussel would not be reelected, and he would fear the consequences, especially since he knew that he would be neither at Saint-Remy nor at Sainte-Anne but at the Madeleine, working very honorably and very successfully as he did before he lived at Sainte-Anne, and especially before Brother Chauvin made his profession. But at the Madeleine, he no doubt feared that he would be obliged to follow the community Rule. In so easily giving my resignation, it was my intention to have a General Administration truly complete and regular, a model for all the establishments of the Society. With this in mind, I proposed to Father Roussel that he resign and ask to be at the disposal of the new General. I put this in writing; he answered immediately that he was prepared to resign and to place himself at my disposal, or at that of the new Superior whom Providence would send. . . . I think that in spite of the length of this letter,

³The Daughters of Mary, the Third Order, and the Society of Mary.

¹August 2, 1830 and August 25, 1840, for the election and the reelection of Mother Saint-Vincent.

²See Articles 480 and 481 of the Constitutions.

I will send you an exact copy of his written reply. . . . The trivial difficulty of knowing to whom he should give his resignation was settled at the first meeting of the council. I made the request—or rather, I proposed—that he resign in order to have the occasion to speak favorably about him; because he was excluded from the reelection of the Assistants, I wished to stress the reputation he had acquired in the exercise of his duty as Head of Instruction. In fact, if he is faithful to his religious vocation, I do not doubt that God will use him to give to the Society of Mary the expansion it needs to fulfill the destiny which God has for this institution.

My dear Son, can you tell me why the moment everything seemed to be concluded to my satisfaction so that I might die in peace—why, I ask, does he secretly write to you; why does he complain that you answered him in such a manner that he raised an outcry? (I have not seen your letter; I have not even seen Father Roussel.) Last Friday afternoon Father Caillet came to Sainte-Anne; Father Roussel informed him of your answer to a letter which he had secretly written. He went on to say that he could no longer stand it; that what happened to others who had left the Society would happen to him, but that this blow would be more harmful to the Society in the present circumstances. He greatly stirred up Father Caillet, who on returning to the Madeleine met Father Bouet, whom I had called to hear my Confession and to prepare me for the beautiful Feast of Pentecost. He told him everything he had heard, and that the only way to save the Society was for me to resign, just as I told you at the beginning of this letter. I have followed exactly the advice and the counsels of Father Bouet not from any fear, not even because of any trouble or danger to the Society. The Society of Mary is the work of God under the special and immediate protection of our august Mother. Father Bouet believes that in all of these storms I will find my sanctification, that God permits them, and that the Society will survive them, purer and more beautiful, etc. . . .

On leaving Bordeaux without even speaking to me, as it had been decided in council, you told Father Caillet that in a previous interview with you I had hurt you very cruelly. I hastened to explain and tried to make him understand that this interview was very friendly and was an expression of mutual confidence. I asked him to write to you at once and to explain himself carefully and well, that your preoccupation and perhaps your feelings made you give my words a wrong interpretation. What is very certain is that my regard for you has never changed, a regard which is always paternal, full of esteem, boundless confidence, tender affection, and frequently of compassion for your difficulties and absorbing occupations. If Father Caillet has not healed the wound, either because he did not write to you or because he explained things poorly, please let me know; perhaps I will be more able to clear up the misunderstanding.

Oh, my heavens! Are you not the person God has chosen to sustain the Society? Where would I be if God had not given you to me? On several occasions I may have made some remarks that were rather harsh, but this was always from a paternal heart; I merely discharged the duties of a Father to whom you owe obedience and whom you have chosen by uniting yourself to him as one of his oldest Sons.

Receive, my dear Son, my fatherly embrace.

G.-Joseph Chaminade

* * *

Brother Clouzet did not reply. Several days later, Father Caillet proposed to Father Chaminade that as a duty of conscience and for personal guidance he should seek the advice of counsel. Always agreeable, Father Chaminade contacted M. Faye, a lawyer, at whose request he consented to discuss the disputed question in writing. This correspondence lasted almost two months (June 18 to August 2, 1844) without achieving the result Father Caillet had hoped for, and which, moreover, could not forestall some new events which greatly changed the situation. Here we have evidence of Father Chaminade's sensitivity; he did not wish to expose the differences which existed between himself and his sons. He took a stand from which he could not

be swayed, even on his deathbed—his mission, his rights, and his duties as Founder of the Society of Mary (see Inquisitio historica, 1970, p. 170; Agmar 1852.30). On the other hand, as a good lawyer M. Faye confined himself to a discussion of the texts.

1299. To M. Faye, Lawyer, Bordeaux

June 18, 1844, Bordeaux

Original, Agmar

My dear Counselor,

I have prayed and reflected a great deal since our last interview. I admire your zeal in looking for the means to rally us, Superior and Assistants, to common attitudes and sentiments. I recognize the great difficulty facing us and you in achieving a reconciliation. Although the principle from which we began is sound, it was only a consequence, and we did not interpret it in the same way.

We said that here is the pure and simple resignation of a General of the Society, and we searched the Constitutions for information on the procedures to be followed; but they told us of the Superior General of the Society and the situation after his death, and not about a Superior who was Founder of the Society and the author of its Constitutions. The discussion should have begun with this idea.

In spite of their very close relationship, there must be a very real distinction between principle and consequence; they cannot exist well together. For instance, between appointees and the one who appoints. If we examine only one section of the Constitutions of the Society, is the council not formed essentially by the three Assistants to the Superior? These three Assistants are the appointed General Heads of the Society—the Head of Zeal, the Head of Instruction, and the Head of Temporalities. The supreme authority is constituted by them and by their subordinates in the General Chapter. But from what principle do they derive this authority? That authority is thoroughly paternal, imbued with the conviction that as one family, all come from a father of whose authority they are the heirs. Who would dare claim that the children, even when they are assembled, have a true and legitimate authority over the father who has brought them into the world? My dear Counselor, I will go into more detail not for your sake, but for those whose cause you would zealously defend.

The Society did not make the Father who engendered it, the Founder who brought it into the world. To take the term “superior” in its strict sense, not even the king or the Sovereign Pontiff appointed him. Their nomination is more a recognition of a fact than the fact itself. Before the royal authorization, there was a plan to form a council of those Assistants or General Heads. Were they appointed by the Society or by the Government? Not at all. The Founder brought them together and gave each one his proper authority. He sent the Government a report of the nomination with a letter of gratitude to the king, to whom it was actually given and about which he expressed his satisfaction. Why send this account of the appointment to the Government? This was for fear that in the future it would be believed that the Government had approved a plan for the Society, rather than the Society itself. Whenever it was necessary or even opportune to change one of the early heads, did I need to convoke a General Chapter or even consult the capitulants and count their votes? Of course not. Who appointed the three actual Assistants? Are they Heads of Zeal, Instruction, and Temporalities because they were elected by a General Chapter, or even by a consultation of the scattered capitulants? If the present Assistants believe their nomination is not legitimate or authentic, they were wrong to use my resignation as an argument in court. If they believe their nomination is legitimate and authentic, why, today more especially, do they claim that my authority is not?

They have stated very frequently that I could resign as General, but not as Founder. A Founder who resigns purely and simply as General in order no longer to concern himself with the Society, as if he were physically dead, would be said to be resigning as Founder, and then he would be an inhuman father who would betray the trust of his large family. What a crime! Now, what if at the moment of his resignation there were some serious abuses in the General Administration of the Society, and he did not remedy them? Do not tell me the Constitutions are there to suppress them; a General Chapter does not have more authority than its Founder. If the Founder tolerates these abuses, after his death they will be interpreted as not being contrary to the Constitutions, etc. . . .

I will not speak here of another rather serious complication which could result from the convocation of a General Chapter, although one would be necessary if I retire.

But Monsieur, I am told by my advisor on the one hand and by their defender on the other, “If your pure and simple resignation is a crime according to the understanding of the Assistants, why did you give it last May 26?” On the contrary, it was most edifying! Was not the esteemed Father Caillet so completely pleased with it that several days later he was annoyed at you because you seemed to act counter to the written promises which were and are still in your hands? It is true that this letter—you remember the scene which led to it—greatly obligated me and demanded of me sacrifices which a person makes only to God; but I believe I took ample means to safeguard my conscience. Those means are described in my letters to Father Caillet and Father Bouet; the use of some of these means was immediately explained to Brother Clouzet, and as for the others, these were thoroughly explained on two occasions to Father Caillet himself. On the second occasion, he seemed to realize that I had duties which in conscience I must fulfill, and he told me to consult someone; I promised.¹

Ordinarily a person does not consult about something which is evident, and this was my conviction. Nevertheless, because Father Caillet was somewhat confused and because it could happen that in spite of myself, I could be mistaken—a very serious error which could be only a punishment for my past infidelities, in spite of my constant desire to do what I know is God’s will—on the advice of Father Caillet I observed various people who were evidently deserving of complete confidence and who would have mine entirely. But I found it very difficult to explain to them the need for a consultation.¹ The Assistants are my cherished children, the children of my fatherly heart. I believe that I love them in Jesus and Mary as much as I love myself; to speak unfavorably of them to some townspeople, to strangers to the Society, was highly repugnant to me. Finally I chose you, Monsieur, who are the spiritual son of Father Caillet, who has as much confidence in you as you have in him; I did not hesitate to choose you as my counsel.

You wish to bring the two of us to the same opinions and sentiments, but you cannot do so until we give you the necessary means. To convince some people, a person needs to use the argument called *ad hominem* [toward the man]. I think such are the ones I am giving you in this letter, and which God has inspired me in spite of my great unworthiness. (God has promised to hear the prayers offered in the name of his adorable Son, who is also the Son of Mary; how great is the power of this lovable name before God!) If you are as convinced as I am, you will convince Father Caillet and, I do not doubt, Father Roussel, whom I have always considered in the depth of his soul to be open to reason. Now I have said everything; here we are now more united than ever. Let me conclude.

The Founder of the Society of Mary should not encounter any resistance in the use or in the exercise of his right and authority to govern the said Society, to direct each of its members or to appoint directors, to resign his generalate with no prejudice to the prudent solicitude which his

¹See above, before this letter.

¹An allusion to Fr. Roussel’s conduct.

office of Founder constantly imposes upon him until death, and this without any limits except those Jesus Christ himself has set, "From whom [Jesus Christ] every family in heaven and on earth takes its name" [Ephesians 3:15].

A person could say that this conclusion is too rigorous, especially after the second resignation given last May 26, according to the advice and authority of a confessor. Well! Then upon what or whom can a person depend? Here we have a word given in writing, examined, consulted, by the Founder of an Order.

Without returning to the arguments of the discussion which would bring about new delays, so harmful to the Society, and without reverting to the spirit in which he gave this so-called resignation, he will put into practice this common saying, accepted everywhere: *Erreur n'est pas compte!* [It is never too late to correct a miscalculation.] With some vehemence, the Assistants demand this type of resignation; the president of the council takes advantage of an opportune circumstance; he very seriously advises me, perhaps he even would intend to order me, as the future seemed to indicate, to satisfy all the demands of the council. I did this, but to the best of my ability without harming my conscience. No type of authority can command against the conscience of anyone without first proving to him that his conscience is false; otherwise, they will be leading him to his crime.

Please note (1) that in giving me this advice or this order, Father Bouet acknowledged that his lack of intellectual ability prevented him from discussing the matter in depth; but he believed that he was sufficiently informed from what Father Caillet had told him, for whom he is also the confessor; (2) that in taking Father Bouet for my confessor, I had resolved never to consult him about the mission in which I am engaged, either because of his lack of intelligence, of which I was aware, or because it would be rather dangerous to ask a counselor whether one should or should not perform a civil or religious act, for then a person could no longer speak of a true divine vocation. The confessor has no authority in external affairs; his authority is limited to the internal forum. If a penitent accuses himself of sins against his duties of state, he should blame him for the transgression and act as he is obliged to do for any other type of transgression or of sin. Otherwise, the confessor is truly in the wrong. By a similar error by a confessor nearly destroyed the Institute of the Daughters of Mary; but its Founder, when he became aware of the cause, intervened to restore the order which had reigned there previously.¹ Must the Founder of the Society of Mary also expose the Society?

I repeat that the Assistants are wrong to demand more than they should; the confessor errs, and the Founder also errs in satisfying an extravagant demand; everyone is in error. "It is never too late to correct a miscalculation."

Therefore it is permissible to accept the above conclusion; in accepting it peace, union, and concord among us will be reestablished. We will forget all the past; anarchy will end in the Society, which is already beginning to be aware of it. Once order is restored, there is good reason to believe that if the Founder himself very decidedly announces his resignation for reasons of advanced age and if he assigns a place and a duty to each person, everything will proceed well and peacefully, so that there will be no need for him to speak of the past.

On the contrary, if any one of the Assistants and with all the more reason if all oppose the meeting, the Founder will be obliged to speak of this, at least on certain important occasions, for in spite of the opposition he will not fail to accomplish his mission even until the last moment of his life; grief-stricken, he will adore the terrible judgments of God.

You see, Monsieur, my dear Counselor, that it is urgent to bring an end to this; everything will be concluded if Father Caillet gives you the two letters of last May 25 and May 26. If at any time they have taken any steps or raised any difficulty, I trust that if all of us are in

¹A reference to the conflict at Agen in the spring of 1832 (letter no. 615; also letter no. 90).

agreement, we will easily solve it. It would be regrettable if under the pretext of further deliberation or of seeking solutions anyone would prolong the delay more than 20 hours.

Please accept, Monsieur and dear Counselor, the expression of my complete confidence and very sincere affection.

G.-Joseph Chaminade

P.S. This letter, Monsieur, dictated in haste but not without reflection, is very long because I had no time to make it any shorter. Father Caillet's confessor is also his guide with respect to his duties toward his superior. Therefore, in this respect Father Caillet has a special conscience under his relationship with his guide. I also have my conscience as Superior and Founder, sent by God to fashion the Society of Mary. These are two consciences, each of which believes in its truth; however, they are directly opposed on the same point. You will hardly succeed if you do not overcome his prejudice against taking another director to guide him in the duties he has to fulfill toward his superior, that superior to whom he has vowed and sworn obedience. Two superiors with equal rights are impossible, and even absurd; this would be a type of Manichaeism.

* * *

In his answer, M. Faye refers Father Chaminade to the Constitutions; here is Father Chaminade's reply.

1300. To M. Faye, Lawyer, Bordeaux

June 19, 1844, Bordeaux

Autograph, Agmar

Monsieur,

I am grateful for the letter which you have the kindness to send to me; I was looking forward to it, and you have realized the urgency of the situation.

We are in perfect agreement as to the fundamentals. I am bound with and by the Constitutions, but in a more rigorous manner as Founder than as an ordinary Superior General. I have obligations to fulfill which are more binding, and therefore I have a right and an authority which is commensurate with these. My right is not preexistent, if you will, but coexistent, inherent and natural to the activity of a Founder. It consists in (1) organizing and sustaining the project of the Constitutions; (2) supervising the Society and each of its members, either directly by myself, if I am able, or indirectly through the Assistants, for the maintenance of true regularity, *cum prudenti discretion* [with prudent discretion]; and (3) maintaining especially the spirit of the Constitutions, in taking the appropriate measures to correct existing abuses, in planning religious instruction in order to support our spirit, to increase it, to revive it if it should weaken, and to instill it in all the candidates. The pope has been kind enough to send me a special letter in this regard,¹ not to impose a special obligation upon me but to encourage me to uphold the spirit of the Constitutions.

¹August 21, 1839.

In today's lessons we read of Saint Benezet, the founder of an Order, who before his death and because of his solicitude for the Order confided its government to Saint Julienne, Superior and Founder of another order of women. This was not to last. The Order,² which was already very fervent, did not object, but after some time it elected a good Superior General. Several illustrious founders, having resigned in favor of members whom they believed to be better than themselves, had them demoted and resumed authority for themselves until another election, such as. . . .³

I believe I have made myself clear on this topic; you can now communicate with Father Caillet.

I would like this discussion to cease; I have cooperated more than you asked. Have Father Caillet send you without delay the two letters I have requested. Neither he nor anyone else must give his confessor any power over the external forum to contradict the orders of his superiors, and peace and concord will be reestablished. This deeply touches the heart of their Father, who loves them more than they know. They need not fear that I will do anything contrary to the Constitutions; if I seem severe today, it is only because of the Constitutions. But I must conclude.

Brother Clouzet's arrival is a good thing; I do not doubt that he will be happy in his heart to find with peace and unity.

Please excuse me, Monsieur, for sending you a letter full of erasures and faults in composition; I am in a hurry to finish it.

Please accept my paternal embrace. I have not reread this.

G.-Joseph Chaminade

* * *

²Fr. Chaminade confuses Saint Benezet (+1184), the founder according to tradition of a lay bridge-building brotherhood (*fratres pontis*) of Avignon, with Saint Philippe Benite (+1285), who "when near death," according to the breviary on the Feast of Saint Julienne Falconieri (June 19), "could not recommend to anyone else other than this saint 'not only the Order of the Mantellate, of which she was the first to receive the habit and become the superior, 'but also the Order of the Servites, of which he had been the superior.'"

³The case of Saint Francis of Assisi and Brother Elias.

The First Skirmishes of the Struggle

June 23, 1844 to October 31, 1844

While continuing to discuss with M. Faye, Father Chaminade decided to act. He retracted his resignation. He mentioned this in his petition to Pope Gregory XVI, of February 25, 1845.

Furthermore, Most Holy Father, . . . I withdrew my authority from them in two letters of protest, one of June 23 and the other of July 12 [letters no. 1301 and no. 1309]; my conditional resignation and my title of Founder left me the power and gave me the right to do so. My letter of May 26, 1844 [letter no. 1296] to the Head of Zeal did not destroy my reservation . . . it could not be interpreted as a new resignation, for that was not my intention when I wrote it. I even had a very opposite one, that of retracting it if it did not produce the effect I desired. I wished only to arouse the filial devotedness of my Children, and especially that of the Head of Zeal. From the moment I saw how he misused it, I revoked it orally on the spot, then later by two consecutive letters of protest on June 23 and July 12, 1844 (Positio, pp. 75-76, Agmar 1852.27).

* * *

1301. To Fr. Georges Caillet, Bordeaux

June 23, 1844, Bordeaux

Original, Agmar

The Founder of the Society of Mary to my dear Son, Father Caillet,
President of the Council of the General Administration of the Society of Mary
In the absence of its General.
My dear Son,

I can no longer resist the cries of my conscience; the more you oppose it, the stronger they become. I have no other ambition on this earth of exile than to obey Jesus Christ.

About four years ago, I resigned the Generalate and took the overabundant precautions prescribed in article 482 of our Constitutions. The two articles 481 and 482 determine the meaning which a pure and simple—that is to say, a sincere and true—resignation should have. This resignation, signed by me, was deposited and registered in the council itself, so that the members who compose it could do what the Constitutions prescribe in a similar case. The Council did not wish to fulfill any of its duties, not even to notify the Society.

Furthermore, in order to bypass the council without a scandalous outburst, I believed I saw a means to save what my conscience authoritatively demanded of me, but still in keeping with the distorted interpretation they wished to give to my resignation; I used it. Hence the letters I wrote to you last May 25 and May 26. But what a pitiful abuse you have made of them!

Wishing to correct all these pitiful irregularities and to save the Society of Mary from the serious dangers to which the council of the General Administration resolutely wants to expose it,

(1) I now revoke the deposit which I made of my resignation to the council of the General Administration; having been frustrated in my hopes, I wish to fulfill by myself the administration of the Society;

(2) I cancel the two letters which I wrote to you last May 25 and 26, and I desire that they will be considered inoperative for the reasons mentioned above.

In testimony whereof,

G.-Joseph Chaminade

[Letter no. 1301 was not sent to its destination until June 26; Father Chaminade wished to submit it first to M. Faye. In this letter he examines the ideas which will reappear frequently in the correspondence and other writings of the last years.

(1) Two abuses: the habitual absence of a member of the council of the General Administration and the interference of a confessor in the external forum.

(2) Father Chaminade remains always the Father of the Society of Mary

(3) The formalities surrounding his resignation have been falsified.]

* * *

1302. To M. Faye, Bordeaux

June 24, 1844, Bordeaux

Autograph, Agmar

Monsieur,

I have been uncomfortable since the beginning of our correspondence because I am unable to give the title of “Son” which my paternal heart would wish to do, and which our sodalists, even the most eminent of them in the world, have desired.

I do not wish to create any obstacle to my meeting with Father Caillet. How painful is this long misunderstanding! If it were known, this would be scandalous.

Can I suffer much longer the secret anarchy which reigns in the Society of Mary? For the last 4 years, the administrative council has been almost habitually without a quorum, and I have not attended for the past month and a half! It is pointless to tell you about the unfortunate consequences of such a state of affairs; you can at least imagine them.

Father Caillet believes I am to blame, that I wish only to conduct matters by myself, especially since he has charged both my confessor and his to order me not to say or do anything more, just as if I were physically dead. He has given a very wide interpretation to these orders; he believes I cannot do those things which even an outsider who would know our situation could do with merit before God. Father Bouet believes this also. . . . But let us set aside these intrigues.

Monsieur, I am sending you the reply to your letter of June 20. I suppose my Assistants are holding in reserve their insolvable and decisive objection.¹ It seems you have been somewhat impressed by it, and I do not blame you. It is precisely at the thought of my advanced age and of the importance of the consequences that I was so easily persuaded to resign, but I never intended to resign as an unnatural Father and to betray the confidence of my numerous Children. It is inconceivable that the heads, to whom I have confided this in such good faith, should wish to deny what I said to them before and after I gave it, and ever since in all our struggles. I even told them in writing, which they still have, that if a Superior General resigns without observing the formalities of the Constitutions, charity and the interests of the Society should oblige them to reprimand him.

Monsieur, if by this time you are truly convinced but cannot convince Father Caillet, I ask you to hand the enclosed protest to him. When I began this letter, I intended to have it copied more neatly and to retain the original. But I see now that this would serve no purpose; you may even destroy it after reading it carefully. However, this does not apply to the other letter, which is a reply to the new objections.

¹The objection, it seems, was that Fr. Chaminade had resigned without reserving to himself the right to choose his successor.

Monsieur, you are providing a good service in trying somehow to end this business in any way whatsoever. If it is painful and unpleasant, the merit in the eyes of God will be all the more pure.

Please accept, Monsieur, the expression of my affection, of my gratitude, and of my devotedness.

G.-Joseph Chaminade

P.S. If on reading the protest you find that its defects in form could delay or even lessen its effectiveness, please return it to me with your corrections, even before attempting to have Father Caillet reconsider by appealing first to reason, for I believe the reply which I have given is conclusive; and then to religion, by showing him the evil of the miserable tactic he is using, adding to the spiritual power a confessor has over his penitent, the authority over his external behavior. From this stems the hidden villainy which, I have frequently said, is inconceivable in a priest as respected as Father Caillet.

*

To these lines was added a reply to the letter of M. Faye of June 20. Father Chaminade tries to follow the lawyer as he reasons on the level of the texts, but here he becomes confused. His examination of the articles of the Constitutions concerning the appointment of the Assistants is painfully drawn out, and he repeats the arguments in letter no. 1294. This is the first manifestation of something to be experienced more than once in the future. Affected by old age and fatigue, the mind of the Good Father, which always had been so unbiased and lucid, suffers at times from fading memory and imagination, only to return later to its full vigor.

1302-2. To M. Faye, Bordeaux

June 25, 1844, Bordeaux

Original, Agmar

I was answering your letter of June 20 when I realized that a brief answer would not end everything, however good and conclusive it might be, and everything must be brought to an end; there is danger in delay. Here is the answer I intended to give you.

You tell me, Monsieur, "I wish to have a clear idea of the problem, which is still somewhat confused in my mind concerning the minutes, etc. . . ." The problem is confused in your mind because you are forgetting the first principle from which we were to begin and which is at the source of the opposition. I began from the principle that a settlement with the opposition was possible. Only first principles are clear and obvious, and only in the settlement is there confusion if someone does not know the point of departure and does not keep it in mind. But this is not where we find the objection which is so important in their eyes, which these men raise and which appears decisive to them.

Article 416 of the Constitutions states that after the resignation of the Founder, the Assistants are not named by him. Article 417 gives, as it were, the motive for this by saying that they in some way represent the Society to the Superior General. Already article 399 has stated, "the Superior General appoints all the heads and superiors, except the Assistants."

In the case of a removal, article 419 demands the written consent of the members of the General Chapter. It prescribes the same thing in the case of the death, resignation, or foreseen long absence of an Assistant. Finally, article 420 says that when there is an election of a Superior, the election of the Assistants proceeds in the same fashion; both he and they are eligible for reelection.

It is this accumulation of citations, of which the first and the second at most have presented an insoluble difficulty to these gentlemen, which I oppose. The other citations are only

to strengthen their assertions, which I believe to be completely false and which in charity should be considered erroneous. For the sake of brevity I will not transcribe their arguments here; I will only destroy their principle, the basis of their reasoning.

Are we to consider articles 416 and 417 separately or in relationship to articles 481 and 482? To adopt the first procedure would be absurd and would not please God; let no one say that the pope “authorizes and very solemnly praises” absurdities. In the second case, they are coordinated, they go together, they explain each other, they support each other, etc. In the first case there would be an absurdity. Why? Because the ones would negate what the others affirm about the same matter. In the second case, they are bound together, they form a continuation, they explain each other, they strengthen each other and, to express my thought fully, articles 416 and 417 are only the shameful but well-deserved punishment of a Founder who has been inhumane and has committed the injustice of abandoning a Society which he had brought forth and of which he is the Father, which still needs him, to which he owes his care because of the trust it has in him.

I have said that articles 416 and 417, with articles 481 and 482, mutually explain each other, and this is their principal service to us. To be convinced of this, let us place them together.

416: Although dependent upon the Superior General, the Assistants General, after the death or resignation of the Founder, are not nominated by him.

417. The Assistants are appointed by the Society in General Chapter, and they represent it in some way to the Superior General; they should reside near him or be away from him only a short time. If the Superior judges it proper for him to make a visitation of the Society, he does not take any of the Assistants as his companion unless because of circumstances which could not be foreseen.

481. If the Superior resigns purely and simply, without proposing a replacement, the action taken is as in the case of a death.

482. If the replacement he proposes is accepted by the council and by the superiors of the central houses, he is vested by this fact with all of the authority of the Superior General until the convocation of a Chapter, which is to take place after the 10th year of the generalate of his predecessor.

Here they are, together, and now I would like to know exactly how a Superior-Founder who realized that he is the Father of a numerous family which has complete confidence in him—how, I ask, can he set aside the burden of the generalate without harming his numerous family, and although he is confident that it will outlive him, how will it enjoy an existence more in conformity with its high destiny? First of all, see in article 416 the expression “resignation” alone, and in 481 the two words which qualify it, “resign purely and simply.” Everyone knows what is meant by giving a pure and simple resignation. In both articles there is question of a real, true, and sincere resignation. Therefore, the qualities “pure and simple” in article 481 must have a broader meaning, otherwise we would have here a simple repetition which, in the Constitutions, would lead to error. But what do they mean? Articles 481 and 482 tell us that they have a twofold moral sense: first, that a Superior General, and with all the more reason a Founder, who shows a lack of interest in the Society, whose retirement becomes a total abandonment, is to be regarded as though he were physically dead. The second meaning expressed by article 481 gives the superior general only the ability to choose a replacement and says nothing about the Assistants. I reply that the precision required by the Constitutions excludes any useless expression. That is the case here.

(1) The Superior loses none of his authority by reason of his resignation; he loses it only when he is stripped of it by a shameful resignation. For a Superior has the right to appoint and replace his Assistants; the Constitutions are explicit on the matter. “The Assistants appointed by him have all the authority described in the Constitutions until the convocation of, or the consultation for, an ordinary General Chapter.” That is to say, after the 10th year of the appointment of a General.

(2) The Superior General who uses his right to choose a successor makes use of the authority of a General Chapter and makes the latter unnecessary. For this reason only, the Constitutions say he is correct to use it in this manner. Thus, although article 482 does not deal specifically with the Assistants, it is no less true that they are implied there. Otherwise, the article would have contained something unnecessary and would have confused the issue.

Therefore, Monsieur, the objections raised by the Assistants in no way support the stubborn resistance which they oppose to the wishes of their aged Superior, who himself resists only because of his tender concern for their temporal and eternal happiness.

G.-Joseph Chaminade

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For the first time the idea appears of submitting the case to ecclesiastical authority. M. Faye suggests this to Father Chaminade (letter no. 1304) who, agreeable as usual, accepts it without difficulty (see text accompanying letter no. 1305).

1303. To M. Faye, Bordeaux

June 27, 1844, Bordeaux

Original, Agmar

My dear Son,

I have received with great interest your letter of June 26. I noticed with no displeasure that you were not entirely convinced by my last letter in which, in truth, I had treated only one of the difficulties raised by the important question of principle. Your reserve is for me further reason to esteem the integrity of your mind and heart and also that admirable openness which invites confidence. I know you will be completely convinced once you have read at full length the origin of our dispute, which I will describe shortly; this will form part of my presentation to the Archbishop of Bordeaux when I ask him to make a decision. I have very strong reasons to believe that the members of the council will not admit it; they are too afraid of having the cause of our dispute become public knowledge.

Nevertheless, my dear Son, I have decided to send my protest officially to Father Caillet through Brother Romain. It will be accompanied by a sealed letter, a copy of which I am enclosing for you. I deeply desire a settlement to which my conscience can agree; it would be easy to find one at no cost to their reputation, since I am sacrificing mine!

Father Caillet visited me yesterday afternoon and asked me to revoke my letter of the morning. Our interview was such that I concluded, interiorly, that a meeting of all the parties concerned was urgently needed. He withdrew.

While I was writing these lines, I received from the Archbishop of Albi a printed circular in which he announces to the clergy of his diocese the arrangement he had made with me concerning the transfer of Réalmont.

I have just received your last letter; I opened it and I saw with pleasure that I was actually answering it, and that my suggestion has the advantage over yours of avoiding the true disadvantages of holding a General Chapter at the present time, and which could not take place before the first of October. It is useless at the moment to speak of other disadvantages. Why do by halves what can be done entirely by the Constitutions? Father Caillet tells me constantly that he has no confidence in me! How then can I deal with him? Through you? So be it!

I would have many other thoughts to share with you, my very dear Son, about your last letters; but for the moment I am limiting myself to the principal point.

Please accept the assurance of my complete confidence.

G.-Joseph Chaminade

* * *

1304. To Fr. Georges Caillet, Bordeaux

June 27, 1844, Bordeaux

Copy, Agmar

My dear Son,

Yesterday M. Faye wrote to me, “If the matter were not pursued any further, if in the event of a difference in the interpretation of the Constitutions between you and the Council of the Society the solution were left to the Archbishop of Bordeaux by common agreement, it seems to me that the decision could be accepted with a clear conscience.” M. Faye is correct in this dangerous situation in which the Society finds itself. I will inform him that for my part, I accept, and I am asking him to show you my letter.

My dear Son, I have not ceased my protests to you in spite of the excellent means we have for arriving at union and peace, for it is urgent to halt the total anarchy which exists in the Society and the resulting abuses.

Please accept, my dear Son, my fatherly greetings.

P.S. However, I will do nothing about the appointment of a replacement as I await a decision, an affirmative one from you and from the archbishop, or a purely negative and conciliatory one from you alone.

* * *

A new incident occurred to further complicate the situation. On June 28 Father Roussel suddenly left Bordeaux for Réalmont, to the house which had been the object of his negotiations some months before and which Archbishop de Jerphanion of Albi had now transferred to the Society of Mary (see letters no. 1275, no. 1276, no. 1280, and no. 1283). There Father Roussel assumed the direction of the postulate, on his own authority. According to him, he left because he was “tired of the responsibility which had been pushed upon him,” and—a remarkable admission—“especially in order to place him in a position to confront all the events in the Midi.”

In a letter to Father Chaminade on January 22, 1845, Father Roussel wrote, “Today I must say frankly that it was on the advice of a wise director that I left Bordeaux, primarily to remove myself from the danger of a relapse.” Father Chevaux explains the phrase “to confront all the events” in this way, “to oppose the Good Father more easily.” The true reason for his flight to Réalmont is found in the fear of the discovery of his bad behavior at Sainte-Anne.

Father Chaminade installed himself at Sainte-Anne to repair the disorder left by Father Roussel. There no longer was a council; Father Caillet was in Bordeaux, Father Roussel at Réalmont, and Brother Clouzet at Saint-Remy. “It must be remembered,” wrote Father Roussel on September 26, 1841, “that a council can act only when all its members meet for a common deliberation.”

In this letter Father Chaminade continues to protest the scattering of the members of the council of the General Administration. He shows his desire to protect the good reputation of the members of the council as much as possible and to follow the demands of his conscience.

The mention of his need of a secretary prompts this partial list of his secretaries (Agmar 97.7.2). Sometimes he also used the services of a third party—for instance, his nephew.

<i>Brother Bonnefoi</i>	<i>September 1839 to February 1841</i>
<i>Father Roussel</i>	<i>January 1839 to January 1844</i>
<i>Father Romain</i>	<i>September 1840 to summer 1844</i>
<i>Father Michaud</i>	<i>September 1844 to September 1845</i>

<i>Paul Bonnefous</i>	<i>August 1845 to May 1847</i>
<i>Brother Loustau-Lamotte</i> <i>the elder</i>	<i>September 1846 to January 1850</i>
<i>Brother Courand</i>	<i>September 1849 to December 1849</i>
<i>Paul Bonnefous</i>	<i>March 1849 to January 1850</i>

1305. To M. Faye, Bordeaux

July 1, 1844, Bordeaux
Copy, Agmar

My dear Son,

Yesterday I received your letter of June 29, in the midst of my many occupations at Sainte-Anne. Because of the protest which I believe more than ever that I am obliged in conscience to continue, you will kindly permit me to avoid any more discussion of the important matter which is the intrinsically scandalous topic of our dispute. I object because there no longer is a council of the General Administration, but only a council of the General; unless the council of the Administration succeeds in circumventing my opposition through a judge who is competent in this matter.

My dear Son, for the good of peace I have been willing to suspend for several days, even to its resolution, the discussions arising from my protest concerning my resignation. Also, because the council is formally but unjustly opposed, it is only fitting to have recourse to a competent judge who should be informed of the facts. This would not be necessary if there were no further opposition. In this case, it is not necessary for the council to be complete, as it must when it administers; it is enough that there would be a majority. Father Roussel may continue his opposition if he wishes, but I do not believe he is so disposed, according to the letter he wrote to me before his departure.

I am expecting Brother Clouzet, unless he has had some accident on the way. I do not think he will be here before the end of the week; I will give him a short briefing which makes it as clear as possible, so that he can judge by using his common sense. Father Caillet will or will not do the same, and I will do what is appropriate according to the agreement or opposition of the majority. They must be convinced that I am merely obeying my conscience, that I love them tenderly, that I certainly do not wish to harm their reputations, and that if I am obliged to speak, I will speak as little as possible and only recount the facts without passing judgment.

Every day, every fraction of a day, it becomes more urgent to bring an end to this. In any case, I must go to Agen and find a secretary and at the same time a companion for the trip. I will have Brother Bonnefoi come here. and I will replace him by Brother Bernadot if Father Caillet does not find me a better one.

My dear Son, I ask you to be our means of reconciliation, and not only the counsel for the opposition; everything has become so clear that a reconciliation should be a simple matter. Please accept the expression of my sincere and tender devotedness.

P.S. I will have a competent arbiter other than the Archbishop of Bordeaux.

* * *

Father Chaminade insists that it is not he but the council who reject Archbishop Donnet as a judge of their difficulties. He promises to give a statement explaining his moral reasons, which have to do chiefly with the Roussel matter. For the first time he mentions his intention to appeal to Rome. He again affirms the spiritual paternity of a Founder, which Father Caillet is incapable of understanding. He gives his reasons; even if these are not acceptable to the council, they will be to people who are not biased.

The letter of Fr. François-Xavier Prost, the director of Réalmont, about Father Roussel and in support of Father Chaminade is dated July 1, 1844. A biographical sketch of Father Prost is in volume one of the letters. The letter of the Bishop of Strasbourg is not found in Agmar.

1306. To M. Faye, Bordeaux

July 4, 1844, Bordeaux

Original, Agmar

My dear Son,

Before replying directly to the remarks which you have the kindness to make to me about my protests, allow me to quote several passages from your letter which struck me as I read them.

“According to your postscript, you no longer wish the Archbishop of Bordeaux to be the arbiter; you have another competent judge.” My dear Son, am I the one who does not wish the Archbishop of Bordeaux to give the solution? Does my postscript say what you thought you read there, in my words, “I will have another competent arbiter”? You know, my dear Son, that you yourself proposed the Archbishop of Bordeaux as competent judge to settle the matter; you know I accepted this voluntarily, and you know these men were the ones who raised the difficulties. My postscript. “I have or we have another competent judge”—could these brief words have for you and for these men another meaning than this, that if it is necessary to decide this business by a competent judge, we will have one other than the Archbishop of Bordeaux, whom you are reluctant to accept?

As I was writing the first lines of this paragraph, I received a letter from the Archbishop of Bordeaux demanding a prompt reply to the letter from the Bishop of Strasbourg which he had relayed to me the day before; therefore, I will interrupt your letter to write to the archbishop. I am continuing this letter only today. I will also add in passing that from these letters I received yesterday, I was electrified at the zeal with which the Saint Vincent de Paul Society of Strasbourg concerns itself with the vast and pious establishment it is offering to us, with the consent of the archbishop, the Chapter, and the pastor of the city. Then I thought of the head of the one in Bordeaux and of his gentle complaints in the letter to which I am replying. I will not draw attention to certain expressions in my letter which he either did not notice or did not understand. I will only exhort him not to give up the essential office of mediator between the council and me until it becomes impossible to fulfill it.

You will ask me, “But, how can I know when it becomes impossible?” You will know, my dear Son, when (1) I cannot answer appropriately a serious difficulty concerning the case; (2) in every circumstance, if I have taken the course outlined in my protest; (3) if whatever our respective positions are, mine and that of the Society, you become convinced that in conscience I could act differently, either for the reasons I have already advanced or because of the same reasons presented in a memorandum to which I will add some moral reasons, briefly but clearly explained; or finally, because of the following considerations.

When someone is about to take a serious step, should he not see—even though there is no evidence to show this is necessary—that no moral evil will result or could result, with very grave disadvantages and the most disastrous consequences? I will not dwell here on these two consequences; I have frequently developed them, sometimes one, sometimes the other. If you do not remember them, I am willing to present them again.

Someone may protest, “But here there is the question of the appointment or the confirmation of the incumbents in their important posts.” If the appointment was made without any true authority, then nothing has been done. I have replied to this objection from the very beginning of our discussion. If after the decision of the dispersed General Chapter a single

appointee doubts that his title is canonical, the pope would be consulted to regularize the case if necessary. But those in the appointing body have no doubts; and I have frequently thought of sending one of our priests to Rome, without it costing the Society anything, so greatly do I wish to yield to everything, except to what is against my conscience.

As I was writing to you this morning, my dear Son, and when I was on the first point, Father Caillet came to my room for a talk. At first I was greatly pleased. He asked me whether I was still of the opinion expressed to you in my last letter—that is, that the council, called the Council of the General Administration, should be the Council of the General who has resigned, until the end of the matter at hand. I replied that this was one consequence of the protests I had made and about which I had written to you. I read to him the principal paragraphs of my letter and was about to answer his question. I said that if my reasoning was sound, it should be admitted. Then Father Caillet began to protest loudly against the change of the Council of the General Administration into the Council of the Superior General who has resigned his generalship. I told him about the demands of my conscience. I quoted the words of Saint Paul, *Omne quod ex fide no est, peccatum est* [whatever does not accord with our belief is sinful]. He replied that I did not understand Saint Paul, and that Saint Paul did not speak in general terms, especially about others, and that it is always necessary to consult. I replied that I saw very well that when I explain conscience, I should apply the proverb, “Do not rely on your own intelligence” [Proverbs 3:5].

Does Father Caillet have a better understanding of spiritual paternity? It seems not. I have not seen him impressed when I pointed out to him that if I did not supervise the elections,¹ there was reason to believe the Society would be denatured—that is, it would lose its spirit. It is not surprising that he understands nothing of my letters, that he does not find them logical, and that he considers me only as a poor old man, troublesome and stubborn, whom he must nevertheless tolerate. He must even be excused from sin because he is not himself, because of his advanced age, his 80th year, although today I am in my 84th. . . . He maintains that I have the same defects; he does not recognize that steadfastness, and especially continual steadfastness of conscience, is one of the surest signs that the conscience is true—or better, is truthful.²

You are perhaps surprised, my dear Son, that in this latest interview Father Caillet has dared to tell me to my face that because of my advanced age, my reason has weakened so much that I do not know what I am doing, that. . . . However, this is exactly what happened at the end of this interview. I mention all this here for the record, because I clearly know that I must present other explanations in addition to those I have given up to the present. If unfortunately they do not mean anything to them, they can mean something to others who do not have the same prejudices or who do not voluntarily close their eyes to the truth.

Perhaps you are saying to yourself, my dear Son, that I am going too fast, that I have not touched on the first principles mentioned in the letter to which I am replying. I will discuss these in a second letter which will follow this one. It will be much longer than I first intended because I need to accompany it with other explanations and moral reflections which I come to make to you. Patience. God allows this, and we must be quiet.

My dear Son, while I was writing the last page I received by courier a letter, a copy of which I am enclosing. Father Prost is one of our priests sent to Réalmont as the provisional director and superior of the new novitiate; I do not believe that the priests of the Society or the other lay members are of the same mind as our General Assistants.

My dear Son, I am most cordially your devoted Father,

G.-Joseph Chaminade

* * *

¹No doubt a reference to Fr. Roussel.

²From Saint Francis de Sales: *traité de l'Amour de Dieu*, VIII, chap. 11.

The previous letter is followed by two supplements, dated July 5 and July 10 (letters no. 1307 and 1308), whose long explanations reveal the fatigue of a man alone and burdened with the direction of the novitiate at the age of 84, the agony of a Founder who is forcing himself to ward off the anarchy menacing the Society of Mary. Here Father Chaminade presents the case of the council against him.

(1) Father Chaminade, they say, is incapable of dealing with business matters; this inability is inherent in his nature. (2) He must take care not to give any advice on this matter to the new General Superior. (3) He should be grateful to the council, which paid all the money he had lost for the Society of Mary because of his ignorance and lack of judgment. (4) Let him concern himself only with spiritual matters. (5) Let him be treated as a religious, just as others are. (6) He is very old, weak as a child, and in need of a guardian—that is, Father Bouet. (7) He has need of guidance.

Father Chaminade replies that in religion there are very few concerns which are entirely temporal, and that his resignation has been strictly a financial affair. Impelled by faith and conscience, he has protested and continues to protest.

1307. To M. Faye, Bordeaux

July 5, 1844, Bordeaux

Original, Agmar

My dear Son,

By my protest I have done only what I could; I have done this from the beginning, but only orally. The Constitutions give me every right. Because it was their purpose to have another Superior General legitimately appointed immediately after my very real and sincere resignation, they constituted themselves as a General Administrative Council. This matters little—or better still, it matters not at all to the court, which is interested not in the manner but only in the fact: a true resignation which obliged the administrative council to do everything necessary so that a new Superior General would replace the former and govern the Society. This oral protest stopped all action on both fronts. The judicial process was begun, and it lasted somewhat more than 3 years. The council neglected a very essential duty by not providing a new Superior for the Institute. But a person may ask, “Why did you approve by your silence the change from an ordinary council to a General Administrative Council? Because it would be understood—and I believe in good faith—that this was necessary at the time; before this I had clearly and explicitly announced the manner in which I wished to resign.

But could you not have been deluded by laudable motives and led into a trap from which there was no escape? Among the reasons for your resignation, were none sufficient to make you believe in an irrevocable commitment? And if these motives made no particular impression on your mind, should they not at least have calmed your spirit and made you adore the plans of God when these were so clearly developed in the discussions? For example, in council and even in private, did Father Caillet not prove to you that just as two and two make four, so you are incapable of dealing with any temporal affair; that this inability is inherent in your nature; that you should be very careful not to give any advice on these matters to the new Superior General; that the conditions they offered me were very good, such as (1) to repay all the money lost to the Society because of my ignorance and lack of judgment in all temporal affairs (I took the humble liberty to remark to Father Caillet that in religious life, there are few things that are completely temporal; if he deigned to reply, I do not recall his answer); (2) that I would stand apart and busy myself freely with spiritual matters; and (3) that because I was still a religious, I should be treated as the others are.

Since then Father Caillet has been guided by these principles; the other members of the council adopted them from the first summons made by Brother Auguste and Father Mémain. But these motives, which for them became excellent reasons, have taken on a new force following the outcome of the court action because of the rather considerable sum they had to pay, so that the business of my resignation is now merely a matter of money or finances.¹ They do not at all intend to treat it in a religious manner—that is, with reason illumined by the light of Christian faith. But because the revelation of such motives in the General Heads would be somewhat revolting, they have found that the reason my manner of replying is so simple and correct is because my mind has become weak; they have allowed for my advanced age; they have concluded that the inadequacy has gone as far as second childhood; that I need a guardian; that I should consult and follow his directions, or rather his orders. Because it was not easy to find me a guardian, they believed they had succeeded. But the pupil stands erect. Seeing that the reasons of faith and of conscience are which oppose him are to be struggled with deeply, he decides to protest with motives and reasons superior to everything which has been presented so far, and he will prove that the council of the General Administration can only be the council of the Superior General who is resigning from his office of general.

Because I must go to Sainte-Anne at least until Monday morning, my dear Son, I thought I would send you this first supplement in reply to your letter of July 2; perhaps your wisdom will find in it something relevant to the goal we propose to ourselves.

Please accept, my dear Son, my fatherly greetings.

G.-Joseph Chaminade

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Here is the second supplement to the letter of July 4. Father Chaminade discusses his “first resignation,” which he qualifies as “a type of treason.” He admits they had set a trap for him to prevent him from using the rights which he is guaranteed by the Constitutions. He adds the restriction “type of treason” in order not to offend Father Caillet and Brother Clouzet, who had not joined in the plan. He claims the acceptance of his resignation was fraudulent and therefore it has not taken place. He expresses his willingness to resign again, but according to the Constitutions.

1308. To M. Faye, Bordeaux

July 10, 1844, Bordeaux

Original, Agmar

The continuation of my reply of July 4 to the letter of M. Faye of July 2.

From my last letter you were able to see, my dear Son, that I have begun seriously to reply to your letter of July 2. To settle the question once and for all and to put a stop to our discussions which are very harmful to the Society I made my protest, from which I drew the consequence that there was no longer a Council of the General Administration but a Council of the General who is resigning his office. You had forgotten these words when you reported the facts in your letter of July 2. I do not believe they are pointless.

You say you do not wish any more than I do to discuss the fact of the protest, but you attack the conclusion I have drawn from it and by so doing you would be coming to the heart of the discussion if you did not skillfully urge me to explain myself categorically. This I will not do, from concern for my dear Children. In fact, you prove the fallacy of the consequence by this

¹Autograph note by Fr. Chaminade to this letter, “I have said it was a matter of money. I did not mean that it was so for them; I will explain myself further on.”

argument, that “What happens to the frankness and sincerity of your first resignation, so freely given and freely accepted, and which has been in effect for 3 years?” If this is true, as you seem to believe, what is a person to think of the judge of the case which had brought about the resignation, who believed it was only a game on your part? What would he think of this today if he knew what is going on?

Today the letter and the form of my resignation are no longer in question, but rather the frankness and sincerity with which it was given and accepted.

Yes, I reply, I gave it frankly and sincerely, with confidence in those to whom I gave it as a sacred trust, telling them clearly and explicitly the sense in which I gave it. It is the sense approved by the Constitutions, which gave me the means to provide for the needs of the Society of Mary and the demands of my *conscience*. I emphasize this last word because it will figure again in the proofs I will give.

Was my resignation accepted frankly and sincerely, in the sense a person should give to these words? No, because it is evident that they set a trap for me; they wanted me to be tricked into an agreement from which I could not escape. and I was denied the rights given to me by the Constitutions. You will say, “These are serious charges; you are interpreting intentions; are you building your case on slander?” No, my dear Son, my proofs are based entirely on facts. I adhere to the *est, est; non, non* [yes, yes; no, no] of which, they insist, I am violating the first part. An insult is not a proof. Let me continue.

I indicated in my letter of July 5, and in the most gentle manner possible, the reasons which influenced the members of the council to allow me to fall into the trap from which, no matter what efforts I used, I could not escape. Whatever value these reasons may have had in their minds, I had no understanding of it because before resigning; and even in the very act itself, I spoke the opposite. This resignation, given frankly and sincerely and even freely—only to have me fall into a trap—was it accepted as *frankly and sincerely*, when I know it was accepted with an intent and dispositions completely opposite to frankness and sincerity, in which there was a type of *treason*? The word “treason” contains in itself a meaning, a one-word decision, a single action toward an evil end; no doubt this is why Father Caillet protested to me that there was no plot. I believed him because he never had any evil intention but only illusions, and deplorable illusions (as I had mentioned) in my letter to Father Bouet, when there was the question of my so-called “second resignation.”

Now, my dear Son, there was never any *frankness or sincerity* in the acceptance of my resignation, and if you persist in believing that frankness and sincerity are essential for the validity of the act in question, in giving and receiving or accepting, then that act is worthless. If it is worthless, we are in the same situation as we were when I sincerely resigned according to the letter and the spirit of the Constitutions, but before it was accepted by the members of the council. Because their acceptance was fraudulent it is invalid, and the modification of the ordinary council into a General Administrative Council becomes void because of the invalidity of the acceptance. Everything returns to the state of a General giving his resignation to his council, and the argument in my protest is proven.

“No,” you add, “your resignation as such *has been in effect* for the last 3 years.” Yes, but not without more or less explicit protests (1) at the beginning, oral protests; (2) at the renewal of the compromise, after the arbitration decision; and (3) when those who were protesting the case told me that the first council meetings after the judgment, and in particular to two members of the council to whom I spoke so explicitly that I called their opposition *a type of treason*, as I have said above. If during these 3 years I have not cried out, this was out of consideration for the members for the council, for fear of compromising them. In view of the consequences it has had during 3 years, can it be said that my submission, fraudulently accepted, was acknowledged? Here we should discuss the entire question of invalidity and apply it to the present; and I am speaking here to a Christian lawyer.

As an added proof you say, “If it is true, as you seem to believe, that the judge in the case which had brought about this resignation believed it was only a game on your part, what would he think today, if he knew what is going on?”

I admit that the respectable judge who saw that the prosecutors did not react to being called comedians, which was done so cleverly (the opposing lawyers are also very respectable), must have believed I also had a role in the comedy, or at least that I countenanced it. If today he knew what is happening and what has been going on more or less continuously, his eyes would be opened. What harm could come of it? My reputation would not be any more tarnished in his opinion. The very tardy appearance of a new Superior would not remove the stigma from his mind or from the minds of the lawyers for the opposition. If this evil were to fall only on an ordinary, isolated individual, it would be merely a passing event; but that it should fall on the Founder of the Society of Mary means that it falls on the Society, it falls on the work of God, etc.

My dear Son, if the proofs about the type of treason of which the members of the council have been guilty against me are valid, then my act of resignation into the hands of the council must be null and void. I say “the act of my resignation” and not “my resignation”—that is to say that I have wished to resign, and now wish to do so more than ever, but only according to the position which I have clearly and explicitly stated—according to the Constitutions.

I gave these proofs to the council, but spoken, and according to circumstances, always accompanied by some reservation. I have told you and written to you about these in our correspondence but never in full detail, which is why you have asked me on several occasions for my proofs in detail. The conduct of the council daily strengthens these proofs and provides new ones. I will give them to you at an opportune time and as much as my pressing occupations permit. If it is necessary to have a competent judge in this business, the written presentation of my case will be presented to him, but it will not compete with that of the members of the council.¹ They do not have the authority. In vain is it said that they represent the Society to the General or in his place. This would be true if they were seeking the good of the Society. On the contrary, in the actual case they are trying to prove everything, and they prove nothing. When I made my protest, I had the intention of stopping all discussion with the members of the council because I did not recognize this authority in them. I merely look upon them as trustees, and unfaithful trustees, and you must be aware of this; this is what removes any authority which they pretend to have and returns them to what they were before this disastrous uprising, an ordinary council of the General who is resigning his generalate, instead of a Council of the General Administration.

My dear Son, I believe I have replied sufficiently to your letter of July 2 to permit me to overlook the observations and reflections with which you bolster what you consider to be proof. I thank you for having forced me, so to speak, to enter on the path which I should have taken long ago. I would have averted many disagreeable things for the Society. I have frequently said to you, *periculum in mora* [there is danger in delay]. I was always hoping that these men would open their eyes, and I still hope. Father Roussel did not leave Bordeaux for the same reasons, or rather because of the same illusions which affect Father Caillet; Brother Clouzet was surely deluded by the example of his two colleagues. I am going to write to them, taking every precaution so that my resignation will secure for the Society of Mary the happy results I expect. I will say little about the members of the council to give them time to make peace and to allow each one to use his proper faculties (1) for his personal sanctification and (2) for the sanctification of others according to the intentions and means which the Society of Mary offers them. My trust is in the Lord and his august Mother, for whom I wish to live and die.

¹Fr. Chaminade did not object to members of the council presenting their reasons to a competent judge; on the contrary, he supposed they would present their case. But he did not believe this presentation could have the same juridical value as that of their superior, or even juridical value as members of the council, from which he had withdrawn the authority. Proof is in the letter of Fr. Chaminade to Fr. Caillet (July 18, 1845) quoted in the *Confidential Memorandum*.

My dear Son, I ask you to pass this long letter on to Father Caillet. If it will open his eyes and convince him to help me as a simple member of my council, I will bless the Lord. I will forget very quickly all the grief he has caused me, for the Lord has permitted this for the expiation of my sins and for my sanctification. As to what might be considered offenses against God, that will be his business and he will have to take care of it. If the time has not yet come, may he do nothing in his position as head of the council of the General Administration (1) because it no longer exists and (2) because it has no authority unless it is complete. He bustles about but says nothing. I learned yesterday that there was supposed to be a meeting of the priests in one of the rooms of the Madeleine, but in secret, with people going through the Rue des Carmes, etc. In any case, he may continue as if nothing had happened in all of the zealous activities which are held at the Madeleine; he may also continue to function as business manager both for the Madeleine and Sainte-Anne. I wish him to return to his former room and take along all his belongings from the secretariat, but nothing else, nothing that has been added there since he decided to make it his room. This change can be made tomorrow or the day after, and he can return the key to me after it is finished.

My dear Son, receive my thanks for all the trouble I have given you. I trust that it will not be fruitless before the Lord.

G.-Joseph Chaminade

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Here is the "second protest." Calling Father Caillet the former president of the Council of the General Administration underlines Father Chaminade's resolve to recognize only a council of the Superior General who has resigned. Once again he raises the question of the confusion between the internal and the external forum.

1309. To Fr. Georges Caillet, Bordeaux

July 12, 1844, Bordeaux

Original, Agmar

The Founder of the Society of Mary

To his dear Son, Father Caillet,

Former President of the Council of the General Administration of the same Society.

My dear Son,

You say you do not accept the conclusion expressed in my protest of June 24, 1844, and which Father Romain gave to you on June 27. As an immediate consequence, it follows that from being the principal member of the Council of the General Administration you return to what you were before there was the question of a resignation—a principal member of the ordinary council established by the Constitutions of the Society of Mary.

Well! My dear Son, with a deep feeling of pain and to obey the demands of my conscience, I protest against every action which you can perform as a member of the Society of Mary, and with greater reason as president of the Council of the General Administration of the Society of Mary; it is my wish that the actions which you perform will be considered null and criminal. This second protest is based upon the same motives as the first; the two form only one.

Furthermore, my dear Son, I order you *in the name of Holy Obedience* to change your confessor and no longer to have Father Bouet as your guide in the dealings which you may have either with me or with the Society. I leave you free to choose any confessor you wish from among

the priests approved in Bordeaux, providing he deals only with the personal affairs of your conscience, those concerning you personally and, as they say, of the internal forum, and this contrary to the pretext that there is an intimate connection between the interior and the exterior in the order of salvation; he must be persuaded that there is a true distinction between the spiritual order and the temporal. The power or authority of a confessor is purely spiritual.

G.-Joseph Chaminade
Delivered the same day. Father Romain

* * *

Meanwhile, Brother Clouzet had returned to Bordeaux from Saint-Remy to attempt to resolve the conflict. Father Chaminade relates what happened on this occasion. "Father Clouzet had very frequent and serious conversations with Father Caillet. He visited me at Sainte-Anne, and after expressions of mutual friendship we had a serious discussion in which I tried to have him understand the true state of affairs. He pretended that he did not understand me very well, and we parted without coming to an agreement. . . . Knowing he would leave Sainte-Anne the following Sunday, I went to the Madeleine on July 25; there we had a very short talk before dinner in which he said to me, 'Only a short, clear explanation is necessary, and my natural good sense will be able to judge.' I replied, 'But your confidence in Father Caillet, the bias which you have, will prevent you from judging rationally.' He protested that this was not so, and that nothing in the world could induce him to act against his conscience. I told him, 'I will go to my room after dinner and I will compose a short explanation; it will be more than a few words, but it will be short and clear.' I went to my room, and when I had taken care of my needs, especially the recitation of the Office, I put in writing this short exposition under the title of 'Notes.' I left them in the hands of Father Romain so he could give him a copy; then I returned to Sainte-Anne" (August 28, 1844).

1310. Notes for Bro. Dominique Clouzet

July 25, 1844, Bordeaux

Original, Agmar

Notes for Brother Clouzet [*who had come to Bordeaux*]

1. The Founder of the Society of Mary asks his dear Children, the members of his council, or of the council of the Society, whether at the time of his resignation he enjoyed the use of his mental faculties? Whether he was capable of performing a human act, one that would be valid in a civil society?

2. Whether before resigning in writing, he did not give his resignation, or rather propose it, according to the letter and spirit of the Constitutions? See article 482, along with article 481 which precedes it.

3. It had just been proposed to the members of the council that in order to conclude more easily the process pending at the time, a written resignation would be given so that the Society would be obliged to give him a successor. Already he had proposed to the members of the council a very true resignation, but the council needed to have it in writing in order to announce it, etc. The Founder could never understand this (and it is very certain that he will die without understanding it, because it is absurd)—how an act of accommodation, devoid of any type of concealment, which in a word does not oppose any virtue unless a person supposed duplicity among the members of the council so that, if it became necessary, one could argue by suppositions and sophisms, etc.—I ask, how can such an act of accommodation invalidate the act of resignation made according to the Constitutions, and invalidate it to such an extent that a Founder, sent by God to found a work according to the heart of his august Mother and to her glory, to whom God has given a spiritual paternity, becomes a monster in the spiritual order?

According to Article 481 he is no longer a father, but a barbarian who abandons his children in their most pressing need; he leaves them at this crucial moment when, by extending to them his hand as he resigns his generalate, he could preserve them from very real misfortunes into which they could fall, etc. A person is greatly horrified by treason, and rightly so; how hideous then would be the treason of a Founder, a treason in the spiritual order which leads to eternity! He would be this traitor and, I dare to add, the murderer of I do not know how many of his Children on the supposition that he had resigned. . . . No! He has not resigned according to article 481; an act of accommodation cannot conceal such malice. . . . The situation today is the same as it was before the resignation.

4. I would have liked to ask the members of the council by what authority they carry on such a long and constant struggle against the Founder of the Society. It seems to me that in the present circumstances, they are the depositaries only of the resignation, such as it is, in order to inform the Society and to warn it, to direct it, etc., especially in the case of a true physical death; they are asked to make known their qualifications. If they do not have any real ones, and supposing they cannot see the truth in the lines I have written so rapidly, then they can write a statement of rebuttal to the one which I must present—not that I believe this to be absolutely necessary, but to avoid the uncertainties which could arise after the nomination.

P.S. Any reply is to be given in writing.

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Remarks.

1. These notes were given to Brother Clouzet, who had come to Bordeaux to bring an end to the struggle between the council and the Founder of the Society. His reply, therefore, must be affixed to this document, which brings everything to an abrupt end.

2. The very providential discovery of documents which show the existence of a coalition formed against the Founder and the plan of action of the new General Administration; the latter was never carried out, but numerous indications prove its existence. They can deny it.

3. This discovery shows that the attack was also directed against the Institute of the Daughters of Mary and the Third Order of the same Institute. The discovery was made only during the first days of August. Brother Clouzet had already departed.

G.-Joseph Chaminade

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Brother Clouzet's reply, dated July 23, 1844, is actually a brief dismissal of Father Chaminade's letter, and he announces that he is going to busy himself with the convocation of the General Chapter. He gives no weight to the oral resignation upon which Father Chaminade bases his claims; he is not aware of the danger of the presence of Father Roussel at the Chapter. He falsely quotes the Constitutions against Father Chaminade, for article 482 gives him the right to name his successor and the Assistants without a Chapter.

As a matter of fact, on that same date Father Caillet signed a circular convoking the Chapter. Father Roussel, always the soul of the council, had already sent it to him with his own signature; however, this circular had no result, as we will see later (Agmar 7.2.250); Father Caillet still uses it on September 15, 1845 (Agmar 14.3, p. 435).

At about the same time, the Superiors of the Daughters of Mary visit Father Chaminade. This visit is recorded in the minutes of the council of the Daughters of Mary, August 5, 1844 (Positio, p. 17-18; Arch. FMI 6G3, p. 204). These passages are cited regarding Father Chaminade's difficulties with his assistants.

In spite of his wishes, they have formed an alliance to convoke a General Chapter to elect a Superior General and his three Assistants. Aware of the serious drawbacks the convocation would have at this time, Father Chaminade proposes another way to hold these elections, but they do not even deign to reply to his proposals. . . . They told him they were going ahead. . . .

The Good Father still does not want the Chapter and has several reasons which oblige him to forbid it. . . . The three Assistants have even told him on several occasions that he is dead. The Superior General of the Institute of the Daughters of Mary and the superiors of Condom, of Tonneins, and of Fleurance have gone to Bordeaux to confer with their venerable Father. . . .

After having heard the reports of this worthy Founder, as well as those of Father Caillet and Brother Clouzet, they did not hesitate for an instant to renew to their Good Father the assurance of their deepest respect and entire obedience.

The substance of this report, almost word for word, was sent to all the houses of the Institute in a circular of August 5, 1844. On July 30, anticipating the arbitration which he had proposed to Father Chaminade and which Father Chaminade had accepted (letter no. 1394), Father Caillet went alone to the Archbishop of Bordeaux and explained the situation from his point of view.

At once, without hearing Father Chaminade and without pausing to reflect, the archbishop declared that because Father Chaminade had lost all power, authority was henceforth entirely in the hands of Father Caillet (letter of Father Caillet to Father Chaminade, August 26, 1844, quoted in the letter of Father Chaminade to Archbishop Donnet, November 9, 1846, letter no. 1466). Much later Father Chaminade commented on this conduct of the archbishop. "I am filled with veneration for His Excellency, but is it not evident that he is abusing his power in the spiritual order?" (letter no. 1491 to the Archbishop of Albi, October 20, 1847). "The Sovereign Pontiff is the Superior of the Society of Mary in general, although because of its dispersion the bishops are its true superiors according to what they agreed when accepting it in their dioceses; but unless there is a special delegation, they cannot intervene in its government except in an emergency" (letter no. 1361 to Father Caillet).

Father Caillet made use of the decision of the archbishop to assume and to exercise this power. He made it a point not to give it up (Father Chevaux to Fr. Léon Meyer, September 6, 1844, Agmar 7.2.266). From now on this decision would be Father Caillet's support, both in public and in private; what is more serious, it would be the basis of the decision rendered later by the Sacred Congregation of Bishops and Regulars. However, Father Chaminade continued to fight. He received two letters Father Roussel had written (January 13 and January 17, 1841) to the Superior of the Daughters of Mary the day after the resignation and which were a confirmation of Father Chaminade's rights (Positio, p. 79; Agmar 1852.29).

1311. To M. Faye, Bordeaux

August 6, 1844, Bordeaux

Autograph, Agmar

My dear Son,

Yesterday evening after I had received your letter, I wrote to Father Caillet that the loving providence of God alone, without any intervention on my part, had helped me to find the written proof for what I call "the appearance of treason."

I also learned that at about the same time Father Caillet and Father Roussel were being called "comedians" here, it was said of me in Agen that I was playing a game; I am looking for further information to better link the remarks of Bordeaux with those of Agen.

Permit me, my dear Son, to refer you to the letter Father Caillet will give you and which I wrote to him in reply to yours of yesterday, August 5. He will probably not receive it for two or three days, for I am interrupted frequently by other matters, and the letter will be longer than I had first intended; but it can nearly take the place of a statement if I should need one, and this will save me some time.

My dear Son, your filial piety has caused you to close your eyes at times in our correspondence, when faith would have made you keep them open. But God allows this; I bless him, I thank him, and I have for you the greatest affectionate devotedness.

G.-Joseph Chaminade

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1312. To M. Faye, Bordeaux

August 16, 1844, Bordeaux

Original, Agmar

My dear and respected Son,

While continuing my letter to Father Caillet, I came across your letter of August 5 and reread it; I saw that it dealt with another matter than the one to which I had immediately replied, that of the exchange of our letters. You wrote, "I very sincerely regret that you feel you must persist in a conviction contrary to the advice of those who know the circumstances."

Your regret, my dear Son, proves the uprightness of your heart. I am edified, but if those who know the circumstances of the dispute which divides us (I refer here only to the members of the council; you and others see only through them), if they are not willing to see the truth contained in these circumstances which they have never wished to examine seriously, a truth which I have nevertheless always defended in the strongest possible manner, they say at all times and without ever varying that I would be a traitor to the Society of Mary and that my conscience rebels in the present state in which the Society finds itself. The word "conscience" has been given a false interpretation. Father Caillet has even profaned it by using it against me. He has even gone further; up until now he has abused the confidence of Father Bouet, his confessor and mine, and consequently the Sacrament of Reconciliation. From this comes all the scandalous and absurd maneuvering. How could you suppose that I would not resist?

Remember, my dear Son, that I have told you several times that the more numerous the acts of opposition, the more courage I feel to resist because my conscience, which I will follow to death with the grace of God, does not permit me to give in to what they demand so insidiously and so unjustly. *Juravi et statui custodire mandata justitiae tuae.* [I resolve and swear to keep your just ordinances, Psalm 119:106.]

As for the last words in your letter to me, which remain in your mind and which summarize for you the position with such beneficent, consoling, and reassuring effects for all, "Yield, I trust that God will reward you." You add, "This is the wish which I also form from the bottom of my heart for the good of the Society of Mary, while assuring you again of my sentiments of respect and filial devotedness."

As for the word "yield" of Father Bouet which I report in what is called my "second resignation" or the confirmation of my first resignation of all power into the hands of the council, my dear Son, you will be more blameworthy than Father Caillet if you believe (1) that I regard as orders the advice I think Father Bouet is giving me, (2) that I was allowing you a glimpse of my correspondence with Fathers Caillet and Bouet when I consulted you about the form my protest should take. I explained clearly to you the meaning I gave to Father Bouet's words. I was still far from believing that Father Caillet was capable of abusing the simplicity and the confidence of Father Bouet as his confessor, but I was not slow to recognize it.

And supposing, my dear Son, that these men of the council through their sophisms (I have already warned you against their habitual sophistry) could have found that I used rather strong expressions to establish that I had made my first resignation in the unjust and irreligious sense they claim—could they and would they not have used this to show that I was going not only against my conscience, but against every true conscience? A person cannot go against a good conscience without sin. Now, can a promise be a bond of injustice? Why did they not realize that? It is to be feared that the double blindness described by the prophet Isaiah is their inheritance.

Meanwhile, my dear Son, until I can finish my letter to Father Caillet, which should be followed by a third protest, I would be obliged if you will give this letter to Father Caillet and tell him that I stand by my two previous protests more than ever, also the orders I gave him in the second letter in the name of obedience. I hope he will finally open his eyes.

Please accept, my dear Son, the expression of my tender and respectful friendship.

G.-Joseph Chaminade

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The next letter had been announced as the “third protest” and bore the inscription Iniquitas mentita est sibi. [False witnesses have risen up against me, Psalm 27:12.] This document is the first of those position papers which in the following years Father Chaminade would address, without tiring, to everyone whom his conscience demanded he interest in the defense of his cause—that is to say, of his duty—to his Assistants, to the Society of Mary of Mary, to the bishops, to the apostolic nuncio, and to the pope. These papers also recall those he composed in his earlier years against the state and in favor of the goods of the seminary of Mussidan; they show that Father Chaminade remained always the same.

These were inspired by his conscience. In similar circumstances, Saint Alphonsus Liguori wrote, “If I do not find an audience, I will write a thousand letters to the Secretary, a thousand to the King.” It must be added that one day these letters and the papers would furnish the basis for the Decree of the Heroicity of the Virtues. The secretary for the Congregation was impressed by the number of letters written to ecclesiastical authorities, and especially by the fact that they did not choose to reply. Thus the words of Father Chaminade in letter no. 1396 (July 4, 1844) to M. Faye become prophetic. “If unfortunately they are of no importance to them [the Assistants], they might mean something to others who do not have the same bias or who do not close their eyes voluntarily to the truth.”

In this letter Father Chaminade characterizes the opposition of the Assistants as an iniquity and shows how this iniquity has contradicted itself. It is now possible to judge the accusations made by the Assistants and accepted by the bishops. In the light of faith, Father Chaminade gives an historical view of the crises through which the Society of Mary has passed. His devotion to Jesus and Mary stands out. The letter clearly shows the behavior and character of Father Caillet, especially how he expected Father Chaminade to resign and to submit without a murmur.

The opposition of the Assistants was unjust because Father Caillet made himself Superior of the Society of Mary; because the members of the council were dispersed; and because Father Roussel and M. Faye supported the council in its refusal to accept the resignation according to the Constitutions. The council went back on its word, according to the documents furnished to Father Chaminade by the Daughters of Mary. Instead of allowing Father Chaminade to resign according to the Constitutions, the council preferred anarchy. Note also that Father Chaminade resolved never to consent to the reelection of Father Roussel.

1313. To Fr. Georges Caillet, Bordeaux

August 17, 1844, Bordeaux

Original, Agmar

My dear Son,

Iniquitas sibi mentita est [false witnesses have risen up against me, Psalm 27:12]. This passage of Scripture which I am placing at the opening of this letter will surprise you; follow me, I ask you. I distinguish two types of evil, one which seems completely material and is often just that and the other, more or less formal, according to the motives which animate it. I have made almost the same distinction with the word “treason,” first of all in our private conversations and then in our longer correspondence.¹

Over 4 years ago, Our Lord Jesus Christ took his fan in his hand to winnow the good grain of the members of the Society of Mary, among whom were found many with very imperfect attitudes and who distorted the sanctity of the state which they had embraced. He did this in another form at the beginning of the Revolution,² as you pointed out to me in another context, and this is the reason for the withdrawal from the Society of Messieurs Auguste, Collineau, Lalanne, and others.

I am growing old, my dear Son, and I am aware that soon I will go to give an account to Our Lord Jesus Christ of the mission which he has deigned to give me during the course of my life, both before the first Revolution and after. I have survived my trials, and the greatest was not that of 1793 when only a step separated me from the scaffold, the thickness of a plank.³ The trials of 1844 are very much more serious. May God be praised! May Mary be glorified! May I be worthy to praise you, O Holy Virgin Mary!

If the Lord has taken his fan in his hand for the Society of Mary, it is only because of his preference for the Society of Mary, it is because he has wanted to do so; there can be no doubt about the will of God for its existence. But he wants a Society completely pure, holy, and free from the ideas and attitudes which are embraced by so much of humanity, corrupted by sin. He wishes to be able to say, all allowances being made, what he said to the Blessed Virgin. “You are all beautiful, you are all beautiful, my beloved” (Song 4:7). This is the reason for the fan in his hand, the tremors which shake it, the contradictions which seem to hinder its progress, the misunderstandings between the principal heads and the Founder, and perhaps in the future, persecutions against the Generals and the General Administration. The prophecy of Jesus Christ must be fulfilled, either concerning the entire Church or in particular that small portion of the Church called the Society of Mary. “I came into the world to divide it, to make the sightless see and the seeing blind” (John 9:39).

I expect, my dear Son, that you will turn these words of Jesus Christ against me; you already have the habit of turning against me all the advice I try to give you. I say “I try to give you” because for some time now, how often have you not protested to my face, with gestures and an air and tone of indignation, that you no longer have any confidence in me? In fact, one of those times when you seemed not to be so irritated, I wanted to have you understand why my conscience opposed what the council demanded of me. I quoted to you the words of Saint Paul. “Whatever does not accord with our beliefs is sinful” (Romans 14:23). You replied rather curtly that I did not understand Saint Paul; that Saint Paul wished people to consult, whatever the state

¹The opposition of the Assistants is an iniquity. The force of the expressions used by Fr. Chaminade to evaluate either his own conduct, as we see in his notes to Bro. Clouzet (July 25) or that of his Assistants, as when he speaks of treason and iniquity, is due to the high regard he has for his duty and his responsibilities; he is careful to explain these expressions when stating that he is not judging the intentions of his Assistants.

²After 1830.

³“There is only one step between me and death” David to Jonathan when pursued by Saul (1 Samuel 20:3).

of their conscience. And I replied very quickly as you were preparing to leave, “Only a short while ago we read in the Gospel that Our Savior Jesus Christ blamed similar consultants. ‘Why do you for your part act against the commandments of God for the sake of your tradition?’” (Matthew 15:3). You left with a type of disdain and compassion. My dear Son, if you would have a little less confidence in your knowledge of gospel morality, or even a little compassion for your aged Superior who is so concerned because he fails to understand what—like the Gordian knot—is blocking all understanding between us. Why not help me understand Saint Paul and the gospel doctrine? In quoting Saint Paul to you, I was absolutely prepared to explain Saint Paul in his own words; I already had them on my lips, and I recall them. “Faith is the conviction about things we do not see” (Hebrews 11:1).

Do not think, my dear Son, that I wish to list in detail the trials of 1844, and still less those which preceded them. I would appear to complain, although you have taught me very well that I must bear my pains with such patience and resignation that no one could suspect I am suffering.

I am going to explain the text which I have placed at the beginning of this letter, “False witnesses have risen up against me.” It leads me to make two observations. There has been iniquity in the continual opposition which you have offered, you and your associates, to my resignation of the generalate according to the spirit and letter of the Constitutions, in spite of the good intentions you could have. I am far from accusing your intentions or those of Father Roussel, the Head of Instruction, the agitator or the one taught by you, the Head of Zeal, and Brother Clouzet, the Head of Temporalities, to conduct your common opposition—which he has done so well that it continues even to this day—but who would have thought he would run off?¹

The second is that this iniquity which you have so veiled, concealed so well and clothed with the charms of a good conscience, especially of your conscience, my dear Son; did it not appear good, very good, and even challenging because of the authority which your burning zeal acquired and which was sustained by works which seemed to be apostolic! You and your associates have constantly denied the arguments against your opposition to my very regular resignation, or as I call it, your “iniquity.” What has happened? True to a divine prophecy, “it has not lived up to its expectations.” How is that? This is the object of my second observation.²

I will begin with the first. Your opposition is sinful.

First of all, I establish a principle which is admitted everywhere: a legal body possessing authority must consist of at least three members, unless there is a special agreement. *Tres faciunt capitulum*. [Three constitutes a chapter.] The Constitutions of the Society of Mary are so strict about the composition of the council that they do not permit the Superior General to take any one of the councilors or heads as a companion on his visits. At the time of my resignation [January 1839]³ it was noted as an abuse that Brother Clouzet, Head of Temporalities, was absent from the General Administration frequently and for long periods of time. It was decided that this should not happen in the future, especially since the ordinary council had become the General Administrative Council of the Society of Mary, and that the Head of Zeal who presided could act only with the advice of his associates. It is a fact that for almost 5 years Brother Clouzet resided

¹By going to Réalmont, June 23, 1844.

²This paragraph has a certain lack of sequence, the effect of fatigue, perhaps of emotion in the older man who is dictating this letter, or perhaps it is due to the inattention of the secretary. The latter is noticeable in the original manuscripts, and it makes reading difficult. Ordinarily a more attentive study of the text allows the discovery of the logical sequence, and even the expressions used by Fr. Chaminade. What is more surprising is the strength of mind which animated him and enabled him to dictate letters of this length and even longer ones and not to stray from his train of thought.

³Evidently 1841.

at Saint-Remy (Haute-Saône) and that his visits to Bordeaux were rare and very brief. Thus, for almost 5 years the Society had been without a true administration, without a legal administration, without a government according to the Constitutions. Is not this called anarchy? I complained to Father Caillet that without knowing it, the Society had been governed by Father Roussel, who maneuvered the group to his own purposes. I have made the same observations to Brother Clouzet on his short visits; never a clear reply. The three kept their secret intact. But could they not see what you see, what was absolutely quite evident, that this was anarchy?

They composed a circular in which they had me give up all of my powers and hand them over to the council.¹ I signed it with the same goodwill with which I had signed or written my resignation. I was far from suspecting any ruse; however, the circular made no mention of my resignation. They accompanied this circular with one of acceptance, seen and signed by them alone.² From then on they considered themselves not only as administrators or governors of the Society, but as actual superiors. Perhaps this was true only of you, my dear Son, as head of the council; but it is clearly a fact. I have heard it said only lately; I spoke of it to your counsel,³ who candidly admitted it. Recently I spoke of it to Brother Clouzet, who assured me that this was the case and that he would be very blameworthy if it were not so. Everything was explained; according to them there was no anarchy, not even now with Father Caillet alone in charge. Father Roussel had vanished, no doubt with your permission or consent; you are the one who is dealing with me about the great questions, whether I am to be allowed to speak to the Society about my resignation, that you wish to convoke a General Chapter, etc. But here I do not wish to point out the consequences of the facts; these are so numerous! But the fact is, you have made yourself superior of the Society. But if you mean Superior during the interim, well and good, but in any case, true Superior. So you believed yourself authorized to exempt Brother Clouzet from being present at the council, and according to you, the council is complete. I consider this fact to be an evil. If you wish, it is a systematic evil planned by Father Roussel; and a lawyer, a very Christian lawyer, defends the system. I repeat this—it is an evil, perhaps more serious because it is systematic. That excellent Christian, your defender, should have requested your earliest documents and examined them.

At the very first sight, the fact in itself is an evil. You do not wish to admit this. That itself is a contradiction—iniquity contradicts itself. This is my second observation.

I was speaking with the Superior of the Daughters of Mary,⁴ and she asked me whether I remembered the circular. “Which one?” I asked her. “The one in which there is a question of giving up authority. I have some memory of it. Do you have it? Father Roussel sent it to me at the time.” I replied somewhat indifferently, “Send for it; write to your secretary,” and the subject was dropped. The next day after the community Mass, I thought I should write her a note of consolation and ask her because she was writing to the secretary to demand all the papers related to the circular. Two days later I received the following items:

- (1) the circular of January 7, 1841, signed, G.-Joseph Chaminade.
- (2) The circular of January 12, 1841, signed Father G. Caillet, Head of Zeal; Father Roussel, Head of Instruction; and Bro. Clouzet, Head of Temporalities.
- (3) The cover letter for the two circulars to the Superior General of the Daughters of Mary, January 14, 1841, signed by Father Roussel. This letter revealed the mystery of the very constant opposition of the council of the Founder General, dealt with his resignation of the generalate, and uncovered the usurpation of the power which then was turned against him.

¹Circular of January 7, 1841 (Agmar 14.3.1).

²Circular of January 12, 1841.

³M. Faye.

⁴At their recent visit, August 5, 1844.

Here the true motive is revealed which urged him to distort the spirit not only of the Society of Mary, but also of the Institute of the Daughters of Mary and of the Third Order Regular. The spirit of these three Orders is the spirit of faith in Jesus Christ, God-Man, applied especially to the government of the three Orders approved by the Holy See. They would be distorted by a General Administration which would rely heavily on reason in its government, without regard to the insights which it received from faith.

(4) The reply of the Mother General of January 15, 1844. She begins, “What a blow your letter was to my heart! Is it true that our Good Father, etc. . . .” It is a kind of protest against the consequence which the council had already drawn, that by my circular of January 7 I had been stripped of all administrative authority over the Institute of the Daughters of Mary. What would the good Mother General have said and done, if she had known the full scope of the blow which she felt so keenly? The blow would be mortal if the council succeeded in its opposition—as it had good reason to hope—by employing the means which it could and did actually use.

(5) Father Roussel’s reply to the Mother General, dated January 17, 1841. Here is how it begins. “Good and Venerable Mother, I have been indiscreet. God knows I would not wish to distress you by being the bearer of painful news, but only to bring to your attention, confidentially, something which interests you in the highest degree, etc. . . . The Good Father has resigned truly, in a pure and simple manner, into the hands of his council; but the council continues its active leadership and guidance as it should. Thus the Good Father continues to be for you what he has been up to now, and that until his death, even in the event that we elect another Superior General during his lifetime and according to his will. Thus, Good and Venerable Mother, continue to go to our Venerable Father in all your doubts and difficulties. It would be cruel, shortsighted, and unfortunate to discontinue your relationship with him. The council of the Society sees it as you do, Good Mother; furthermore, it will not undertake anything except under the immediate direction of the one whom God has established to make known to us his orders and the plan of salvation. To bring you up to date, I wrote to you the day before yesterday on the part of our Venerable Father and for him. I explained very briefly the new situation which is a direct result of the court action. In speaking of these events, Good Mother, I ask you to please to confine yourself to the information contained in this letter.”

My dear Son, can a person show bad faith more cleverly? I am not surprised that M. Faye, your lawyer, did not understand my letters. I was arguing in the supernatural order of faith: “Faith is the conviction about things we do not see.” On the contrary, reason by itself is the conviction due to appearances. I told him in our correspondence, or rather I told you, that it is not permissible to argue *a genere ad genus* [from one genus to another], otherwise a person would produce only miserable sophisms. What answer did I receive? None from M. Faye, but from you? That I am not a logician!

However, I do not believe that you or Brother Clouzet intended to use evil means to achieve the object of your alliance, but you and he had blindfolds over your eyes—or rather, this prophecy of Christ is accomplished, “I came into the world to divide it, to make the sightless see. . . .” But you do not desire explanations from me.

Let me continue. The Mother General of the Daughters of Mary has always guarded the confidential secret of Father Roussel, especially because I was the person who confided it to her. What trickery! Without a doubt, you did not see all the letters he wrote. God has permitted this to purify the Society of Mary, its Founder included. May the name of the Lord be blessed in all of its lovable Providence. Iniquity has shown itself to be false at the time the Lord has predetermined, not only by the discovery of the five items which I have mentioned to you and of which I have copied several extracts, but by another, more striking circumstance.

You know, my dear Son, that it was necessary to renew the compromise several times,¹ and that since the debates began the lawyers for the defense have said about you, “You are playing a comedy here.” You reported these incidents to me, and every time I wanted to explain them to you and again when we renewed the compromise, and I think you would have understood what they meant. “To play the comedian” is an expression which has become famous these past few years. Were you ever willing to listen to me? Well! While you were being accused here of playing the comedian, at Agen it was said that I was the one who was playing the comedian, in reference to my resignation. I had really and truly resigned so that I could find a substitute according to the Constitutions; but this was not what the coalition wanted. You preferred to bear the humiliation of being called comedians, hoping later to overcome my opposition.

That coincidence of being accused at Bordeaux and Agen of playing the comedian before a respectable judge of the court proves the honesty of this tribunal and that it sincerely wished to adhere to its decision,² providing the resignation was sincere and another General had taken my place. I never doubted that the judgment, although very just, was so strict because according to them, I was playing the comedy along with you. But because I could not prove this, the persecution increased. The Lord has finally permitted the evil to contradict itself.

The question which divides us is very serious, yet very simple; it actually became serious only with the statement which Father Roussel, Head of Instruction, recently composed after the litigation. The case was very clear and simple in itself, but it was necessary to make it appear doubtful and obscure in order to give it an air of importance. If he could not triumph, he would at least allow me to suggest some settlement, and then to object if what I suggested was not according to his plans; for, my dear Son, his views and interests are not yours or Brother Clouzet’s, as I have told you many times. You knew from the beginning that I would never consent to see Father Roussel reelected Head of Instruction, but that I would gladly accept the four whom you presented by common agreement: Father Chevaux, Superior General; Father Caillet, Head of Zeal; Father Fontaine, Head of Instruction; and Brother Clouzet, Head of Temporalities. You worked with Father Roussel to have him accept his rejection as Head of Instruction and dangled before him a good position, that of superior of Saint-Remy; he seemed very content. He himself informed me of this in council. Brother Clouzet was absent, but I myself brought up the subject, and I answered as follows: “Father Roussel should not be at Saint-Remy, but at the Madeleine where he will find an activity to suit his talents; this is something he needs.” On another occasion, speaking of changes, I appointed someone director of the novitiate of Sainte-Anne, which he likes very much. He was greatly hurt by this appointment and realized even more fully that I was determined not to have him as superior of any establishment.

Is it not since that time, my dear Son, when our discussions became more bitter, that my resistance to what my conscience authoritatively forbade has become more pronounced? This explains why, after a forced arrangement, I wrote two letters to you last May 25 and 26 over which you rejoiced, which you paraded around, and which you used to seduce the simplicity of Father Bouet. And to what excesses you have led him! My dear Son, I was hoping that by recalling to you this evil which you have caused as a result of your alignment with your two associates in the Council, you might finally yield to the truth and by your example keep them from greater faults. . . .

Actually, I cannot continue this letter. Continually, without my seeking it, new information comes to me about the carrying out of the plan you have formed and which I did not think was so far-reaching. Without a doubt I owe you something, but I owe more to the entire Society. I will contact you as often as possible.

¹The compromise was effective July 6, 1841, and the decision was left to the arbiter, M. Ravez. It expired December 31, 1841, and was renewed 5 successive times in 1842 and 1843.

²In 1840, at the beginning of the trouble, in declaring null the agreement between Fr. Chaminade and Bro. Auguste Brougnon-Perrière.

I think M. Faye will have shown you the letter I wrote to him yesterday morning, but which he will not have received until this morning.

Please accept, my dear Son, the expression of the deep compassion which your conduct has produced in me; it is proportionate to the tender friendship and the complete confidence with which you have inspired me all these years.

G.-Joseph Chaminade

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This “false witnesses” letter caused Father Roussel to call it “a letter of iniquities” (Confidential Memorandum, Positio, p. 75). It is found among the items attached to the memorandum, p. 85 (Agmar 1852.27).

In a letter to Father Chaminade, dated August 20, 1844, Father Bouet expressed the opinion that Father Chaminade has been under the influence of Satan (Agmar 7.2.252). M. Faye asks Father Chaminade at least to stop speaking contrary to the love which a father owes to his children (Agmar 7.2.256).

While the assistants were preparing to send out a circular drawn up by Father Roussel to inform the directors of the houses about the conflict, Father Chaminade decided to forestall them by sending his own circular. Because the oral resignation of January 7, 1841, had not obtained the principal effect—that is, the appointment of a successor—but had turned the Society of Mary from its spirit, the spirit of faith, Father Chaminade declares the acts of the council null and void.

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1314. Circular to the Directors of the Society of Mary

August 19, 1844, Bordeaux

Original, Agmar

To my dear Children, the Superiors, Directors, and Heads of Establishments of the Society of Mary.

My dear Sons,

Because the resignation from my powers and authority which I made into the hands of the members of my council on January 7, 1841, and of which I informed you by my circular of the same date has not attained its principal objective, I have found it necessary to dissolve the council, which at that time was called the General Administration, as in fact I did dissolve it and reestablished it as the ordinary Council of the Superior General of the Society of Mary. However, because I sincerely wished to resign my powers, I resumed them only to resign according to the spirit and letter of the Constitutions, which I have sworn with you to observe and to support until death.

The members of the Council were not and could not be more than the depositaries of my resignation in order to transmit it to you as it truly was. They never did wish to do this, for they formed a coalition to denature it and to denature the Society of Mary. The spirit of the Society is a spirit of faith, which is the spirit of Our Lord Jesus Christ produces in us when we open our hearts to him. It is denatured when we open them only to our weak reason, neglecting the intuitions of faith which should illuminate it. I have resisted because I am your Father, and by the grace given to me I hope to be incapable forever of betraying my Children. Consequently, my dear Sons, if you receive any order, any obedience from any of the three General Assistants under any form whatsoever, consider it as null and void and return it to me.

Several of our Most Reverend Archbishops and Bishops who have requested from the Holy See the approbation of the Society, both in the dioceses in which we have or should have a large number of establishments, as well as the Daughters of Mary, will be notified today of the steps I have taken, for they have the same interests we do.

You will go on vacation as usual with the brothers to . . .¹

I embrace you most heartily.

G.-Joseph Chaminade

[On August 20, Father Caillet replied to this circular by sending Father Chaminade “four plans for a settlement.” But he did not offer any new plan which could satisfy Father Chaminade’s conscience. The first suggested a consultation of the scattered Chapter, a plan which had already been discarded. The second, to abide by the decision of an ecclesiastical superior, had ended in the troublesome intervention of Archbishop Donnet. The third, the project of May 8 discussed above, was not in the Constitutions. The fourth, the convocation of a General Chapter, had been opposed from the beginning by Father Chaminade.]

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Father Chaminade hints that the great danger is Father Roussel, who continues as a member of the council; this letter ended the correspondence between Father Chaminade and M. Faye.

1315. To M. Faye, Bordeaux

August 28, 1844, Bordeaux

Autograph, Agmar

My dear Son,

I received your letter of yesterday evening. We would inevitably come to an agreement if you knew, or if I could say, the words which I cannot write but which Father Caillet and Brother Clouzet know at least to a certain extent; as for Father Roussel, he knows exactly what I mean. If you are able to slip away for a few minutes, I will share with you everything that I can in conscience. However, I will continue my campaign, making excuses for you to all the people concerned.

G.-Joseph Chaminade

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1315-2. To Fr. Léon Meyer, Ebersmunster¹

August 28, 1844, Bordeaux

Original, Agmar

My dear Son,

The Society of Mary has been betrayed in its Founder General. The treason was consummated last July 25 and July 26 (see letters addressed to Brother Clouzet and his answer, breaking off all relationships).

The members of the council do not have even a high-sounding reason to proceed with the business of my resignation since my first and second protests (see these two documents).

¹The different central houses.

¹ In addition to the letter bearing this date, an extract exists which Fr. Lebon dates “August 28, 1844” and quotes in his introduction to letter no. 1310. Where does this passage originate? From a letter which has been lost, or is it an error in dating?

The treachery of which I was personally convinced, and of which I had informed the members of the General Administration, but which they took as an insult—whose existence I supported out of consideration for their coalition—was providentially discovered in the secretariat of the Daughters of Mary at Agen during the early days of August (see my letter to Father Caillet of August 17).

The Mother General of the Daughters of Mary, having heard of the struggle between me and Father Caillet, president of the Council of the General Administration, came to Bordeaux with permission, accompanied by three local superiors; she spoke to Father Caillet and then returned full of bitterness. On their return to Agen, the Mother General convoked her council (see the extract).

I believe I must send the enclosed circular to all the heads of our establishments in the Midi. This, my dear Son, is the circular which must be distributed to all the establishments in the towns of the province of Alsace. It will be easy for you to quickly make the necessary number of copies. You will countersign in my name and in the absence of the provincial.

Kindly inform me, my dear Son, when you have received these letters. For the moment, I will not reply to your letter of August 23. I will answer it as soon as possible. Receive, my dear Son, my paternal embrace.

G.-Joseph Chaminade

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Father Caillet was opposed to Father Chaminade's circular letter. On August 30 he sent a letter to Brothers Michaud and Gobillot at Sainte-Anne.

I have consulted the Archbishop of Bordeaux about our position with respect to the Good Father, and I have been told that, having resigned in writing and without any reservation, he no longer has any authority as Superior General; that all of the protests which he has made and all of the orders he has given since, as well as any which he may plan to give in the future, are null. Nothing has changed in the canonically established General Administration, and nothing new is to be introduced into the government of the Society of Mary until the election of a new Superior General and the three Assistants, according to our holy Rule, in a General Chapter which has now become necessary, and to which will be convoked all the brothers who are members by right.

In this letter, he also recommends the practice of economy at Sainte-Anne if they wish to avoid bankruptcy, and he dares to add, "The Good Father never paid attention to this matter, unfortunately, either before or after the unfortunate lawsuit which he lost; and yet, that is what brought upon us all our troubles, even spiritual." Father Caillet gave orders to Brothers Michaud and Gobillot (Agmar 7.2.261); then in a letter to Fr. Léon Meyer (Agmar 7.2.262) he asks him not to carry out the orders of Father Chaminade.

1315-3. To Fr. Georges Caillet, Bordeaux

September 1, 1844, Bordeaux

Original, Agmar

My dear Son,

Having received a copy of the letter you wrote last August to Brothers Michaud and Gobillot, I reply that I do not at all recognize any authority which the council might have over me, or the pretended claim over me from a so-called written resignation without any reservation which I gave it on January 7, 1841. I protest against all the actions which you have taken or will

take; I consider them not only null, but as of today, criminal. However, I continue to have the deepest respect for the Archbishop of Bordeaux, and I also respect his wise dealings with you, who are so well deserving of his confidence.

Receive, my dear Son, the expression of my fatherly love.

G.-Joseph Chaminade

Copy sent to Fr. Léon Meyer at Ebersmunster.

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On August 30, Father Caillet announces the coming General Chapter. Father Chaminade responds with a new circular to the directors on September 2. He quotes his letter to Father Caillet (no. 1315), denounces the convocation of the Chapter as criminal, and announces his intention of bringing the case to the attention of the bishops.

1316. Circular to the Directors of the Society of Mary

September 2, 1844, Bordeaux

Original, Agmar

My dear Son,

I have learned that Father Caillet, in his own name and in the names of Father Roussel and Brother Clouzet, both of them being absent, has given you orders completely contrary to those which you received from me in my first circular of last August 19. Here is my reply to the information concerning that gesture.

“Having received notice of the letter which you wrote to Brothers Michaud and Gobillot last August 30, I reply that I do not at all recognize any authority of the council over me, or the pretended claim over me resulting from a so-called resignation without any reservation which I gave it on January 7, 1841. I protest against all the actions which you have taken and will take; I consider them not only null, but as of today, criminal. However, I continue to have the deepest respect for the Archbishop of Bordeaux, and I also respect his wise dealings with you, who are so well deserving of his confidence. Please accept, my dear Son, the expression of my fatherly love.
Bordeaux, September 1, 1844”

My dear Son, I do not need to remind you that the council has no standing and is without authority to give orders without my participation; that the General Chapter will not be canonically convoked if its measures are not followed; and that all the actions which it performs to this end are null and, as of today, criminal.

You must believe, my dear Son, that I do not make such serious accusations against my own Children, the members of my council, without having the most authentic proof. I cannot give these to you in detail; first of all, there was a kind of treason which I discovered and which was enough to force me to resist plans which seemed treacherous to me and which in early August were found to be proven and confirmed by a most providential discovery. I am sharing this information with the Most Reverend Bishops and Archbishops, our protectors, who represent the Sovereign Pontiff for us in urgent matters.

Have confidence in the one whom God has given you for a true Father in the order of salvation.

G.-Joseph Chaminade

P.S. The Council of the Mother General of the Institute of the Daughters of Mary has decided to break off relationship with the Society of Mary. All the houses of the Order have done the same; the Third Order Regular of the Daughters of Mary has followed the same path. However, the Order and the Third Order will not break relationships if the council will divest itself of the authority it has usurped.

* * *

When he sent copies of his circular to Father Meyer, Father Chaminade brought him up to date on the situation. Father Chaminade has great confidence in him, and he sees in this crisis the winnowing action of the Lord to purify the Society of Mary. The letter is filled with faith, love, and a pastoral spirit. He presents his plan to rally the Society of Mary around him.

1317. To Fr. Léon Meyer, Ebersmunster

September 3, 1844, Bordeaux

Autograph, Agmar

My dear Son,

I am returning for a few moments to your letter of last August 23. You will have understood from reading the dispatches I sent you after its reception how painful the situation of the Society of Mary is; however painful it may be, I will not call it disastrous. I have confidence that Jesus Christ, perhaps at the prayer of his august Mother, has taken his fan in hand only to purify the Society. I hope to have from you in a few days the confirmation that you have received the dispatches. At the same time, I sent you a copy of a circular to be forwarded to all the heads of the establishments in the province of Father Chevaux; there are only three outside Alsace.

I sent similar dispatches to Father Rothéa and ordered the circular to be sent to all the small establishments of the Jura; I greatly fear he will do more than I tell him and that he will add to our troubles. You would do well to get in touch with him and to work along with him.

I wanted to send the same dispatches to Fathers Chevaux and Fontaine, who seem to be completely unaware of everything that is happening, but I fear Brother Clouzet will intercept the package. However, the three priests who are at Saint-Remy, in whom I have great confidence, should at least be warned. I have done the same for Father Fidon at Besançon, Father Lamotte at Marast, Father Perrodin at Acey, as well for Saint-Hippolyte. I was forgetting Father Desgranchamps at Orgelet; it may be good to add your brother at Courtefontaine and Brother Dumond, who will be ordained a subdeacon in September.

There must be unity among all the priests of the Society, both in convictions and attitudes. Be careful here, my dear Son; I do not speak here of purely human convictions and attitudes, but of supernatural convictions and attitudes, of convictions and attitudes of Christian faith which are the spirit of our Constitutions which the pope has approved.

I desire the love of my Children, only that they might respond to the tender love which I have for them in the order of salvation and for their spiritual rebirth. If I have not actually brought them into the world, the good God has me serve as their adoptive father. Oh, my dear Son, keep your heart and mind always lifted to Jesus and Mary, and you will know how to speak to your brothers. Soon you will be very intimately united in the same objective. I dare not allow myself to think that there could be scandal from some dissenter; in any such unexpected event, notify me immediately.

It might perhaps be wise for those employed in the establishments of the diocese of Besançon not to spend their holidays at Saint-Remy, where our three conspirators wish to convoke the General Chapter. They at least must be warned so that without human respect, they may express themselves openly and without too much discussion and attempt to make the truth known to those with opposite opinions and to have them accept it.

My dear Son, no doubt I have given you a challenging mission, and I am adding to the burden under which you are beginning to bend. Nevertheless, there is no other way to help you.

You will understand this more clearly from the letter I am going to write to several archbishops and bishops who have asked for the approbation of the Society of Mary, and in which I will tell you what is to be done. Actually, nothing more is to be done than to put on a good countenance and to oppose every order or injunction which you might receive regarding the convocation of a General Chapter.

My dear Son, I am enclosing three items: (1) the letter Father Caillet sent to Brothers Michaud and Gobillot, (2) my reply, and (3) a second circular which you are to distribute as you did the first.

Take care of your health, my dear Son, in the midst of all your work; you can do this with prudence. In your own house, of course, always exercise vigilance yourself or through those in whom you trust. As to Confessions, limit yourself more or less to hearing those who are to go to Communion. Exhort them in a few heartfelt words, but put off until later the instructions they need; do the same for the instructions to the community, etc.

I embrace you very paternally.

G.-Joseph Chaminade

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1318. To Bro. Justin Dumont, Saint-Remy

September 3, 1844, Bordeaux

Copy, Agmar

My dear Son,

The second circular which I am sending to you will make you understand why I am so late in writing to you. I am enclosing a commission for your clerical title. The bishop himself gave me the form, but I do not have it at the moment. If it is requested in another form, please keep this one until I can exchange it.

My dear Son, consider as expressed all the things I would say to you on this serious occasion, if I had the time.

* * *

1318-2. To Bro. Justin Dumont, Saint-Remy

September 3, 1844, Bordeaux

Copy, Agmar

The Society of Mary assumes responsibility for the clerical title which Brother Dumont, a perpetual professed, must present at his ordination to the subdiaconate in this month of September.

In witness whereof. . . .

* * *

Father Chaminade began to inform the episcopacy by sending the following letter to Archbishop de Jerphanion of Albi, under whose jurisdiction Father Roussel was working (see the biographical note on Archbishop Jerphanion in volume 4 of the Letters). Father Chaminade qualified Father Roussel as a "sower of a type of treason" of which he himself has been the victim. Fearing these letters would be intercepted by Father Roussel, he asks the archbishop to give the enclosures to the director, Father Prost.

On the advice of Father Caillet, the archbishop's reply to this letter, sent through the Archbishop of Bordeaux, was not forwarded to Father Chaminade (letters of Father Martial, the vicar general, to Archbishop Donnet, September 16, 1844 (Agmar 7.2.275). But Father Chaminade continued to point out to the archbishop the dangers to which the council, and especially Father Roussel, were exposing the Society of Mary (letters of September 11, September 17, and September 22, 1844).

1319. To Archbishop de Jerphanion of Albi

September 5, 1844, Bordeaux
Original, Arch. of the Archbishop

Your Excellency,

The Society of Mary has been betrayed, and it has been betrayed by three of its principal Children, the three members of the General Council. The one responsible for this type of treason is Father Roussel, who indeed has other opinions and other motives than those of his two associates on the council. Within a few days I will have the honor to furnish Your Excellency with all the details and proof which I consider necessary.

Father Roussel left on foot about a month ago; he was at Réalmont, and I have reason to believe he is still there.

I have sent a first circular to Father Prost with some short observations; I have had no reply. Recently I sent a second, and I have reason to believe Father Roussel intercepts some of the correspondence of Father Prost. I ask Your Excellency to forward to him without fail the five small items which I take the liberty of enclosing. If you have any doubts about the situation, you will have at least a suspicion that the Society of Mary is in a condition which, if not distressing, is at least very painful.

I am with the greatest respect, Your Excellency, your very humble and obedient servant.

G.-Joseph Chaminade

* * *

Father Chaminade believed the principal effort must be made at Bordeaux, to convince Archbishop Donnet. He sent to the archbishop a series of long and urgent letters on September 10, September 16, September 24, and September 27, 1844, in an effort to have the rights of his conscience recognized.

In the first he explains the situation: the two resignations of 1841, oral and written; the opposition of the council and especially of Father Caillet who, although separated from his two associates, has assumed extravagant authority and compromised the authority of the archbishop, who "took him at his word"; the difficulties of holding a General Chapter in the present circumstances. . . . Moreover, he has a much stronger reason to resist, his conscience; he is ready to sacrifice everything "except his conscience." He recalls forcefully the urgent needs of his mission as Founder. He must maintain in the Society of Mary, first of all in its administration, the practical spirit of faith "which seems extinguished in the members of the council." But is there no way to arrive at a settlement, Father Caillet will ask. First of all, Father Caillet must separate himself from Father Roussel, "the first cause of the resistance" to Father Chaminade. If Father Chaminade does not resist, he would expose the Society of Mary to corruption; for this serious statement he is prepared to present proof but, he insists, only to the archbishop and other interested prelates. He is also prepared to give any explanation that might be desired.

To this letter, using a method he will follow in the future until the end and will push to the limit, Father Chaminade adds copies of the August letter of Father Caillet and of his reply on September 1. Father Chaminade has acted only according to his conscience, and he is so convinced of the justice of his case that he plans to have it triumph only by a clear statement of

the truth. This is why he has sent to his adversaries and to his defenders copies of everything he wrote and of all the replies he received. This is the simplicity of the Gospel. However, prudence is allied to this simplicity; these copies were not sent indiscriminately to everyone. "I had them made only for the Most Reverend Archbishops of Albi and Besançon," he wrote to the Archbishop of Bordeaux. "The priest who was charged with delivering them is worthy of every confidence, and I have placed my copyist under the most inviolable and most comprehensive secrecy about their contents."

1320. To Archbishop Donnet of Bordeaux

September 10, 1844, Bordeaux

Copy, Agmar

Your Excellency,

Along with the letters of Father Caillet, I am taking the liberty of sending to you the reply which I gave him rather hastily and in the midst of very serious occupations.

The special motive which prompts me to write is that he has compromised Your Excellency by the tone of good faith and moderation which permeates his letters. Kindly permit me some reflections about this rather brief answer, sufficient for one who is informed about the situation which exists between me and my council.

(1) I resigned from my generalship very truly and simply, just as the Constitutions and my conscience permitted me. First, let us look at the Constitutions.

Article 481. If the Superior resigns purely and simply without proposing a successor, the matter is handled as in the case of death (see articles 465 *ff.*).

Article 482. If the successor he proposes is accepted by the council and the central houses, he is invested by this fact with all the authority of the Superior General until the convocation of a Chapter, which is to take place after the 10th year of the generalate of his predecessor.

After several moments of reflection, Your Excellency, following the proposition by the council that I resign my generalate, I very clearly and explicitly made the proposal to name my successor and then considered whether I should consent to their demand that my resignation would be put in writing. This form of resignation, of which the Constitutions do not speak, is not at all a dissimulation before the parties or the civil tribunal before which the case was conducted; the adversaries knew the Constitutions, and the civil court had no other interest in the case except to see a successor, however he might be chosen.

Does the council state that it has not heard or understood this form of resignation? The only reply I have to make is that it has lied, and if it has done so under oath; it has perjured itself, and I can prove this. Providence is admirable in all of the actions and circumstances which God permits to mortals.

Therefore, Your Excellency, I ask (1) how could the true and sincere act of resignation, made according to the Constitutions, be made ineffective and altered by a subsequent act of accommodation and which does not have an intimate relationship to the first?

(2) What right can the members of the council have to hound me, to discredit me, Your Excellency, and especially to bring your authority and wisdom to accept Father Caillet at his word?

Although Father Caillet here represents the entire council, he is alone because Father Roussel has fled and Brother Clouzet is absent, both no doubt with his permission. He alone represents the resigned General to the Society, without ever informing the Society, and this for almost 4 years.

Can a person thus abuse an act of accommodation? And abuse it for such a long while? Yes, for so long? For finally, what qualifications does the council have to judge the value of the resignation of a General who resigns his generalship? None, save that it is its faithful depository, that it must faithfully and as soon as possible convey the knowledge of this to the Society and convene a General Chapter as soon as possible. Now, it has failed in this duty imposed upon it by the Constitutions, under the pretext of observing them scrupulously, compelled to this by its conscience.

Should it convene a General Chapter now that it has decided, without the proper authority, that a General Chapter is necessary? I feel that if Father Caillet were present he would stop me. “Wait! It is not I who have decided, it is the archbishop. Who is as competent as he to judge such a situation? In the present critical and urgent situation, the archbishop has the same power as the pope who named you. This is what the archbishop says; there is no need to pay attention to your recent protests” (letter of August 30).¹

You see, Your Excellency, how your discretion has been compromised. On the one hand, your judgment demands that you take Father Caillet at his word, after an explanation artlessly given and which has the appearance of truth. Ever since Father Caillet has worked under your authority and with your permission, he has clearly merited this mark of confidence from Your Excellency. Perhaps he was even accompanied by M. Faye, his intimate and very devoted lawyer. Your judgment demands that you believe his word, otherwise he would be very humiliated. On the other hand, has your authority not been compromised? If the considerations which I have presented to you are true, why should my protest be unable to restrain it?

Permit me, Your Excellency, again to draw your attention to the convocation of a General Chapter. I have shown the members of the council the very serious disturbance it would create for the Society and how many members would be inconvenienced, and what great expenses would have to be made. Sometime later, I showed them how unwise it would be at the present time, that they could compromise the Society and even the French episcopacy in the person of the Archbishop of Besançon.¹ No consideration stops them; this is the stand they have taken among themselves since the trial began, and it strengthened after the intervening judgment. I have the most authentic proof.

Your Excellency, this letter has become very long for you, and for me. However, I have another motive for resistance, stronger than the ones I have just explained to you—that of my conscience.

(3) Yes, Your Excellency, the motive of obedience to my conscience is much stronger than that of changing the Constitutions, as far as I am concerned—my conscience excepted. I believe I have sufficiently proved this by the deep humiliations which the members of my council have directly or indirectly caused me. I believed I saw my twofold duty in the holy saying, “I am concerned for your good name,” one personal, which could be sacrificed for the sake of peace, unity, fraternal charity, and the other which concerns God only, his holy law, his adorable will—in a word, a duty summoned by conscience.

I unite in myself, unworthy as I am—and perhaps because God wishes the glory of the work of the Society of Mary to be in no way attributed to the instrument which he uses—I unite two titles, two very delicate offices, that of Superior General and that of Founder of that Society. I hold the first from the king and from the Holy See; I can resign from it. As to the second, I hold it immediately from God; I cannot resign from it. Each of these titles, taken separately, has its duties. The Superior who can resign from his generalate has duties because of his resignation.

¹Quoted in letter no. 1316.

¹The chapter was to be held at Saint-Remy in the diocese of Besançon. Fr. Chaminade was not without anxiety about the holding of the chapter after more than 3 years of a vacant generalate, under a Government highly sensitive about its rights. The Superior General had to be recognized by the king in virtue of the royal Ordinance of 1825.

The Founder has very serious duties; they become more serious if he unites in himself the office of Superior General who wishes to resign from his generalate. He must resist with all his might those who would wish to oppose the accomplishment of the duties which his conscience imposes upon him, and this is the situation in which I find myself. I have truly resigned my generalate, but in a manner to be able to fulfill my duties; the Constitutions give the details.

But this is not the way the members of my council see it. Without positively denying my resignation according to the Constitutions, they desire that because of the need for my resignation, I had decided very freely and completely voluntarily to give it in writing, just as it is, pure and simple in the sense which the Constitutions give to these expressions in the present circumstances. I truly admit that I resigned my generalate, but that I did not intend at all to resign my title of Founder; I could not do this without becoming a criminal, perhaps culpable in the first degree, because I would be morally betraying a very large number of people in the three Orders I have founded and who are united under the same practical spirit of faith and under the same direction by the authority of the Holy See, although they are entirely separate, for instance of men and of women; and what a number of spiritual parricides has that treason not caused! I say parricides and not homicides because all have called me, and still call me, their Father, which I am in fact in the supernatural order. To the name of "Father" they usually add that of "Good," although they know that at times I am very severe toward some; this is because they clearly know that the love and even the natural tenderness I have for them comes only from above, from the spiritual paternity with which God has vested me.

Practical faith seems to be extinguished in the members of my council, as is shown by their endless opposition which requires from me a continual resistance. They took their definitive stand last July 16. The struggle is no longer one of discussion; it is a hand-to-hand combat, so to speak.

Because he knows I intend to bring the case to the knowledge of Out Lords the Archbishops and Bishops who had requested from the Sovereign Pontiff the authorization of the Society of Mary, Father Caillet writes to me, "Is there no way of settling this dissension which reigns between us so that we could speak to the Society of Mary neither for nor against? Father Caillet can hardly contain his displeasure with me because in my second circular I labeled "criminal" the acts of opposition which he was performing or might perform in the future. Because I was unable to answer him myself because of other occupations just as pressing or perhaps more so, I profited by the occasion I had to send the most highly-regarded of the professors of Sainte-Anne,¹ who is himself very attached to Father Caillet, to have him say that as I have always been, I am very disposed to take all possible means to secure peace and unity in the Society; that no sacrifice is too great, providing my conscience will be spared; that therefore he is to separate himself from Father Roussel, the Head of Instruction; that he will sincerely join me in spirit and heart; and that with the grace of God, who will deign to help me, I hope to find a compromise which will meet with his approval. But I asked for sincerity, and that (1) he would prove this by retracting completely and without any commotion the secret demands for a dispensation or a permission which he had made of Your Excellency, (2) that he would correct the abuse he made of the simplicity of Father Bouet and the bad example given to Brother Clouzet; and that he would presume that Father Roussel would make up his mind to do what I demand of him.

Perhaps it is difficult for you to understand, Your Excellency, that all I ask of Father Caillet is his separation from Father Roussel and the compensation for the necessarily criminal behavior for which this union is responsible. I must tell you, Your Excellency, that Father Roussel, whether as Head of Instruction or as superior of an establishment, is the primary reason for my resistance to all of the proposals for compromise which have been made to me, in which

¹Brother Muchaud (see letter no. 1316).

my active authority over him would cease; for if I did not resist, I would expose the Society of Mary (1) to becoming denatured in the spirit of its foundation and (2) to the demoralization of some of the youth confided to our care. And who knows if he would be skillful enough to prevent an outbreak of scandal?

Father Caillet and Brother Clouzet know almost everything. I have discussed this at various times with them, but nevertheless they do not wish to separate themselves from him, perhaps because of some superior talents which he possesses. Are their actions not criminal? Will the Society reelect them, as I intended,² always believing that I could bring them back if they would give up their connection with Father Roussel? I doubt it. Father Caillet and Brother Clouzet are two very admired and esteemed religious; but today, when the Society of Mary is moving along a promising road, would it accept guides who are blind?

Your Excellency may be surprised. You may believe my zeal is too ardent, my imagination too excited, so that I believe in the reformation of religious, etc. Your Excellency, I have authentic proofs which I will share with you if you judge it opportune to see them, but I will show them only to you and to other worthy prelates, the recipients of this letter.

Your Excellency, please pardon me again if you find that I have spent too much time trying to make you understand the true situation in which Father Caillet has placed me and the regrettable position in which he has placed the Society of Mary. I am writing this in too great a hurry to say more briefly everything which strictly pertains to the question. Perhaps because of this great brevity you will find certain assertions obscure. I am completely ready to give you all the explanations and the proofs which Your Excellency could desire.

While I was writing this letter, I received a second letter from Father Caillet in which he sends me a copy of my two resignations, that I might judge of their similarity. This is no doubt the talisman he uses to prove the justice of his actions. I will take the liberty in a few days to send you my reflections about these two items.

I am, with the deepest respect, Your Excellency, your humble and obedient servant. . . .

P.S. I ask you urgently, Your Excellency, to completely strike out the part of this letter which begins with "I must tell you . . ." up to the last words "the recipients of this letter." This part is for you alone. I would not take the liberty to make such an observation to Your Excellency this was not necessary.

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1320-2. To Archbishop de Jerphanion of Albi

September 11, 1844, Bordeaux

Autograph, Arch. of Archdiocese of Albi

Copy, Agmar

Your Excellency,

I had the honor to write to you recently and to send you a few days ago some very circumstantial details about the type of treason to which the Society of Mary has been submitted.

I had nearly finished a short statement when I learned from Father Caillet, the Head of Zeal, that he had obtained from the Archbishop of Bordeaux permission to proceed and to convoke a General Chapter. I believed it was my duty to write immediately to the archbishop.

²After the resignation, when the propositions for the election of the Superior General and his Assistants were made.

I have the honor of sending you a copy; it may give you an idea of what is happening. I ask you to strike out the part indicated and to let me know if I can correspond freely with Father Prost, and if I do not need to fear an interception of my letters to Your Excellency.

I am with the deepest respect your most humble and obedient servant.

G.-Joseph Chaminade

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Here is the letter which Father Rothéa, the dean of the priests of the Society of Mary and the person through whom Father Caillet himself had been drawn to the Society of Mary, wrote to Father Caillet.

Dear Father,

I do not call you Good Father, but you are always dear to me in spite of your errors. How could you bring sorrow to the one who takes the place of God for us? Is the Superior General of the Society of Mary not its center, its rock, its root? The Blessed Virgin herself governs this beautiful Society which essentially is hers, and this is what distinguishes it from every other religious Order. And you do not want Father Chaminade, who has been charged by Mary to bring us together, to lead us, to explain to us the spirit of the Constitutions, to inculcate this in us by order of the Sovereign Pontiff, you do not want him to be our Good Father? It seems according to your letter—to which you request a reply—that you believe he has lapsed into infancy, that he is so feeble that his ideas are confused and uttered as if in spite of himself, or that age. . . . My pen refuses to copy the phrases which you had the audacity to write to me.

What! You say that he is no longer the head of the Society of Mary! Then who is the head? Is it you? Is it Father Roussel? Is it Brother Clouzet? The latter seems, in fact, to direct it; he makes personnel changes, and he gives orders even for what concerns the sacred ministry. You certainly cannot tell me that Father Roussel is the Superior General. If such a calamity happened, even after a General Chapter which you desire so greatly, I would say, “Farewell, O beautiful Society of Mary!” It will be a Society of the conceited, the impure, and the schemers, just like its head. Let us forget the rest; charity obliges us to pull a veil over what takes place before our eyes. Have there not been enough scandals? You quote to me a part of a text of our savior Jesus Christ, “It is inevitable that scandal should occur” [Matthew 18:7]. But you will do well to think of what follows, “But woe to that person through whom scandal comes . . . better to enter . . .” Upon whom does this “woe” fall? Is it not on the one who is the instigator of the sad coalition of which the Good Father speaks in his correspondence, and which is made the subject of our lament? For never, since I have had the honor of being admitted to the Society of Mary in spite of my unworthiness, never have I seen such a scandal.

You know that 20 years ago I brought you to Bordeaux. Is this then the fruit of all the instructions you have received from such a tender Father who kept you at his side? Could he not apply to you this text, “If an enemy had reviled me I could have borne it; but you, my bosom friend . . .” [Psalm 54:13-14]? It would be useless to cite other proofs of the affection which Father Chaminade constantly had for you. I will move to more serious considerations.

If it was your intention to imitate Saint Peter by a type of denial which is almost equal to apostasy—for one who threatens the foundations of religious life by loudly declaring war against the Superior of the Order, overwhelming him with loathing, bitterness, shameful quarrels which many a rejected novice even would not be a party to, does he not become an apostate? I say this without prejudice to the deep respect which is due to you because of your attachment to the Catholic faith and to the many works which you have undertaken for the glory of Mary. If you have imitated Saint Peter in his fall, then imitate him in his penance: “He began to weep bitterly” [Matthew 26:75]. I seem to see you coming from a fervent meditation, weeping bitter tears and casting yourself at the

feet of our Good Father, who will receive you as the prodigal son. You have always said to me, "Love to be known and to be counted as nothing." Today I take the liberty to say, "Physician, heal yourself!" [Luke 4:23].

The Archbishop of Besançon, whose prudence and spirit of faith you know, was greatly disturbed when he heard from me about the persecutions which the Assistants wage against our venerated Father and Founder. Brother Clouzet had pleaded his case eloquently before His Excellency; I found myself obliged to plead against him, and against you. What surprised me was to see that Fathers Chevaux, Fontaine, and even Lamotte at Saint-Remy absolutely turned away from Father Chaminade and offended when I proved, in my very simple manner, that Father Chaminade has always been Superior General of the Society of Mary in spite of his resignation (never published or promulgated). I went so far as to say, "But you preach submission, and you yourselves do not wish to submit! What an absurdity! You want to reason. Should a person not believe without seeing? The Good Father has spoken; there is no more to be said."

P.S. Father Chevaux gave me your (irregular) circular announcing the convocation. My reply was, "I will not go to a General Chapter against the wishes of the Good Father. Moreover, you can be sure that all of Alsace and all of the Jura will hold my view. You will make yourself detested for your intentions and your ranting against our venerated Founder" (September 10, 1844; Agmar 7.2.274).

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Father Chaminade wishes to give the priests of the Society of Mary a true picture of the situation. He sends a copy of his letter to the Archbishop of Bordeaux and to Fathers Fontaine and Chevaux at Saint-Remy and charges them to send it to the Archbishop of Besançon, with the letter addressed to them.

**1321. To Fr. Jean-Baptiste Fontaine and
Fr. Jean Chevaux, Saint-Remy**
September 12, 1884, Bordeaux
Copy, Agmar

My dear Sons,

I have received your letters of September 5 and 12 (this letter is an answer to both). Blessed be the Holy Name of Mary, whose feast we are soon to celebrate! The struggle I have carried on for almost four years to defend the holy work of the Society of Mary against the united efforts of my three Assistants—to be brief, I will not say here by what means and to what purpose this fight approaches its end, but happily it does.

When I received your letters, I was finishing a letter to the Archbishop of Bordeaux about a case very similar to the one you told him had happened at Besançon. Father Caillet has consulted His Excellency, alone and with documents which seem to state the truth decisively. Brother Clouzet has done nearly the same things, at the same time, with the Archbishop of Besançon, and no doubt Father Roussel has done the same at Albi. I still do not know the outcome. Yesterday I wrote to the archbishop. Is this acting in good faith or not?

I wrote immediately and in haste, my dear Children, to the Archbishop of Bordeaux, postponing every other occupation, even the reading of your letters. Please, one of you, present a copy of this same letter to the Archbishop of Besançon because it deals with the same case and has the same urgency. I trust that His Excellency will excuse me and have pity on me. My dear Children, in assuring His Excellency of my very deep respect, you will show him first of all the letter I am writing to you and then the one addressed to the Archbishop of Bordeaux. If His Excellency of Besançon asks for some time to consider it, wait in the city until he asks for you;

if he has need of further information, take note of this and inform me immediately, even from Besançon. In that case, ask His Excellency to order the suspension of all proceedings toward the convocation of a General Chapter. I myself will do likewise and hold a dispersed Chapter, as I believe I am authorized to do.

Whatever the archbishop decides, the end of this struggle will be a happy one for the entire Society. If it is humiliating for me, I hope it will have gained me something for heaven and the penance for my sins; do not worry about me.

I say that it will be a happy ending for the Society because I will write immediately to the archbishop about the urgent needs of the Society. We can provide for these only in a General Chapter. His Excellency will understand. He will give orders, the Society will obey, and the end of the conflict will be happy one. This has always been my only intention.

I will stop here, my dear Sons, so this letter may leave by the same post. But how many things I could say to you during this beautiful Octave, especially about the Nativity of the Blessed Virgin and the coming Feast of the Holy Name of Mary! I embrace you paternally.

P.S. Both of you should leave for Besançon as soon as possible.

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1321-2. To Fr. Jean Joseph Chevaux, Saint-Remy

September 13, 1844, Bordeaux

Autograph, Agmar

My dear Son,

Yesterday I wrote you a letter which is also for Father Fontaine and which was addressed to him. This letter orders one or the other of you to go to Besançon and to present to the archbishop the copy of a rather long letter which I have just written to the Archbishop of Bordeaux. All of this is in a second envelope addressed to “Brother Clouzet, and in his absence, to Father Fontaine.” After the departure of the small packet, I thought perhaps you would give the retreat at Saint-Remy, and that Father Fontaine would leave immediately to preach the one at Ebersmunster on September 15. Thus, Brother Clouzet might find an excuse to keep the packet. I am writing to you, but am addressing it to Brother Clouzet and ordering him to give you this letter immediately and the little packet of letters addressed to Father Fontaine.

Father Meyer has written to me twice asking that I send Father Perrodin to preach the retreat instead of Father Fontaine; the retreatants would be very pleased to have a new preacher. I do not know what to do; Brother Clouzet is making you do as he pleases! Answer me immediately about this matter.

Your devoted Father,

G.-Joseph Chaminade.

* * *

Father Chaminade explains why he sent the preceding letter to Fathers Fontaine and Chevaux, ordering them to take the copy of his letter (no. 1320) to the Archbishop of Besançon. The two priests had written to tell him that Archbishop Mathieu did not find sufficient reason for his resistance to the council. In this letter he detects the plan of action of the council: Father Caillet is to influence the Archbishop of Bordeaux, Father Roussel the Archbishop of Albi, and Brother Clouzet will try to win over the Archbishop of Besançon.

1322. To Fr. Léon Meyer, Ebersmunster

September 13, 1844, Bordeaux

Autograph, Agmar

My dear Son,

Yesterday evening I received your letter of September 6. I have been told there was another addressed to Father Caillet; no doubt this is the one you told me you wrote to him. I have also been told that the Archbishop of Bordeaux had sent for him, and that he was very sad. I am habitually at Sainte-Anne, a very short quarter of a league from town.

Fathers Chevaux and Fontaine are very uneasy; they have written to me that the Archbishop of Besançon was consulted about some small items which I sent to Father Rothéa, and that he did not see sufficient reason to justify my resistance. I immediately sent Father Fontaine a copy of the letter written to the Archbishop of Bordeaux; I am enclosing a copy of the same to you. No doubt Brother Clouzet is doing at Besançon what Father Caillet is doing in Bordeaux and Father Roussel in Albi; it seems to me the moment has arrived at which the Society of Mary should emerge from its tribulations more pure and more beautiful, as I believe I announced to Father Caillet in the long letter of which I have a copy; may the holy will of God be done!

I have written to your brother to prepare him to receive an obedience for Strasbourg in the near future.

I do not know if Father Fontaine, who was preaching a retreat at Saint-Remy when he wrote to me, is leaving for Alsace on September 15. I can write only tomorrow to resolve this uncertainty. Both Fathers Fontaine and Perrodin should not be at Ebersmunster at the same time, otherwise Courtefontaine will be neglected.

I will continue to write to you tomorrow. I am your very devoted Father,

G.-Joseph Chaminade

* * *

On September 13 at Besançon Archbishop Mathieu convoked the Marianist priests of the region: Fathers Chevaux, Fontaine, Fidon, Perrodin, Lamotte, and Rothéa. He told them he was confirming the directives given to Brother Clouzet in favor of Father Chaminade. A letter was sent to the Bishop of Strasbourg informing Father Meyer that the decision of Archbishop Mathieu was "to go to the defense of the Superior General and Founder against the council." The Bishop of Strasbourg was of the same opinion (letter of Father Meyer to Father Chaminade, September 16, 1844; Agmar 7.2.279). This letter to Father Perrodin merely asks him to deliver the enclosed documents to the Archbishop of Besançon.

1323. To Fr. Jules César Perrodin, Acey

September 14, 1844, Bordeaux

Autograph, Agmar

My dear Son,

How many things I would like to tell you personally and to tell our dear Society of Mary. I hope soon we will be able to converse freely together.

I want you to leave as soon as possible for Besançon and to give the archbishop the two items I am sending to you—that is, a copy of the letter I wrote to the Archbishop of Bordeaux and a copy of my letter to Fathers Fontaine and Chevaux. I have reason to believe that my dispatches

will not reach them, and in any case, there is no harm in having both of you go; the archbishop knew that someone was compromising him.

I embrace you paternally.

G.-Joseph Chaminade

* * *

The next letter, without a precise date, is only the sequel to the one which Father Chaminade intended to follow his letter of September 13 to Father Meyer. It discusses the same themes and seems as incomplete as the first. The retreats must take place as usual, for the good of the Society of Mary and the glory of Jesus and Mary.

1324. To Fr. Léon Meyer, Ebersmunster

About mid-September, 1844, Bordeaux

Autograph, Agmar

My dear Son,

I have received your latest letter, which gave me great pleasure. The Bavarian matter consoles me and nevertheless leaves me with some unpleasant forebodings.¹

When I told you I was pleased with your letter, it was not because you told me I would be reelected, but because of the good spirit which I believe reigns in what we call the north of France.

I truly and sincerely resigned from my generalate according to the prescriptions of the Constitutions so that I could choose men according to the heart of God and guide them until my death in the accomplishment of God's adorable will in the Society of Mary. I am about four years closer to the grave. In Bordeaux, many could believe that such a delay in the appointment of a replacement is due partly if not entirely to me, which is false.

The essential now is the choice of the three Assistants, and especially the one for temporalities, considering the circumstances of the Society; his position in this regard is comparatively significant. If it is too difficult to find someone, one of the other two Assistants could be appointed to the office with the permission to be replaced when he believes it is opportune.

The last time I wrote to you I was composing a short report for Our Lords the Archbishops and Bishops; it was not finished when Father Caillet decided to go alone to seek from the Archbishop of Bordeaux permission to proceed and to convoke a General Chapter. I was obliged to write the letter to inform everyone concerned, of which I sent you a copy.¹ Please have it recopied, but omitting entirely the part indicated, which should be given only to the prelates; also omit the postscript.

I am going to write to Father Fontaine and ask him to preach the retreat at Saint-Remy, then to come to Bordeaux to preach the one at Sainte-Anne, and to Father Perrodin to arrange with you about giving the one at Courtefontaine and Ebersmunster. I will continue this letter at the first free moment; continue to keep me informed about everything.

May the names of Jesus and Mary be forever blessed. I embrace you tenderly.

G.-Joseph Chaminade

¹"It is about extending ourselves at this time as far as Bavaria. The Archbishop of Ratisbon is sending here [Ebersmunster] the superior of his minor seminary" (Fr. Meyer to the Archbishop of Besançon, September 9, 1844). The project came to nothing.

¹Letter no. 1320.

* * *

In this letter to Archbishop Donnet, Father Chaminade gives his reflections on the two items Father Caillet had sent to him: the resignations of January 8, 1841, and of May 26, 1844.

1325. To Archbishop Donnet of Bordeaux

September 16, 1844, Bordeaux

Copy, Agmar

Monsignor,

While I was writing to Your Excellency about the proposition which the members of my council made to me concerning the government of the Society of Mary, I received from Father Caillet a dispatch containing my two resignations, so that I might “compare the one with the other and see how very evidently the second explains and confirms the first.”

Monsignor, I promised to send you my reflections about these two items in a few days. If since I wrote them I have always shouted and loudly protested against their use in a way that is injurious to the Society, I was speaking and writing only from memory (all the documents are in the hands of the council); today, when I am able to examine the writings themselves and confront them with the manner in which they suppose or say that I signed them, my conscience must shout and protest more loudly, that august witness of my obligations toward God and toward the Society of Mary of which God willed to make me the Founder. Let me come to the point, my reflections on the drafting of the documents of my two resignations; I will begin with the first.

1. First Reflection. The draft of my first resignation bears the date January 7, 1841; the circular which is called the resignation of my authority and powers into the hands of the Council is of the same date; now, it is impossible that these two acts could have taken place on the same date.

2. Second Reflection. However, these two documents had to bear the same date if they were to be mistaken one for the other, as the need arose, and as they did for a long time.

3. Third Reflection. The resignation which I gave and signed, while very sincere and true, did not have any preambles; it was pure and simple, as they say.¹ I knew only that they had made preambles; they read them to me very rapidly, and I recall—because I did not stop to think—that the resignation I signed had no preambles.

4. Fourth Reflection. After these and other reflections, I decided to send Brother Michaud, a professor at Sainte-Anne where I have been living since Father Roussel disappeared, to check these documents against the register of the council and everything in it that dealt with this matter. Twice I sent him on this mission; three times Brother Michaud reported that Father Caillet refused to let him see the register and said I was to be content with the transcript which Brother Bonnefoi, the Secretary General, had made at the time of the lawsuit involving Brother Auguste.²

5. Fifth and Last Reflection. Your Excellency, what am I to think of the validity of this first resignation, called “written,” obtained as a favor but maintained against an uninterrupted resistance, motivated by the conscience of a General, a Founder of three Orders united under the

¹Here Fr. Chaminade’s memory is at fault; his resignation has preambles (see letter no. 1239).

²It is false to say that we refused to show the register; on the contrary, we offered it to Bro. Michaud” (note of Fr. Caillet about Fr. Chaminade’s letter to the pope, November 13, 1845). However, the resignation was never entered into the register, as can be noted today. It was inserted into the register as a separate page on November 1, 1845 (Agmar 15.1.1).

same government? What am I to think of the ferocity (I do not believe this word is too strong) of the opposition of the council which pursued its plan of attack through denials, sophisms, pious subterfuges, and what they claim to be only gentle violence? I believe Father Caillet and Brother Clouzet have taken part in this for such a long time only through a monumental illusion; they have always shown by their usual behavior that they are true religious of the Society of Mary.

Now that they are sufficiently informed, I believe unhesitatingly that their actions, contrary to the spirit and to the religious government, are criminal. If I go too far, I ask Your Excellency to tell me so; I will take more lenient means of resistance.

There are three archbishops, Your Excellency, whom we must treat with respect and upon whom we like almost to depend. With the approach of the climactic moment³ which will decide everything, during the first days of October, they have separated their roles: Father Caillet will try to influence Your Excellency, Father Roussel the Archbishop of Albi, and Brother Clouzet the Archbishop of Besançon.

Monsignor, as I was ending, I received a letter for Father Caillet from the superior of one of our central houses. Will you be kind enough to give it to him? It will be more effective coming from Your Excellency than from me. The superior of another central house sent him a similar message, but directly. He seems to have paid no attention to it.¹

Your Excellency, I have also some serious reflections about the document of my second resignation; I will submit these to you in a third letter.

Your Excellency, I am your very humble and very obedient servant.²

* * *

Father Chaminade sends to the Archbishops of Albi and Besançon copies of his letters to the Archbishop of Bordeaux to inform them of the true nature of the conflict, about which they have heard only from Father Roussel and Brother Clouzet.

1326. To Archbishop Mathieu of Besançon

September 18, 1844, Bordeaux

Copy, Agmar

Your Excellency,

Pardon, a thousand pardons, for sending you yesterday two letters which I had the honor to write to the Most Reverend Archbishop of Bordeaux and omitting to enclose the letter I wrote to Fathers Chevaux and Fontaine, one of whom had to leave immediately for Besançon to present his respects to Your Excellency.

Your Excellency, you could pronounce definitively—it is thus agreed between me and my council—and consequently halt the convocation of a General Chapter which would consummate the evil we wish to avoid. Monsignor, it is not that I have a great deal of fear that a large majority of the superiors would go to Saint-Remy; no, but if even a small minority went drawn by the sophisms and by the influence which I had permitted my three Assistants to acquire, believing them to be of good faith, this minority could issue decrees and even begin a schism.

³The General Chapter.

¹A reference to Fr. Rothéa (see his letter after letter no. 1320-2) and to Fr. Meyer.

²“The section concerning Fr. Roussel was in the body of the letter I sent to the Archbishop of Bordeaux. I did not make a copy of it. I had it added to another copy where it had been deleted.” This postscript is dated September 17, 1844, and was listed as letter no. 1325-2.

They already have a Superior General who is very ready, Father Lalanne, already outside the Society, very hotheaded, etc. Furthermore, the greatest part of the assets are in the hands of Brother Clouzet, and he has taken no steps to guarantee them for the Society; this is a great temptation for Father Lalanne, who is insolvent.

Your Excellency, I do not ask you to solve the difficulty if, after having been surprised, you still do not see clearly, but by writing to Brother Clouzet to halt every form of convocation of a General Chapter, which is so irreligious and ill-advised.

Your Excellency, do you not think that my Assistants have been struck with that blindness which the prophet Isaiah calls “the spirit of giddiness” [Isaiah 19:14]? The strongest reason they give for their constant and stubborn opposition to their Superior and Founder is the second resignation, which is the confirmation of the first; and because I still resist, in spite of this second resignation, they say at Bordeaux and write it in the north that my mind is weakened into childishness because of my great age. But if this is the case, what value can be placed upon this second “written” resignation? On a resignation given by a broken-down old man who has become a child? To give it such importance, to make of it a major proof in such a serious matter, to dare to present it to the most illustrious heads of the Church of France. . . . I can see this only as the spirit of giddiness and adore the decrees of the Most High, while trembling for myself.

Your Excellency, I am your very humble and very obedient servant.

* * *

1326-2. To Archbishop de Jerphanion of Albi

September 17, 1844, Bordeaux
Original, Arch. of Archdiocese of Albi

Your Excellency,

I have just received a short letter from Father Prost which seems to have been written at someone’s suggestion. He says only that he awaits the decision. If it is the decision to convoke the General Chapter, there will be no further need of a decision. It will bring about a very great disturbance and could lead to a schism. The large majority of the superiors of the Society of Mary do not think this way. I am taking the liberty send to Your Excellency a copy of a second letter which I sent to the Archbishop of Bordeaux yesterday evening. I am also enclosing a copy of a letter which Father Rothéa, the superior of one of our central houses, wrote to Father Caillet, the first member of my council.

I am so pressed for time that I am unable actually to enclose other writings.

I am Your Excellency’s very humble and very obedient servant.

G.-Joseph Chaminade

P.S. I am enclosing a copy of a letter which I have the honor to send to the Archbishop of Besançon.

* * *

1326-3. To Archbishop Mathieu of Besançon

September 17, 1844, Bordeaux
Original, Arch. Of the Archbishop of Besançon

Your Excellency,

Given the importance which the members of my council attributed to my removal from office as Superior General since January 1, 1841, and almost immediately before the resignation which they asked me to make of my generalate and which they obtained thanks to the great indulgence which I have always displayed toward them whenever my conscience has permitted it, they became enthusiastically involved in their scheme. They are so occupied with it that they persist in saying that they did not hear my first resignation, which I gave according to the Constitutions. They admit, however, that I may have had the intention but that I abandoned it when I put my resignation in writing. And in virtue of this resignation, and especially because they have secured a second resignation which they wish to consider as a confirmation of the first, they behave in this manner. If I am not mistaken, Your Excellency, this is all that Brother Clouzet or those he has rallied to his cause has shown to Your Excellency, accompanying this with pious regret about my advanced age, etc., and other stratagems which to respectable prelates appear only to be perfectly proper reports. Thus, while Brother Clouzet utters his pious moans to Your Excellency, Father Roussel is doing the same to the Archbishop of Albi, and Father Caillet to our very respected prelate.

As soon as I noticed this, I wrote to the Archbishop of Bordeaux and sent to two of our priests at different establishments copies of the letter which I had the honor to write to him; but because I have reason to believe that either they were intercepted or that these priests were not at home, I am taking the liberty of addressing you directly. I am enclosing a second copy of a second letter which I sent to him last evening.

I am. . . .

P.S. The item about Father Roussel was a part of the letter which I sent to the Archbishop of Bordeaux. I do not have a copy. I have added it to another copy from which it had been deleted.

* * *

1326-4. To Fr. Léon Meyer

September 18, 1844, Bordeaux
Autograph, Agmar

My dear Son,

I have just time to send to you by this post (1) a copy of a second letter addressed to the Archbishop of Bordeaux, (2) a copy of the letter sent to Fathers Chevaux and Fontaine, and (3) a second letter to the Archbishop of Besançon because I failed to send the first one.

Please accept, my dear Son, my paternal embrace.

* * *

Here is the last extant business letter from Father Chaminade. It shows how even in the midst of this crisis, the Society of Mary continues to prosper and develop; it is proof of the keenness of mind which Father Chaminade always preserved, in spite of the opinions of the Assistants.

1327. To Bro. Joseph Enderlin, Courtefontaine

September 18, 1844, Bordeaux

Original, Agmar

My dear Son,

Let us bless Divine Providence and thank the Blessed Virgin for the development of our dear and beautiful Society. Like you, I am overcome with joy and consolation at seeing how much good we could do; but that which greatly tempers my joy and turns it almost to sorrow is to find that in spite of all our goodwill, it is not possible for us to grant all the demands which are addressed to me. It is even with difficulty that we can finally help Strasbourg. You know the importance of this place for us, and how long it has been offered to us.¹ Bavaria would take us to its bosom² and loudly calls to us. From all sides demands come to me to help various parts of France. May the Father of the family send numerous and fervent workers into his vineyard. Everywhere the harvest is ripe; let us then pray to the Master of the harvest to make it possible for us to gather it, and to harvest it all.

My dear Son, a great good could be done in Switzerland, where we are offered the direction of some normal schools. This would be the certain means to work solidly and efficaciously at the goals of the Society of Mary.

But now that we are on the eve of opening the new school year, how can we provide the necessary number of members to satisfy all the needs? No Society whatever could do this, especially in Switzerland where our religious, for the most part, would need to know German and to be exemplary in all respects. You understand this better than anyone.

My dear Son, at the close of your letter of September 11 you inform me that in the near future the honorable chairman of the Council of Education of the city of Fribourg intends to confide to the Society of Mary the direction of the canton's normal school. If it is accepted, I seem to see in the success of this proposition a means of responding to every situation and of serving every need, even more certainly and more efficiently than with all the means provided by the suggested multiplication of our establishments. You understand that it will not be possible for a long while yet to furnish the number of capable religious necessary to begin several normal and other schools, although by limiting ourselves it would be fairly easy to staff a single school.

Here is my idea. Either the proposition to confide to you the normal school of Fribourg is accepted, or it is not. (1) If it is, and they furnish you with an appropriate residence close enough to the school, you will inform the towns and the cantons who are asking for Brothers of Mary about our actual status, and you will point out to them that they can send to Fribourg candidates whom we will train, and once they have been sufficiently formed we will send them back so that they themselves may teach and direct a school. (2) If this proposal is rejected, if you have the necessary space you could open a private school in your own establishment and immediately announce its foundation. If you were cramped for space, you could announce that it would open as soon as a building can be obtained; in this latter case, it would be better to build than to buy, for ready-built houses are very expensive, and will you be able to find one suitably laid out and not too distant? As for the funds necessary to build, I have every reason to believe that you will find considerable resources in the zeal and generosity of well-to-do Catholics. Should it even become necessary to borrow money in order to make up for insufficient voluntary contributions, I hope there will be some charitable and pious people who could help you by lending without interest, without harm to their business or their families. You could cover these loans with the surplus you gain from the establishment. If your very worthy pastor and the archbishop agree to these plans, I do not doubt that everything will develop very happily. If you believe it is opportune, I myself will write to these men.

¹See letters no. 1130, no. 1247, etc.

²See letter no. 1324.

In this very useful establishment, you will receive the candidates who will be sent to you from everywhere. You can write about this to the State Counselor of the Valais. If they cannot provide you with a sufficient number of mature and somewhat educated students who need only to perfect themselves, to be trained to the good management of a school and to virtuous living, let them send you younger people who after several years could take the place of the first ones and fill the posts which would still be vacant.

My dear Son, you will not have the immediate administration of this establishment, but the religious who would be employed in this work would be subject to you, and you would have the overall supervision and would maintain contact with the superiors of the Society.

There still remains to make known the physical and moral qualities which those who would be admitted to the normal school should possess; this will be the topic of a special prospectus. At the present time it is not possible to make greater sacrifices; according to the proverb, “a person cannot give what he does not have.” You at least see—and you can inform others—the true interest I have in your dear Switzerland and my sincere desire to help the people there.

Chatel-Saint Denis could do as the other towns or cantons and send to Fribourg some young men who would be trained and who as soon as they were able would return to manage the communal schools of the town. As for the priest you write about, I can think of nothing better than to have him come to Bordeaux and to make his novitiate. You know, and you can tell him, that he cannot be received as a member of the Society until after a year and a day, according to the holy Canons.

Brother Raindre asked me for permission to spend several days with his mother in order to conclude some family business. You can make arrangements with Father Rothéa to permit him to leave, if there is no objection on your part; give him the time you believe will be necessary.

Please accept, my dear Son, the tender embraces of your old Father.

G.-Joseph Chaminade

* * *

Father Chaminade comes to accept the solution Father Meyer has suggested to him as the only possible one, and which at first he had rejected—that of a reelection by the Society of Mary. He foresees the possible opposition on the part of the council and replies in advance that the Assistants had thought of this from the very beginning (see letter no. 1329).

1328. To Archbishop Donnet of Bordeaux

September 19, 1844, Bordeaux

Copy, Agmar

Your Excellency,

I am surprised at your prolonged silence after my two letters. I attribute this to your great prudence, which sees the great dangers in taking sides either for or against.

I had already begun a third letter in which I was going to continue my reflections on the comparison between my two resignations, of which the second, according to Father Caillet, was the confirmation of the first. In fact, I have made very serious reflections which appear to me worthy of your attention in the eminent position to which Providence has called you. However, I thought it would be better to refrain from describing them to Your Excellency; otherwise, they would already be in your hands.

Yesterday Monsignor, on coming from my morning meditation, I believe I saw clearly and distinctly the very peaceful means by which to conclude happily all our differences without compromising each other. The Society of Mary will develop more vigor and scope to fulfill the plans of God on his institution and foundation, it seems likely, but to the detriment of the

miserable plans of the members of the council who are denaturing it. I have some good ideas on the subject which I will have the honor to communicate to Your Excellency when I have more time.

This completely peaceful expedient, Your Excellency, whether considered in itself or in all of its consequences, is that of my reelection. It is completely conformable to the Civil Statutes and to the religious Constitutions of the Society of Mary. This reelection needs no General Chapter; the scattered members can vote, but a two-thirds majority is needed.

When I sent my first circular to Alsace, the superior of the large novitiate at Ebersmunster wrote to me that he could bring peace to all by a reelection at the end of the annual retreat. In my reply I expressed a great repugnance to a reelection. In fact, I resigned quite freely and sincerely so that another General might replace me. Moreover, I am four years older, and some people in Bordeaux might actually believe what the members of my council have been spreading abroad confidentially, that the love of a superior office dominates me, etc.

Thanks to divine help, I believe I am above all these human considerations. I place myself entirely in the hands of Jesus and Mary, that they might dispose of me according to their good pleasure. What a happiness to die humiliated and despised in the minds of others for the love of the Divine Crucified!

Will the members of my Council say that this is not possible? Then they would be thinking differently than they did at the beginning of the matter which is presently absorbing our attention. I read in one of the confidential letters to the Mother General of the Daughters of Mary, "I am certain that if the Good Father is willing, he is the one who will be elected" (Bordeaux, January 14, 1841).

I am. . . .

P.S. I have stated several times in writing that the members of my council have no grounds on which to attack me. I am surprised that they have not shown any, and that no one has remarked about this. My resignation could not be one for them.

* * *

Archbishop Donnet does not reply to the letters of Father Chaminade. With M. Faye and the council, he takes the same stand—that is, the literal interpretation of a written document. The 5th paragraph of the letter of September 16 presents briefly and clearly the arguments of the council in favor of the validity of the written resignation of 1841, which was confirmed, in a way, by the second resignation. Father Chaminade explains why he consents finally to a reelection: the increased influence of the opposition. On the subject of his correspondent, Fr. Léon Meyer, here is what Father Lebon writes in Les dernières années du B. P. Chaminade, page 113.

Of all the actors we meet in the drama, the latter [Father Meyer] was the one who best understood the situation. His strong good sense, his spirit of faith, did not falter in the midst of difficulties, although sometimes he did not entirely understand the position taken by Father Chaminade and the consequent demands made by his conscience. The correspondence between these two souls, so worthy of each other, throws a precious light on the true interpretation of the difficulties of these last years, just as very frequently the letters of Father Meyer to the Assistants give the true indication of what should have been done and of what would have been done if Providence, in its highest wisdom, had not permitted misunderstandings to perpetuate themselves in spite of all efforts.

1329. To Fr. Léon Meyer, Ebersmunster

September 19, 1844, Bordeaux

Autograph, Agmar

My dear Son,

Only on September 20¹ at the morning meditation did I see clearly that in the actual condition of the Society, as Founder I must permit myself to be reelected Superior General and at the same time take you as Assistant of Zeal; that we two would reorganize the Administration; that keeping the heads of the establishments for the time being, we would work at the necessary replacements; and that you should seek with the eyes of faith the person most proper, or the least improper, to replace you at the novitiate of Ebersmunster in the present situation of the Society. You know the Society very well, both the north and the south but especially the north and the northeast of France. It is up to you to have a good rapport with all your colleagues, the priests of the Society of Mary, as we have already said. I presume that at this time Father Fontaine is preaching your retreat, or that he will do so after the one at Courtefontaine.

The coalition weighs and coordinates its moves admirably toward its goal; the spirit of Satan, changed into a spirit of light, has been allowed extensive concessions by God. "I will put enmity between you and woman, etc." [Genesis 3:15]. Fathers Fontaine and Chevaux, who had been informed of almost nothing, were surprised by the secret dealings of Brother Clouzet with the Archbishop of Besançon; but I believe they are intrinsically good men, and they need only to know what has happened and what is to be done.

Father Rothéa has written me a very good letter; he defended our cause as best he could before the Archbishop of Besançon, knowing that Brother Clouzet had taken advantage of the latter's good faith. Along with the letter there was a longer one, unsealed, for Father Caillet; I will send you a copy. The overall tone was good. I would have preferred that there would have been no reference to personalities; we must absolutely keep these out of our discussions. At the time, I was writing my second letter to the Archbishop of Bordeaux, of which you must have received a copy. I thought it was advisable to ask His Excellency to pass it on to Father Caillet; I have no reason to believe that my request was granted.

The Archbishop of Bordeaux has not replied to anything I have told him in my two letters, and if he has spoken to Father Caillet, it was probably to tell him to expedite the preparations for a prompt convocation of a General Chapter in order to bring an end to the entire matter.

I have reason to believe that the archbishop is going along with the members of my council, of whom the counselor [M. Faye], especially in the presence of Father Roussel, is also ordinarily the counselor of the archbishop in civil matters. What is this understanding? Wanting to see in a document only what it says literally? Again, I resigned according to the Constitutions; then to be obliging, I consented for it to be written purely and simply—that is, without the reservation given by the Constitutions.¹ Hence the endless argument, "Why did you give your resignation in writing? Such a resignation supposes that you have changed your mind; that you abdicated freely and voluntarily. You have made a second which confirms the first. You are losing your mind. You are falling into dotage because of your great age! Finally, what is true is always true, can only be true. It is true that you have given us your resignation in writing. If that is what you wanted, then it is true that you were not forced, etc.," and they hold fast to this very rigorously. The most telling objections count for nothing; this is what I reported to the Archbishop of Besançon, "the spirit of giddiness."

¹Evidently an erroneous date; read September 18 (see letter no. 1331).

¹According to article 482 of the Constitutions, that is, with the reservation of designating his successor.

That is what made me decide on a reelection, my dear Son, although I am intrinsically authorized to resume my functions, having resigned them under protests which were motivated by the abuses of my Assistants in the offices which I confided to them. However, because of the prestige enjoyed by my qualified opponents, it is better to have a reelection. We must have a well-written proclamation.

I embrace you very tenderly.

G.-Joseph Chaminade

* * *

Meanwhile, Father Roussel continues his work at Réalmont. He attracts some young men from Brusque. In the district of Aveyron and with the help of the pastor, Father Alverne, the Society of Mary had founded a school for the purpose of recruitment; Bro. Bernard Laugeay became its director, and he was not slow in finding postulants.

1330. To Archbishop de Jerphanion of Albi

September 20, 1844, Bordeaux

Copy, Agmar

Your Excellency,

I had found a safe way to correspond with Father Prost, and I was going to use it to remove him from Réalmont so his presence would not appear to sanction the illegal actions of Father Roussel. I have reason to believe he has attracted to Réalmont all the young men of Brusque whom Brother Laugeay was to bring to Bordeaux; it would have been child's play for him to abuse the good faith of the worthy Father Alverne, the founder of the establishment. I have reason to believe he will attract to Réalmont as many of our religious from the houses in the south as he is able, that he will hold the annual retreat there, and then he will leave with the heads of our houses in order to go to the General Chapter, etc.

The Lord, having been pleased to suggest to me a peaceful means of preventing this storm which threatens to destroy the Society or to expose it to a terrible schism, urged me to write immediately to the Archbishop of Bordeaux; I am sending you a copy of this letter. I will wait a few days before writing to Father Prost.

It is my earnest desire, Your Excellency, that you should recognize the truth behind the facts, and how the Society of Mary is at risk of being changed, which would be worse than if it were dissolved; it will certainly be seriously exposed to schism.

I am. . . .

* * *

There is documentation to strengthen the validity of the first (oral) resignation.

1330-2. To Archbishop de Jerphanion of Albi

September 22, 1844, Bordeaux

Copy, Agmar

My last letter to Your Excellency had already been mailed when I received your second reply, dated September 18. As your first, I have no other knowledge of it than by the one to which I have the honor to reply. If Your Excellency sent it to me enclosed with the one to the Archbishop of Bordeaux, I am not surprised that I have not yet received it.

I had the honor to send you yesterday, without any examination or discussion, my explanation of a peaceful means to end our dilemma. I have good reason to believe that this came

as an inspiration from God. I have given myself untold pains and trouble in order to suppress certain very serious abuses which only a Founder can suppress, and which have been the chief motive for my lively and stubborn resistance to a false interpretation of what has been called my two written resignations. But to what end? Because these two resignations have been preceded by another, non-written resignation, but one that is entirely conformable to the Constitutions of the Society of Mary, which make no mention of a written resignation. Providence has contrived the circumstances in order to prove the evident authenticity of this first resignation, the only one which my conscience will admit. The circumstances are such that my Assistants, in denying them, are perceived as liars and traitors.

Your Excellency, I was about to go into the details of my allegations and assertions about these two resignations in order to reply satisfactorily to your letter of September 18, but I wish you to receive this reply by return mail. I will continue it before long.

I have had the honor to send you two selections from the letters of two superiors of central houses which I have just received. At this very moment I have received a letter from Brother Laugeay at Réalmont, which I have not had the time to open.

I am. . . .

* * *

Father Chaminade continues to plan for the future, to anticipate the new General Administration. He places his hope on the intervention of the Archbishop of Besançon. He asks his correspondent to excuse the “strident” tone of his letters, even to the prelate, for he believed he has had to cry out, “perhaps too loudly for some.”

1331. To Fr. Léon Meyer, Ebersmunster

September 23, 1844, Bordeaux

Autograph, Agmar

My dear Son,

I read with interest and pleasure your letter of September 18. By this time you must have received the one I wrote to you on September 19, although I dated it September 20 by mistake.

On the following day, that is September 20, I believed I should write especially to the Archbishop of Bordeaux and then send copies of this letter to the Archbishops of Albi and Besançon, to you, and perhaps to Father Rothéa. In this letter, which is like a circular, I speak only of my reelection in order to save time because, in fact, it would settle all discussions and disputes; but it would be only an imperfect answer to the unhappy consequences, and especially to certain irregularities which exist among the very members of the General Administration.

My physical weakness must be bolstered by a strong and active Head of Zeal, such as you, and this very soon. If at the same time another good religious is named as Head of Instruction, such as Father Fontaine if he could be replaced effectively at Saint-Remy—careful, for I say “effectively” in all these changes—you must come to an agreement with the Archbishop of Besançon because he is the person who would like to end it all. The minutes must be kept flawlessly. Present my respectful homage to the archbishop; all my trust is in him. If he is not pleased with what I have written in my defense, tell him I have the means to banish summarily all the evil effects which my writings could have; that they are only the outcries, perhaps too loud for some, especially for His Excellency, but which I believed it was my duty in conscience to raise, seeing that in a few days the Society of Mary would no longer be what the Holy See had intended it to be when it gave its approbation. I can give clear and authentic reasons for what I say.

I am sending you four obediences for Strasbourg; you are to inscribe the name of those to whom you will give them; the fifth I am sending directly to your brother at Courtefontaine.

Kindly tell Brother Fridblatt that I have received his letter, that it is very satisfactory, and that until this matter is settled he is to receive orders from Father Chevaux unless they are contrary to the matter itself. In addition, I will write to him as soon as possible.

Be sure to come to an understanding with Fathers Rothéa and Perrodin. I cannot add anything before this post. I embrace you tenderly, my dear Son.

G.-Joseph Chaminade

* * *

However, the Archbishop of Bordeaux notified Father Chaminade in a letter of “three lines” that he had ordered Father Caillet to convoke a General Chapter. Here is Father Chaminade’s reply to Archbishop Donnet, which he then relayed to the Archbishop of Besançon (letter no. 1333), to the Archbishop of Albi (letter no. 1335), and to Father Meyer (letter no. 1334). Father Chaminade insists that he has always been careful not to talk about people. Everything he said about the Assistants was dictated by circumstances and necessity.

1332. To Archbishop Donnet of Bordeaux

September 24, 1844, Bordeaux

Copy, Agmar

Your Excellency,

It was only about five o’clock yesterday evening that I received your letter of September 21 here at Sainte-Anne.

Your Excellency has judged it proper to order Father Caillet to convoke a General Chapter, based upon the secret communication which he made to you about the discussions which I had with my council almost four years ago, first of all about my original resignation which they call “written.” In obedience to your very respectable orders, Father Caillet writes circulars to the south and to the north of France in order to prepare the superiors of the central houses and the heads of small establishments to come to a General Chapter at the first signal (Saint-Remy had been chosen a long while before).

Since the severance-provoking letter of last July 26,¹ a General Chapter convoked in this manner will become the moral tomb of the Society of Mary. The Institute of the Daughters of Mary and its Third Order Regular would separate themselves from the Society of Mary by severing relationships with its General Administration, in which the two Orders were united. I should not mention here that the Founder of the three religious Orders also finds his moral death there because for some time now he has offered this sacrifice to God.

What am I to do, Your Excellency, in this situation? I seem to hear you reply, “Draw up a strong and logical statement in which you do not attack the morality of the members of your council.” What! To attack the morality of the entire council, which has become the General Administration of the entire Society! Is this not to destroy the Society itself? Is this not to build with one hand and to destroy with the other? Furthermore, how shameful for religion if such a thing were to be spread abroad! Your Excellency, I foresaw these two evils before taking up my pen to write my first letter about the situation; I even saw others, and I would be very guilty if I did not have a duty toward religion to oppose these evils.

“To draw up a strong and reasonable statement in which I do not attack the morality of the members of my council?” Monsignor, judging from the agitation which I hear is manifest in Father Caillet, and from the long and frequent interviews he has had with M. Faye, knowing that he would try to catch me off guard, that he would consult and ask for permissions which for him

¹ Letter of Fr. Caillet convoking a General Chapter.

become orders, I began a position paper in the style which I believe Your Excellency would desire. This abridged document was progressing satisfactorily but was not finished when Father Caillet informed me that he had received orders from Your Excellency,² and that in these cases, he acted always in obedience to Your Excellency. Monsignor, could I continue that memorandum? If a man who is completely submissive to his superior discovers a house full of combustible material on fire, should he let the fire spread and not call for help and make efforts to put out the fire at the very beginning before going to ask permission of his superior? Here there was not a question of a material house, but of hundreds of spiritual houses worth incomparably more than the most beautiful palace. I could put out the fire only by writing immediately to Your Excellency and by calling upon the respectable prelates who have a great interest in supporting the Society.

“Yes,” Your Excellency could reply, “but should you not have avoided personalities, and what personalities?” Monsignor, I did not believe so. I had to take those precise moral precautions which would prevent a harmful incident.

If I established the true reasons for my continual resistance since the first days of January 1841 until the present, inclusive, without any variation even in what they called my “second resignation,” I believed it was my duty to attack the members of my council. Imagine! When I was resigning in good faith according to the Constitutions, there was a plan by the members of my council to seize this opportunity to prevent me from having any influence, no more than if I were physically dead, in all temporal business (that is to say, religiously directed; the distinction has already been made). Imagine! Father Roussel was the prime reason for my energetic resistance; with this I have said almost everything’

to think that I believed Father Caillet to be blameworthy for supporting wholeheartedly Father Roussel, since he was more than sufficiently informed about the man;

to think that Brother Clouzet, already informed, was wrong to follow the example of Father Caillet because for a long time he was no longer carried along by the dynamism of the group, but he allowed himself to be carried away.

Your Excellency, if I have said more than is necessary in my situation, or rather in the lamentable state of our important concern, I am ready to apologize very humbly to you, for I believe that I am fallible, perhaps more so than any other person, in the interpretation of the obligations which my conscience imposes upon me. Everything comes down to this, Your Excellency—to know if it is a duty of conscience to speak to you about the members of my council as I have done, and if I have taken all the precautions which I should have.

The problem, the entire problem, is treated sophistically; members of my council have taken a position based upon reason alone, although they are Christians and religious. Thanks to the Divine Mercy, I have relied of course on reason, but on reason illumined by faith; this is the essential difference between the natural and the supernatural states. Very few people are capable of recognizing this type of sophism, especially when it is adroitly and uninterruptedly pursued. I have pointed this out many times to the members of my council and especially to their personal counselor, M. Faye. They have found it necessary to have me considered as a decrepit old man whose reason has been weakened almost to childishness.

Your Excellency, what lesson should be drawn from this brief account? It is that in general, a person does not judge for or against a question except on the authority, the insight—in a word, on the reputation—of a deserving person.

And what is the usual argument Father Caillet uses with me? Oh! If you only knew, Your Excellency, how he has used it at times! But I must remain quiet; my conscience commands this.

² In the interview of July 30, 1844.

Without pursuing this any further, Your Excellency, was it not upon the qualifications of the members of the council, on the esteem they had acquired in the eyes of Your Excellency, especially Father Caillet, that you based not only the situation itself, but the prompt convocation of a General Chapter? You know the physical incapacity of the poor old man who has the honor to address you, the poor opinion of him held by some very respectable people who had the happiness to be near you and to deserve your confidence even before you came to the See of Bordeaux. I believe, Monsignor, that my conscience was not mistaken when it revealed that it was my duty to speak to you about the members of my council in the way I did; moreover, I had copies made only for the Archbishops of Albi and Besançon, and the priests of the Society who were to deliver them are worthy of all confidence. I have imposed upon my copyist the most inviolable and the most extensive secrecy about the contents.

I am. . . .

P.S. I am enclosing the reports I have just received from two heads of central houses about the situation of the Society. They needed neither my circular nor the instructions which they received later. The attitude of the Society in general is good. May God be pleased to strengthen it and to consolidate it. I have sent five obediences to exceptional members destined for our house in Strasbourg.

* * *

1333. To Archbishop Mathieu of Besançon

September 25, 1844, Bordeaux

Copy, Agmar

Your Excellency,

I am taking the liberty of sending you a copy of a new letter which I have just written to the Archbishop of Bordeaux. You will see that this letter is only a prompt reply to his answer to my first letter. His Excellency should have had my third, in which I accept my reelection as a sacrifice which will not, however, prevent me from resigning after I have corrected the serious abuses which are rampant in the General Administration; and I have reason to believe that God will accept the religious whom I choose as my successor.

In his answer, the Archbishop of Bordeaux seems to base everything on reason alone; he urges me to charity and justice, but he does not decide anything. In the natural order I suppose he is right, for he can hardly see in me more than a man who is a poor representative of a newborn Society but which, in spite of so many hardships, is bound to spread widely and to do great good. If I seem to talk nonsense, this is because I am convinced that the Society of Mary will not do any true good for religion unless faith directs the exterior means used by reason. Most certainly reason alone will never approve the spirit of real poverty, as the history of the older religious Orders can testify. Why do I protest as loudly as I can, Your Excellency? Because I see the Society headed for destruction; it has been corrupted. It is no longer the Society which was approved by the Holy See. What people can say against me—and a great deal has been said—is unimportant, providing my three Orders do not lose the spirit of practical faith. Alas! There is also a fourth which I did not believe needed approval and which would be compromised—it is the Miséricorde.

I am writing to Father Meyer to have a complete understanding with Your Excellency.

I am. . . .

* * *

1334. To Fr. Léon Meyer, Ebersmunster

September 25, 1844, Bordeaux

Autograph, Agmar

My dear Son,

I am sending you a copy of a letter I wrote yesterday evening to the Archbishop of Bordeaux, and by the same post I am sending a copy to the Archbishop of Besançon; in my short forwarding letter, a copy of which is also enclosed, I briefly analyze or comment, as you wish, upon the letter of the Archbishop of Bordeaux.

Have an understanding with the Archbishop of Besançon; I believe justice will guide his actions, but he will not act without the support of the priests of the Society, represented there by you. Be sure to tell him that for all things to run smoothly, I wish you to become Head of Zeal and Father Fontaine Head of Instruction. I hope that in the name of Jesus and under the protection of Mary, everything will go well.

I embrace you tenderly. I embrace you paternally as a spiritual Father does a Son who is the support of his numerous family.

G.-Joseph Chaminade

* * *

1335. To Archbishop de Jerphanion of Albi

September 26, 1844, Bordeaux

Copy, Agmar

Your Excellency,

Pardon me for bothering you with such long letters at such short intervals. Pardon because of your cherished and very interesting establishment at Réalmont, founded on high religious ideals and so worthy of your pastoral solicitude. Can I allow in conscience for it to be governed by motives that are too human, to say the least? Especially, can I allow secret worms to work their silent but certain corruption?¹

Your Excellency is astonished, and you can hardly believe that I can speak so coolly, that I speak to you so reasonably, especially after having had some interviews with Father Roussel. What is to be done, you might well ask? Write to the Archbishop of Bordeaux? That would be the height of prudence. The archbishop has been so discreet that he told me nothing about him, but he did reassure Father Caillet about the secret orders he had received from him.

The Archbishop of Bordeaux has finally written me a short letter, to which I replied immediately. I am taking the liberty of sending you a copy of my letter to him. I will write to him only when he takes the initiative.

I do not intend to struggle against the Archbishop of Bordeaux or against any prelate of the Catholic Church. I have no other intention but to bring to their knowledge the facts which could be very harmful to the Society of Mary, in which they seemed to take interest for the good of religion.

I am. . . .

* * *

¹ Fr. Chaminade had very good reason to fear this corruption.

Father Chaminade discusses the new foundation at Strasbourg, but he passes a precise and just judgment on the attitude of Father Caillet. He states that Father Caillet is the key person in the situation; he is the one who follows Father Roussel and in turn draws with him Brother Clouzet. Brother Clouzet protests at the word “treason” hurled by Father Chaminade, but he easily believes in the weakness of mind which Fathers Roussel and Caillet attribute to Father Chaminade.

1336. To Fr. Jean Chevaux, Saint-Remy

September 27, 1844, Bordeaux

Original, Agmar

My dear Son,

I have just received your letter of September 21. The remarks you make about assigning the young Brother Benoît Meyer to Strasbourg are now irrelevant because I have sent the five obediences which Father Meyer of Ebersmunster requested. When I sent young Brother Benoît his obedience, I told him he would have the opportunity to better prepare himself for ordination at Christmastime. I do not see anything to fear because of his youth. The Board of Education of Strasbourg itself asked for him and refused Father Rothéa, who had been suggested. We will also need to discuss the transfer of Brother Girardet; we will have time to do so, which I do not have at the moment.

As for the lamentable accident which happened at Saint-Remy, we must adore the designs of Providence; I exhort you to do this, my dear Son.¹

Brother Clouzet has manifested to me the most favorable and the most Christian attitude, as well as the desire to cooperate. I will not be surprised to see him continue in these sentiments. This even gives weight to all of these overtures. But he has a very strong tendency to follow the example of Father Caillet, and consequently the sophisms of Father Caillet’s counsel² which are those of Father Roussel, although he hides this tendency and this strong attraction to sophistry. Father Caillet intends to follow Father Roussel and his counsel in spite of what he knows about them. I have revealed and proved—I am always the one who is proving—that Father Caillet acts in a criminal fashion when he influences Brother Clouzet by his example; I do not have time to give here the proofs which I have given to the archbishop. Brother Clouzet can be more open, now that he knows that the Archbishop of Besançon has decided to ask for his resignation.³

I have been—I have said this for almost four years—and I still am disposed to cooperate with my Assistants, as I could have done by my first resignation according to the Constitutions; this will not destroy the strict obligation I have to follow my conscience. In spite of all the evidence, they wish to hold to the resignation which they call “written” and which was given as a favor. Is this not already the beginning, if not the full fruition, of the treason? But it is there, in spite of everything. Brother Clouzet bridles at the word “treason,” which I mentioned in a friendly and paternal manner in order to withdraw him from it. It was a mortal dart which I drove into his heart! In fact, I believe he has a horror of the word. He has a beautiful soul. But how powerful is the example of Father Caillet and of Father Roussel, to make him believe in my dotage, in my . . . etc.!

Father Caillet’s notions of conscience as expressed in his proclamations and writings are false, erroneous. They are contrary to the doctrine of Saint Paul and even of Jesus in the Gospels. I tried to prove this to him; he told me to my face that I did not understand Saint Paul, that he believed the Gospel but not my interpretation of it, etc.

¹ See the end of letter no. 1337.

² M. Faye.

³ See letter no. 1326.

Brother Clouzet has consulted privately with the Archbishop of Besançon and has given him my circulars, which are not meant to prove the facts which I state. The archbishop must have believed the statements made by Brother Clouzet because of the confidence His Excellency has always had in him. It was very wrong of Brother Clouzet to consult him only on his own interpretation and not wait for my position paper as had been agreed, and to wish to compromise the prudence and the authority of the archbishop. What can I say, my dear Son, when I see my three Assistants using the same duplicity, Father Caillet in Bordeaux, Father Roussel in Albi, and Brother Clouzet in Besançon!

You tremble, my dear Son. No doubt it is very permissible for you to tremble at the sight of the terrible judgments of God who would allow the triumph of my three Assistants in some matters and then begin a schism. Not being able to hold a General Chapter, it seems they take the means to cause a schism in another manner; I already have serious proof of this. Will God permit it? I do not believe so, because of God's goodness and mercy. Why does he want me to issue these warnings?

As for you, my dear Son, do not fear to adhere to the truth; die rather than abandon it. Please accept, my dear Son, my fatherly embrace.

G.-Joseph Chaminade

P.S. You will find enclosed a copy of my last letter to the Archbishop of Bordeaux; I have just begun another one.

* * *

For the time being, Father Chaminade has succeeded in preventing a General Chapter, but he begins to fear a schism. This gives rise to a new series of letters which insist upon the necessity of faith and fidelity to conscience. The first discusses the differences between conscience as a natural light and supernatural conscience illumined by faith. Practical faith constitutes the spirit of the Society of Mary.

1337. To Archbishop Donnet of Bordeaux

September 27, 1844, Bordeaux

Copy, Arch. of the Archbishop of Bordeaux

Your Excellency,

Up to the present time I believed I had satisfied the obligations of my conscience by the letters which I had the honor to write to you, and by sharing them only with the respectable prelates of Albi and Besançon who had, it seemed to me, a great interest in the serious question which the three members of my council have raised so irreligiously against me. Several other prelates, no less respectable, also are interested in this question, such as those of Strasbourg and Saint-Claude. The Archbishop of Besançon realized this, and he has informed the Bishop of Strasbourg of everything, as Your Excellency already knows according to the report I have received. As for the Bishop of Saint-Claude, I thought it was better to remain silent until now because Father Roussel is in his diocese.

In my letters to Your Excellency, I said I believed I had fulfilled all of the obligations of my conscience. I reduced these to two—first, to prevent the entry of false doctrine into the General Administration of the Society of Mary, an erroneous doctrine which would denature the spirit of practical faith. It is this spirit of practical faith which the Holy See endorsed when it approved the Society of Mary. Without this spirit, the Society can be of little use to the Church.

The Society of Mary would deteriorate very quickly if its General Administration were guided by another spirit, even without saying so expressly. Who does not see, who does not understand that the Administration's constant opposition to my persevering and unvarying

resistance is based completely upon human reason? In all their written or oral arguments, is there any glimmer of light which comes from God through revelation? True, the General Administration very frequently used the word “conscience,” which I use habitually; but in spite of my repeated requests, I have never been able to elicit from Father Caillet what he means when he speaks to me about conscience. I have often remarked to him, as well as to his adviser M. Faye, that it is absurd that on the same topic and the same question, his conscience would be “for” and mine “against,” or the reverse. Finally, not too long ago he wrote to me that “each person has his own conscience,” and for proof he gave me the example of Saint Paul who had his conscience, and then remarked that there was the conscience of those who refused to eat the meat bought at the market which had been offered to idols [see 1 Corinthians 10:25-29]. He respected my conscience, but in return I was to respect his. I did not think I needed to reply to these absurdities. I would have done so because of the tender devotedness which I have for him, but I did not have time; or rather, if I had not known from him or from others that he wanted no explanation from me and that he had no confidence in me.

However, Monsignor, I have never believed Father Caillet was without a conscience, and even a very delicate conscience. A little reflection led me to solve the problem which I proposed to him. We distinguish two kinds of divine law, one called “natural law” which God has placed in us at creation, and the other which God gave to us in revealing himself to us. Each of these laws has its corresponding conscience, a very real but natural conscience, and a supernatural conscience added to the natural as a gift of grace. The Christian, the religious, and with all the more reason a member of the Society of Mary are in a supernatural state; no doubt they are obliged to guide themselves by reason, but reason illumined by the far superior light of faith.

Reason is only a small flame which God has placed in us when he created us in order to make us according to his image and likeness, with the help of conscience. However, faith is an actual and immediate participation in the supreme intellect, which prompted the Holy Spirit to say, “My thoughts are not your thoughts” [Isaiah 55:8].

That a religious, a member of the Society of Mary, could think and act in accordance with such a system! What an iniquity! Has the opposition not been following this system for almost four years?

* * *

Father Chaminade solicits the intervention of the Archbishop of Albi to prevent a schism and gives him the reasons he fears a schism. Referring to the purchase of “one of the largest and most magnificent mansions in the city” by Father Caillet, Father Chaminade seems to be the victim of some misunderstood statement. He orders Father Roussel to return to Bordeaux.

1337-2. To Archbishop de Jerphanion of Albi

September 28, 1844, Bordeaux

Copy, Agmar

Your Excellency,

It appears very evident to me that my three Assistants, the members of my council, are about to perpetuate a schism which will be very harmful to the Church and which will greatly hurt the Society of Mary. The evidence has come to me (1) in a very long letter which Brother Bresson received from Brother Laugeay, who is at Réalmont with all his small group; it is evident that it was prompted by Father Roussel. (2) Here, by the edginess of Father Caillet. There is a question of buying one of the largest and most magnificent mansions in the city; already they had almost completed the purchase of a very large house needed to lodge the General Administration.

I had the purchase stopped. (3) By all the care which they take to win over the houses in the south. And (4) by all the maneuvering, which would take too long to tell and time is too precious to shout “Fire!” before it has started.

I am also sending you, Your Excellency, only a portion of a letter which I had wanted to send first to the Archbishop of Bordeaux, as I did the others; but that will be time wasted, to say the least. I am sending it to you first of all and in complete confidence; excuse the mistakes. I have set it aside in order to write this one to you. Excuse the faults of style which may be found here; I have not even reread this.

I ask you, Monsignor, to have an understanding with the Archbishop of Besançon. Archbishop Mathieu had arranged with the priests of the Society of Mary who could go to the archbishop’s house and demand the resignation of Brother Clouzet. Your Excellency has as much reason to demand this of Father Roussel. The letter written by Brother Laugeay will give you the opportunity; the person who asks for himself asks unworthily. He is no longer needed at Réalmont; let him come to Bordeaux and be with his Superior, whom he should not have left without permission, etc.

The very day on which I wrote my last letter to you, through the Archbishop of Bordeaux I received the one you sent me dated September 7. I should not make any reflection other than that which I made to him in my second letter, of which I had the honor of sending you a copy.

I am. . . .

* * *

A letter from Bro. Dominique Clouzet to Father Chaminade clarifies the history of this period. He describes how the situation of the Society of Mary in the north appears to him. He discusses the personnel destined for Strasbourg. He offers his resignation, and he wishes at all costs to avoid recourse to Rome. He describes the accident to which Father Chaminade alludes in his letter to Father Chevaux (no. 1336).

Where are we going with all our divisions? To our inevitable destruction. Yes, we are destroying the Society of Mary which has cost us all so much. Good God! What chaos! To have an exact idea of this mess, just think of the men to whom you gave a mission, not indeed to bring about disorder. That certainly was not your intention, but you know Fathers Meyer and Rothéa. . . . Good God! What men! Someone has written from Courtefontaine that Father Meyer the elder is preparing to carry out some project, which he has been nursing for some time, to make an independent province of Alsace, and he says that under his government everything will go better. To this end he would call his brother to Strasbourg and would gradually remove all the French from Alsace, Brother Gaussens, etc. . . . I can only report this as a rumor, which may be very exaggerated, but it should not be discounted in the interests of the Society. Father Rothéa had been destined for Strasbourg because of his diplomas—but Father Meyer is moving heaven and earth so he will not go; he fears the competition! How miserably human all this is! He argues that the brothers at Strasbourg will be unwilling to, etc. . . . The younger Meyer wrote to Father Chevaux a few days before that he dreads Strasbourg where he cannot fittingly prepare himself for the priesthood; that he would prefer to be at Courtefontaine or near you, Good Father, for that preparation. These are strong reasons, and a good priest for the Society of Mary could have far-reaching effects. In the second place, if Fathers Meyer and Rothéa leave Courtefontaine, the novitiate and the boarding school will necessarily be the losers. Courtefontaine is one of our most important establishments because of the novitiate, the boarding school, and the parish; it is a difficult assignment.

You have been told, Good Father, that there was a meeting of our priests at the archbishop’s residence to discuss our sad discord. I did not wish to be present in order not to hinder the discussion, for I desire above all to know the will of God and to follow it. But alas! Hardly any progress was made. It was decided that we were to tender our

resignations, or as someone suggested, deposit them into the hands of the Reverend Archbishops, I into those of the Ordinary of Besançon, who would forward it to the Archbishop of Bordeaux, into whose hands my two colleagues would already have placed theirs; that these men would bring their proposals to you, and if they were not accepted the question would be sent to the Roman court. In the actual state of things, the Archbishop of Besançon said the Roman court must decide, etc. This thought terrifies me, Good Father, for it would take a year before we had a reply from Rome, and in the meantime, what would become of us? The archbishop says we can operate as we have done for the past three years, but this is impossible . . . the spirit of factions, the hotheads— in a word, emotions would grow worse and disorder would reign, for already no one knows whom to obey. Again, once it is necessary to go to Rome we are doomed, and our works with us.

But is there no way to stop this among ourselves without troubling the Reverend Archbishops with all these problems! Personally, I would prefer that there be some type of irregularity in the manner than lose our fine works; between two evils it seems to me that the lesser should always be chosen. Please tell me, Good Father, what you want of me, and if I can reconcile it with my conscience, you know how happy I would be to grant it. I have not yet sent in my resignation; it was waiting for your reply before acting. I can receive that within eight days. Do not worry, Good Father, I have received the circulars and the signatures of Father Caillet and Father Roussel for the convocation of the General Chapter. I received the forms a month ago, but I will not send them on until you agree with us; and it always seems to me that there is a possibility of coming to an understanding without wounding the conscience of anyone. You better than anyone can point out the means. I am writing to Father Caillet along these lines.

Three days ago we had a serious accident; a beam of poor quality broke at the mill, two of our good religious suffered a broken leg, and a mason received a head wound, but all are doing well; it is a miracle that they were not killed.

This, Venerable Good Father, is from your eldest son, who has suffered martyrdom these past three months because of all these divisions which are detrimental to our works (September 30, 1844; Agmar 2.6.1338).

* * *

In this reply to Brother Clouzet we see the humility of Father Chaminade. He again rejects the decision of Archbishop Donnet to allow Father Caillet to proceed because His Excellency has taken into account the words of Father Caillet and does not listen to Father Chaminade.

1338. To Bro. Dominique Clouzet, Saint-Remy

September 30, 1844, Bordeaux

Copy, Arch. of the Archbishop of Besançon

My dear Son,

You are quite right to believe that I want no discord to follow our discussions. In writing to Fr. Léon Meyer and Father Rothéa I had no one in mind, considered as people, but as superiors of the two central houses in the north; both have an authentic and regular foundation. My confidence is more in the Providence of God than in the quality of the men; this does not mean, however, that a person should close his eyes to the greater or lesser defects of human beings.

I have not forgotten that Saint-Remy is considered by us to be a central house, and rightly so; actually, we never thought it necessary to erect it as such solemnly and authentically. By what authority, therefore, does Father Chevaux give orders to Father Rothéa to go to Strasbourg in

order to open the proposed establishment? True, Strasbourg is in the territory of his province; but his title of provincial gives him authority only over the people in his territory, whether they are Alsations or not, but legitimately placed elsewhere.

Moreover, my dear Son, it is only with great trepidation that I write to Saint-Remy because for almost four years now, you have believed your conscience which said that you are my opponent. I do not say my personal opponent, but the opponent to the authority which I have only from God; and you believe in your heart and conscience that you can and should fight against this authority through the faults and incompetence which you see in me, very confident that I cannot bear up under this trial. I recall perfectly having answered this accusation in the full council, that I recognized in myself all the faults and incompetence which anyone can believe and even greater and more numerous ones, but that God could have chosen just such a one in order to have all the glory for the foundation of the Society. I quoted the words of Saint Paul, "The weak of this world. . ." [1 Corinthians 1:27], but no attention was paid to these words of faith because they are evidently contrary to reason. What more could I do than to say that my conscience did not permit me to yield; that on the contrary, the more anyone opposed it, the more I could resist. They did resist, in fact, with every means at hand; for myself, my conscience was my only weapon.

Everything was not yet revealed, but Father Caillet could no longer bear it. My protests, although still private, greatly worried him. He had an interview with the Archbishop of Bordeaux and obtained from His Excellency what he desired, the permission to proceed. Father Caillet obeys this decision with humble obedience, as though it is an order from on high. I learned this only when he began to give orders to Sainte-Anne, to the south, and to the north.

Then my conscience cried out, and it continues to do so. I wrote to three respectable prelates with whom you have similar dealings. Although interiorly greatly afflicted, I am completely calm, submissive to the will of Providence which is always just, always lovable, although frequently so lofty that we cannot discern its plans.

My dear Son, let me conclude these remarks with my conviction that if you wish to admit your faults sincerely, I will bring a halt, even with your help, to all the evil that is taking place, so that the Society and its works will be better and more solid than ever.

I embrace you tenderly as a very dear eldest Son.

G.-Joseph Chaminade

* * *

At the beginning of October, everything seems to be settled in favor of Father Chaminade. At the end of the annual retreats, all of the directors are won to his cause, and the Archbishops of Besançon and Strasbourg are favorable. There is a new series of letters. This letter gives us a glimpse into the spiritual activity of the Daughters of Mary and its Third Order in an effort to solve the difficulties of the Society of Mary; it recalls how the revelation of the five documents furnished by their superiors (letter no. 1311) helped to unmask the plot begun by Father Roussel. Hopes are again expressed that Brother Clouzet will have a change of heart.

1339. To Archbishop Mathieu of Besançon

October 1, 1844, Bordeaux

Copy, Agmar

Your Excellency,

I have at long last received a letter from Brother Clouzet, to which I replied as soon as possible. I am taking the liberty of sending Your Excellency a copy of each. God has blessed the first step which you took to stop the great scandal which was about to erupt. Oh! Monsignor, if you knew the prayers, the fasts which are taking place in the houses of the Institute of the

Daughters of Mary and of its Third Order Regular, and with what concern prayers are said at the house of the Miséricorde of Bordeaux, composed of at least 450 women! The reaction is similar to that in a time of greatest calamity. The major superiors alone know the true state of affairs, and all unite their wishes in the same intention before Jesus and Mary. You will perhaps be surprised, Your Excellency, at such sorrow among these Orders of women, and now a kind of joy, tempered no doubt by the sufferings which they imagine I must have endured. However, the reason is very simple, but enclosed in a heavy veil. This reason was hidden in the secretariat of the General Administration of the Institute of the Daughters of Mary. In the five documents which are found there, a person can plainly read the plan which used the resignation as a pretext to depose me just as though I were suddenly dead. Worse yet, it seems that among my papers were found the proofs of the desire that I had to preserve the Society of Mary in the same spirit in which it was approved by the Holy See, and in my pretended “written resignation” they made me stifle all the cries of my conscience.

The Institute of the Daughters of Mary had been aware of my resignation from the generalate from the very beginning, while the Society of Mary has learned of it only after four years of silence. It learned of my protest at the same time, and the principal superiors testified to their happiness. I did not know that by an act of Providence the Daughters of Mary had been informed by my Assistants, but that reciprocally nothing was said. The Superior General was sworn to a secrecy which was almost sacramental. She believed she was bound to keep it; but Providence alone revealed it, as I explained at some length in a letter I later wrote to Father Caillet and which should now be in the hands of Brother Clouzet.

I wish I had time, Your Excellency, to tell you what I said to the Archbishop of Bordeaux in the second letter I had the honor to write to him! Why is it that I cannot find, in the written copy of the resignation which they show me, the resignation which I actually made? That three times they would not permit me to compare it with the register of the council? Night and day this register has been in the possession of my council; the copy they show me is not even authentic, etc. . . .

Monsignor, in my reply to Brother Clouzet, in order to restore all things to their original order, all I ask of him is an expression of sincere repentance. You alone can bring him to this. You can summon him to you and ask for his resignation; you can point out to him that his systematic opposition to the continually manifest desires of his First Superior to follow his own conscience has been more or less criminal, etc., etc. Brother Clouzet has faith in Your Excellency; Father Caillet will follow this example, and Father Roussel, although not yielding interiorly, will adhere to the rule of the community of the General Administration without having any title. I hope that he will be converted.

Your Excellency, excuse me for taking so much of your time. I have complete trust in you.

I am. . . .

* * *

While Father Chaminade hopes he can convert Brother Clouzet to his cause, he doubts that Father Caillet will resign. And if he does, can he be reappointed as Head of Zeal? Once reappointed, he could resume his intrigues.

1339-2. To Fr. Léon Meyer, Courtefontaine

October 3, 1844, Bordeaux

Original, Agmar

My dear Son,

On October 2 after 9 o'clock in the morning, I received at Sainte-Anne your letter of September 27. The conclusions stemming from your discussions with Fathers Chevaux and Perrodin are completely correct. By a similar argument, I sustained my protests against those who had nothing to say that made sense. They had to resort to trickery. Father Caillet succeeded with the Archbishop of Bordeaux. The Archbishop of Albi replied to me immediately, but did so in an enclosure to the Archbishop of Bordeaux, who kept it for 21 days and then sent it to me without a word.

Father Caillet, although beaten on all sides, is a worried but good man who acts only in obedience to his superior, who could have cleared up the differences. In resigning, if he does resign, will he recognize his mistakes? He has announced it several times. To reappoint him Head of Zeal—would that not reopen the conflict? Would this not favor another attempt at a schism against which I have just protested by writing to the Archbishop of Albi, a very respectable prelate, and whose council, his three vicars general, shows such wisdom and prudence? I will enclose a copy of the short letter which I wrote to him hastily about three days ago.

Moreover, Father Caillet preaches a false doctrine on conscience, on faith, and on the practice of that faith especially which must guide the government of the entire Society.

Brother Clouzet has written to me. I am enclosing a copy of his letter, as well as of my reply. I sent these items immediately to the Archbishop of Besançon; you will also find a copy of my cover letter.

Father Fidon wrote to me at about the same time as Brother Clouzet. I had not yet received your last letter. I believe he wrote to me as much from zeal as from duty; I asked him to act as he would have if he were in the diocese of the Archbishop of Besançon. I am also sending a copy of his letter.

Your letter, my dear Son, has reminded me that I must write to Father Chevaux to assure myself of Brother Clouzet's sincerity of heart; accordingly, I will leave you in order to do this, and then I will return to you. I will send you a copy of the letter if there is enough time to do so before the postman comes.

I believe, my dear Son, that this letter contains the principal remarks I wanted to make to you. I will stop; I embrace you tenderly.

G.-Joseph Chaminade

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Father Chaminade discusses with Father Chevaux the reorganization of the General Administration. He answers the question he asked in letter no. 1339-2 about the reappointment of Father Caillet. He does not oppose it or that of Brother Clouzet, for these men "have acted with good intentions." He brings up the matter of Brother Clouzet's residing in Bordeaux; this is required by the Constitutions and must be dealt with in the future as the correction of an abuse. But in fact, everything was not going as well as Father Chaminade imagined.

On October 4, Father Caillet wrote to Father Chaminade.

Your disastrous circular letters are already bearing very abundant fruit, unfortunately of destruction and ruin. Here is what Brother Clouzet wrote to me last September 19. "The Good Father is sending orders at random and because of his circulars, all of the income has stopped. Not a penny is coming in. and you know that at the end of the school year I used to receive the contributions from the directors of our houses. Because my financial arrangements are dependent on this, a catastrophe can

happen at any moment because of a default in my payments. . . . Because of this sad state of affairs, I hereby inform you that I can no longer pay the suppliers of Sainte-Anne: the baker, the butcher, the lard merchant, the laundry women, etc. . . . All of them will apply to you for their pay (Agmar 7.3.3).

1340. To Fr. Jean Chevaux, Saint-Remy

October 3, 1844, Bordeaux

Original, Agmar

My dear Son,

Only yesterday did I receive Father Meyer's letter, which informed me that you can arrive at a settlement with him and with Father Perrodin of the matter which so seriously troubles the Society. *Perturbatio magna* [a great confusion]. You can do this in the name of the Society itself, for Father Meyer could represent all the superiors and even all the establishments of Alsace assembled at Ebersmunster; Father Perrodin, who had attended a similar meeting at Courtefontaine (Father Rothéa is perhaps somewhat suspect because he exaggerates at times); you, my dear Son, could perfectly represent the Doubs, Saint-Remy, Brother Clouzet, one of my Assistants who was specifically delegated by his associates, in a way, to come to terms with me.¹ In a way you could also represent the Archbishop of Besançon because you and Father Perrodin were at the archdiocesan meeting of the priests of the Society. The houses of the south sent their individual letters²; only the presence of Father Roussel kept them from meeting at Sainte-Anne, where they should have met. We have proof of this, moreover, in the large number of letters from the directors of both the small and the large houses who before your decision promised their complete obedience and share my sorrows.

In his letter, Brother Clouzet says he would prefer a slight irregularity to the disorders which exist. There will be none of the latter, and there should be none in the reorganization of the General Administration. It can reorganize itself without the interference of either the archbishops or of any inappropriate advice. However, it must follow the Constitutions according to both the letter and the spirit. If according to the letter there is some difficulty in the application, this is to be solved according to the spirit. If there is still some opposition, the Society's position should be presented to the Holy Father and his opinion sought, but always moving forward; anarchy is an evil whose enormity cannot be calculated.

My dear Son, this is what I read in Father Meyer's letter. "Father Chevaux tells me that Brother Clouzet sent his resignation to Father Caillet, asking the latter to do the same and to hand them to the Archbishop of Bordeaux." This is what the Archbishop of Besançon advised, believing this to be the means of normalizing everything. Once these men resign, everything comes to an end. It is hoped that the return would be open and sincere in order to give you complete satisfaction. Then it would be best to restore to their functions Father Caillet and Brother Clouzet, if you judge this proper, in order to repair the scandal and for the honor of the Society in the eyes of the public, for I am persuaded that although they have been mistaken, these men acted with good intentions."

I am hurried, for it is almost time to post this; I will be brief in the few reflections I need to make. You are to assume the responsibility for the sincerity and openness of the return of these men. Have them give you sufficient guarantees to repair the scandal—this is all I ask. Brother Clouzet must reside habitually in Bordeaux; the Constitutions are very explicit on this point.

¹ The preceding July (see letter no. 1309).

² See letter no. 1343, note 1.

He was advised of this when he accepted the position of Head of Temporalities; he renewed this promise to me when our troubles began, and if he had been faithful to God and to others on this point, would we be where we are now? Almost no precautions have been taken to guarantee that the assets acquired by individual religious will accrue to the Society.

Brother Clouzet sent his resignation to Father Caillet; Father Fidon tells me that he gave it to the archbishop or sent it 5 or 6 days ago; Brother Clouzet writes that he still has it.¹ This resignation, as well as Father Caillet's, should be given to you; it is up to you to do what is necessary. I demand only honesty and sincerity. I embrace you very tenderly.

G.-Joseph Chaminade

* * *

The first and most apparent consequence of this weakening of faith was the lessening of the spirit of poverty (see Inquisitio Historica, p. 24 ff.; Agmar 1852). In a letter of October 21, 1844, to the Archbishop of Bordeaux, Father Meyer complains that the Society of Mary is being transformed into a society of commerce and industry (Positio, p. 35; Agmar 1852.29). In a letter of March 14, 1859, Brother Frézouls reveals that Father Caillet still kept its spirit. "Good Father Caillet never wrote a letter without using this refrain, 'be economical.' Since I have been a director he adds, 'What good are superiors who do not practice economy? They are good for nothing'" (Agmar 7.3.32).

1341. To Fr. Georges Caillet, Bordeaux

October 7, 1844, Bordeaux

Original, Agmar

My dear Son,

In your letter you give me an excerpt from a letter Brother Clouzet had just written to you. Brother Clouzet wrote to me at the same time and informed me that he was writing to you, without telling me what he had to say. I thought simply that he was telling you the same things—I am still somewhat of this opinion—but that in his excitement he used very strong words to express what you call "disorder," from which you drew very different conclusions. Accordingly, I am going to show your answer to Brother Clouzet.

As for the effect my circulars may have had on the income from our various houses, let me say (1) that they could not produce such effects without the competition from your own circulars, and you are the one who began the rivalry; (2) that it does not seem exact to say Brother Clouzet has not received a penny because I know he drew a check for 1,000 francs against the director of the establishment at Saint-Claude, who had only 500 francs at his disposal and who consulted with Courtefontaine to know what to do. He was told to provide the 500 francs and to remain calm; (3) that Father Roussel must have collected as much as he could from the 5 or 6 houses in the south because he succeeded in winning them over; (4) that under the type of schismatic banner Father Roussel raised at Réalmont, for he knew there would be no convocation of a General Chapter, he ostentatiously named several establishments in the north where Brother Clouzet could find more funds.

However, I do not believe that the directors of these houses would wish to be associated with a bastard Society of Mary, but that they are true religious stripped individually and collectively of the goods of this world and of their use. By "goods of this world" I mean the goods of the Society. Before God, the Society is not the owner of these goods; they have been offered and consecrated to God; only the person who represents Jesus Christ has the obligation to determine what is to be done with them.

¹He sent it on September 19, but the archbishop, annoyed by the delay, refused to accept it.

I do not have time, my dear Son, to see what still remains to be answered in your letter; I will do this at the first free moment. I will not pay the bills you send me; you cannot on your own make a similar statement, and still less make it retroactive. I will, however, pay the small monthly salary of the laundress of the Madeleine because this is her only source of income.

My dear Son, please accept the assurance of my tender devotedness. This devotedness is very sincere, and because it is so sincere, it causes me great grief.

G.-Joseph Chaminade

* * *

Father Chaminade insisted with the Archbishop of Albi to counteract the influence of Father Roussel, still operating from his base at Réalmont (Inquisitio Historica, p. 222 ff.; Agmar 1852.30). He protests against the house at Cordes where Father Roussel, with no authority and against the Statutes of the Society of Mary, was negotiating for the foundation of a school. As to the house at Brusque, see letter no. 1330. Concerning the person of Philippe Roussel, see Inquisitio Historica, p. 60; Agmar 1852.30.

1342. To Archbishop de Jerphanion of Albi

October 8, 1844, Bordeaux

Copy, Agmar

Your Excellency,

I have received with great pleasure your dispatches of October 4, but reading them was a very bitter experience. I saw that the crafty Father Roussel is still abusing your good faith and compromising it.

If Your Excellency approves the personnel changes which have been proposed for Cordes, Brusque, and Réalmont,¹ I will see myself obliged to request that you break the contract which you undoubtedly intended to make with the Society and for which you had requested the approbation of the Holy See—and which in fact has been approved—rather than with a bastard Society which is striving to supplant it.

Monsignor, I will be obliged to protest against the establishment in the town of Cordes² and to publish my protest or to inform the rector of the Academy of Toulouse. On the other hand, my protest against the house of Brusque will need no other publicity, I believe, than to be known to the pastor, the founder of the establishment, and to the Bishop of Rodez.³ However, I will be obliged to inform the young men who will serve under the new superiors of what has happened.

The scandal would be aggravated if after the opening of the house, several or all (it is to be presumed), being well informed, would desert it to be united to the true center. For example, I do not at all believe that it is in Brother Laugeay's heart to join the schism, whatever illusions he may have had up until now. As to Brusque, whatever connection there has been between the two brothers,⁴ we can presume that Bro. Philippe Roussel still has enough religious spirit and faith not to follow his older brother.

Do not believe, Your Excellency, that I am blaming your hesitancy to take sides in a matter as serious as this; on the contrary, I call this prudence and great wisdom. Furthermore, you have the conduct of the Archbishop of Bordeaux, who secretly and at least tacitly has approved the authorization given to Father Caillet, although it was given without knowledge of the facts.

¹Houses opened since 1841 by Fr. Roussel, who intended to control them.

²With no authority and contrary to the statutes of the Society of Mary, Fr. Roussel was negotiating for the foundation of a school at Cordes, a village in the diocese of Albi, in the jurisdiction of the Academy of Toulouse.

³Brusque was in the diocese of Rodez, adjoining that of Albi.

⁴The director of Brusque was Philippe Roussel, the brother of Fr. Narcisse Roussel.

He approves of him, it seems, to the point of doing nothing about the threefold refusal of Father Caillet to permit me to consult the register of the council, a document which is at the origin of all our discussions and in which I find essential irregularities.

On the other hand, in me there are so many defects of nature, cultural deficiencies, very real faults. . . . God does not allow them to see the true cause of the persecutions, that is, my infidelities, my sins, and those of the Society; they see nothing more in me than a weakening of reason or a deep-seated love for superiority, so rooted that it cannot yield to reasons which appear evident. The very evident reason is this, the pretended conformity of my two resignations. May the name of the Lord be blessed!

Your Excellency, you are probably distressed by this collection of proofs on the one hand, and on the other the brilliant qualities of my adversaries, so capably sustained by Father Roussel, who for his part is encouraged by your hesitation. I adore the designs of God and am at peace, but I cannot abandon obedience to my conscience.

I am. . . .

* * *

This circular, "A Short Address," was not published. Father Chaminade states precisely his position toward his three assistants, Father Roussel, Father Caillet, and Brother Clouzet. He explains why he had named Father Roussel to the council 4 years ago—from pure necessity. He reveals his intention to call Father Meyer and Father Perrodin to his side.

1343. A Short Address To the Society of Mary

October 12, 1844, Bordeaux

Original, Agmar

A Short Address of the Superior General of the Society of Mary

To his dear Children, directors, superiors, and religious, priests and laymen.

The word "short" which your aged Father uses at this time when he is about to speak tells you that he would have had many things to say to you. His paternal heart, full of tenderness for you but not being able to make itself heard, turns to the august Mary, our tender mother and powerful patroness.

Mary, yielding to the designs of her adorable Son, must have left us, Father and Sons, in the crucible of tribulation to purify us of so many blemishes which her glance, so pure and so holy, still sees in her dear Family. Just as the storm was about to break, Mary has interceded for us and order has been reestablished. You have gathered, my dear Children, to attend the pious exercises of the annual retreat, and in the dark night into which you were unwittingly plunged, light has arisen; you have seen your distressed Father, still leading you on. May thanks be given forever to God by Jesus and Mary!¹

Your Father, afflicted and at the same time consoled by your love and your submission, is very ready to take up again his functions of General and Founder, duties which are entirely paternal; but he is all alone, he no longer has at his side any of his Assistants, no, not even a titular secretary. The secretary's office is still in the hands of the former council, as well as the use and administration of the assets which some very improperly call the assets of the Society, unless they see in the light of faith the use which God, to whom these are consecrated, wishes to be made of them. Intolerable abuses exist. . . .

¹If the directors of the houses of the south did not come together for any annual retreat in the north, it must be noted (1) that they were few in number, 6 or 7 at most; (2) that we have written proof that three of them did come, but there is reason to believe from what they said and what is known about them that they did not obey only because of the prodding insistence of Fr. Roussel. (Note by Father Chaminade.)

It is very true that I have in mind and heart the reelection of Father Caillet as Head of Zeal and Brother Clouzet as Head of Temporalities; I love them; I hold them in high esteem; I have always given them positive proof of my confidence, and they have always responded. If I am given proofs which assure me that they had denied the rights given to me by the Constitutions only because of a deluded conscience, they will be reappointed. I am happy to find myself in agreement with the representatives of the Society at Ebersmunster who wrote to me on September 27,² “It would be good to reappoint to their functions Father Caillet and Brother Clouzet in order to repair the scandal and for the honor of the Society in the eyes of the public; for I am convinced that these men have acted with good intentions, although they had been deceived. . . . Father Chevaux is going to write to Father Caillet and Brother Clouzet along these lines.”

My dear Children, I am not forgetting Father Roussel; I know you were surprised almost 4 years ago when he was named Head of Instruction. You did not consider him mature enough to hold a position of such importance, although he had the talent. Interiorly I was of your opinion, but at the time of the appointment I was required to complete the council, and I believed this appointment would only be temporary. He is the one who by interminable deceptions has compromised Father Caillet and Brother Clouzet, whose only fault has been to let themselves be drawn by the prestige which Father Roussel knew how to use for his own purpose. My dear Children, I do not reject him—far from it. I am sincerely attached to him; he could be of valuable assistance to the Church and to the Society of Mary. For the time being, I wish him to be stationed at the Madeleine, where he was before all our troubles began, and to be employed according to his talents and live according to the rules of the community which the General Administration is to form, along with its Assistants. This community should be the model for all the houses of the Society.

In the isolation in which I find myself, my dear Children, whether to reorganize entirely my council, to correct certain abuses, or to expedite my correspondence with you, etc. . . . I need two excellent Assistants who by their solid piety and regularity, their talents and a true self-abnegation, could implement everything that pertains to the three important offices of Zeal, Instruction, and Temporalities. For this reason I have considered Father Meyer, under whose direction many of you have made your novitiate, and Father Perrodin, who has just preached the annual retreat to the novices at Ebersmunster. I am going to send these obediences, and I will give them very little time to find temporary substitutes for the positions which they hold.

I am speaking to you, my dear Children, as an aged Father of a numerous family who sees death close at hand and who does not wish to die without seeing all of you completely united and marching with long strides toward the goals which the Incarnate Word had in mind at the foundation of the Society of Mary. They are noble, these goals, and meant to promote the worship of his august Mother, through whose mediation he hopes to strengthen faith and religion during these recent centuries of the Catholic Church.

When I am not so busy, I will be able to speak to you more at length about your spiritual and eternal interest without, however, forgetting your temporal needs; I have these greatly at heart.

May the Lord, my dear Children, through the mediation of our august Mother and protector, shower upon all of you abundant blessings.

* * *

Here is the obedience to Father Meyer. Father Chaminade tells us where he finds counsel—before the crucifix. He believes, without reason, that the Archbishop of Albi has definitively settled all the difficulties. He characterizes his own activity as a disturbance to halt the General Chapter announced by his Assistants.

²Letter of Fr. Meyer of this date, quoted in letter no. 1340.

1344. To Fr. Léon Meyer, Ebersmunster

October 12, 1844, Bordeaux

Original, Agmar

My dear Son,

I was just writing my short address, which you will find enclosed, when the porter brought me your letter of October 5; I opened it and read with increasing pleasure the very short message it contained.

We are not quite in agreement, my dear Son, on the decision of the Archbishop of Besançon which he was later to pronounce on the heart of the matter; for my part, I looked upon his first declaration as a person looks upon the judgment of Solomon.¹ His wisdom is admirable. The short letter he wrote to you very clearly confirms what I had already believed I saw.

The type of disturbance which I created was actually only to prevent the convocation of a General Chapter, which would have been very dangerous although only a few superiors would have attended. Everything was directed and predicted to attempt a schism. Just the convocation with its auxiliary events was very imprudent.¹

Moreover, the question of the government of the Society is the concern of the Society itself, Constitutions in hand. This is what led to the first suggestion, to submit the resignations and to come to an understanding. Let us go to the pope if necessary; I wish no more discussions with my respectable colleagues, etc.; let us not speak about it any longer. The case seems to be more complex than that of Solomon; at least he had no rival.² But my dear Son, let us set aside these considerations, however weighty they may be. “Let them not even be mentioned among you” [Ephesians 5:3]; this is most certainly his intention.³

My dear Son, you tell me in a very discreet way that if the wise archbishop is encountering some difficulties, “it is with respect to the administrative actions of my council since my resignation.” I am very happy to have the opportunity to tell you that since the beginning of this trouble, I have had no other administrative council than my crucifix. In general I have said nothing, written nothing but what I believed Jesus Christ crucified desired and commanded, and this is what I call the language and even the cry of my conscience. I believe that in matters of conscience, to consult is to insult God; Jesus Christ strongly blamed the scribes and Pharisees on this point. “You have made a fine art of setting aside God’s commandments in the interests of keeping your traditions” [Mark 7:9].

Some are scandalized at what I have written. What can I do about this, my dear Son, for I have written only what I believed I saw in my book, without any kind of bitterness? It seems to me that I love more than ever those who rise up against me. What if they add that in spite of all these pious refinements, the facts are no less real and disastrous? “Real,” yes, if you will; “disastrous”—I cannot believe this is the word to use. I admit, however, that I can and should draw another conclusion, that of not knowing how correctly to read my dear book—the crucifix. Alas! I have so many faults. I am guilty of so many infidelities! The eyes of my conscience are so blurry! Pray frequently, my dear Son, and have those with whom you share these thoughts also pray for me, who has such need to save myself while trying to save others and to make them conformable to our common Savior.

¹Fr. Chaminade believed the decision of the Archbishop of Besançon was decisive.

¹ Because the Government—already very distrustful—had been unaware of the resignation for 4 years and still had not been informed of it.

²The director of Brusque was Philippe Roussel, the brother of Fr. Roussel.

³Of the Archbishop of Besançon.

I return to the essential object of this letter. In the present situation, I believe it is absolutely necessary that you and Father Perrodin come to Bordeaux, near to me, and as promptly as possible. It is more necessary than I explained in my short address. This is why I am sending you a strict obedience. I am going to send a similar one to Father Perrodin, and I will add to it a copy of this letter, just as you will find here a copy of the one I will write to him. You must act in perfect harmony. I am going to write also to Father Chevaux and send him an obedience to replace you temporarily at Ebersmunster during your absence. I am going to appoint Father Fontaine as temporary superior of Saint-Remy to replace Father Chevaux.

I will send Father Perrodin an obedience which he will give to Father Rothéa, telling him to come to Bordeaux and to be occupied at Sainte-Anne as needed, but to keep him until you have a suitable substitute at Ebersmunster.

As I was writing these lines I received a letter from Father Rothéa, who enclosed various items of his correspondence of which I will have a summary made for you. I have only a few moments to bring this to a close. Tomorrow we begin the retreat at Sainte-Anne, and I am completely alone.

From everything I can learn, it is urgent that you and Father Perrodin come as quickly as possible. I authorize you to sign for me and to send the short address to all the priests, and especially to those of Franche-Comté whom the Archbishop of Besançon brought together. You will do well to send also a copy of everything I say about the first decision of the Archbishop of Besançon. I believe that everyone only needs to express to the Archbishop of Besançon and to the Archbishop of Bordeaux their satisfaction that this matter has been settled in the Society and by the Society itself. Perhaps it will be good to begin with the Bishop of Strasbourg; I believe he will be pleased.

G.-Joseph Chaminade

P.S. I am sending the obedience by post tomorrow only, October 13.

* * *

Here are some instructions and errands for Father Fidon.

1345. To Fr. Antoine Fidon, Besançon

October 12, 1844, Bordeaux

Copy, Agmar

My dear Son,

I have just received some dispatches from Father Rothéa in which I found some important items from you. It seems you have not been informed about everything. In haste I am sending you (1) the short address which I wish to send to the entire Society and (2) a copy of the letter I have just written to Father Meyer, but which will leave only with the same post as this one.

It seems to me it is no longer necessary to seek a decision on the part of the archbishops because in spite of their support, the convocation of a General Chapter has not occurred and cannot take place. The great agitation had only one objective; this General Chapter was also more irregular in the order of religion than imprudent in the civil order, but enough on this point. I believe it will be enough to show them the short address, and they will immediately manifest their satisfaction.

Continue to urge Brother Clouzet to write me a letter of atonement, and persuade Father Caillet to do the same; order will reign again, an order that is better and more durable.

Courage, my dear Son, and receive my tender embrace.

* * *

Here are other errands for Father Perrodin, similar to those for Father Fidon, and the first mention of Brother Bonnefous, who for a considerable time will be the private secretary to Father Chaminade during the years of struggle.

1346. To Jules-César Perrodin, Acey

October 12, 1844, Bordeaux

Original, Agmar

My dear Son,

I was very pleased to receive your letter written from Ebersmunster, and I am expecting the one you promise. Because I am very pressed for time, I am sending for your guidance (1) the short address I wish to send to the entire Society of Mary, (2) a letter I have just written to Father Fidon, (3) a copy of a letter I am writing to Father Meyer, and (4) an obedience.

Come to an agreement, my dear Son, with the Bishop of Saint-Claude both about Acey and about Courtefontaine: (1) about your replacement at Acey, which will be temporary, and (2) as for Courtefontaine, see if it will not be possible to authorize Father Bouly to care for the parish while awaiting a titular pastor. I believe it will be appropriate to place Father Desgrandschamps in charge of the novitiate and the boarding school.

You will present my respects to the bishop, and you will inform him of the terrible storm which has buffeted the Society of Mary and has extended even to the entire Institute of the Daughters of Mary. If I did not inform him, one of our protectors in whom I have the utmost confidence, this has been from consideration for Father Roussel, the leader and the adviser of the coalition. You could suggest that he add a few lines to the short address indicating his satisfaction.

On going to or returning from Saint-Claude, you could visit the pastor of Orgelet and his worthy brother the mayor, who is from Orgelet itself. Ask them not to go into details. Father Desgrandschamps would be taken away temporarily. If because of his absence there is a need for a teacher on the secondary level, I will immediately send Brother Bonnefous, whom we had first sent because he has a Bachelor of Arts degree. After that it remains to be seen whether Brother Salmon, whom we just sent there, can be a true director.

Tomorrow I will send you the obedience; the postman is almost here.

I embrace you tenderly.

G.-Joseph Chaminade

* * *

1346-2. To Fr. Jean-Baptiste Fontaine, Saint-Remy

October 13, 1844, Bordeaux

Original, Agmar

Directives Given to Father Chevaux in these Difficult Times.

My dear Son,

I am breaking the silence which reigns here at Sainte-Anne because of our retreat which began today to send you various documents which could determine the attitude you should take in the difficult situation in which you are placed.

As for the younger Meyer, I did not send him an obedience for Strasbourg until I had heard that Father Rothéa had been rejected and that Brother Meyer would be aided and supported by Father Wilhelm, a young priest of the establishment who seems to me to be very pious. Father

Meyer the elder could easily watch over him and see that my hopes and my orders are carried out. You could assure yourself of this up to a certain point during the stay which you will make at Ebersmunster, according to the enclosed obedience. Tomorrow I will send you one for Father Fontaine, appointed temporarily as superior of Saint-Remy.

Continue to pressure Brother Clouzet that he has a duty to write a good letter of atonement to me so that I can send a second address to the Society of Mary.

I am at your service, my dear Son.

G.-Joseph Chaminade

*

Obedience

To my dear Son, Father Chevaux, Provincial of Alsace,
For all the establishments of the Society at Saint-Remy.

My dear Son,

You will leave for the time being the residence at Saint-Remy, where your presence has been necessary, to return to Ebersmunster to replace Father Meyer, who is called to Bordeaux for matters about which you have been informed. I have reason to believe this will be only for a short time.

May the peace of the Lord be with you.

G.-Joseph Chaminade

* * *

Letters 1343 to 1346 are dated October 12, 1844. On this date Father Caillet signed a first statement prepared by Father Roussel in the name of the council, but in reality there was no council; Brother Clouzet had resigned into the hands of the Archbishop of Besançon, Father Caillet's term had expired (he had been appointed in 1833), and Father Roussel had resigned. Brother Clouzet added his signature as though he were then in Bordeaux, but on this very day he wrote to Father Chaminade from Saint-Remy. This statement explains the resignation of Father Chaminade and submits to the decision of the archbishops these three questions: (1) can Father Chaminade resume today, purely and simply, the position and functions of Superior General? (2) Can he claim the benefit of article 482 to designate his successor? (3) In this case, on his own authority, can he also appoint his Assistants?

On October 13 the annual retreat opened at Sainte-Anne. Father Chaminade was there alone, at 83 years of age, to direct both the community and the novitiate and to preach the retreat.

In his letter Father Chevaux seems to adopt the position of the council, "according to the general tone of his letter." Here is the reply in which Father Chaminade repeats the complete history of his resignation. However, it does contain some new items. He speaks of a letter written by Father Roussel and addressed to him about Father Caillet's qualifications, or lack of them, to fulfill the office of Superior General; this letter has since disappeared. Father Roussel will accuse Father Chaminade of a breach of confidence for permitting Father Caillet to read the letter.

* * *

1347. To Fr. Jean Chevaux, Saint-Remy

October 15, 1844, Bordeaux

Original, Agmar

My dear Son,

Your letter of October 8 reached me on October 13, the first day of the retreat. It would have troubled me if I had not assumed the habit of desiring only what is in the order of Providence. You do not seem to have yet the dispositions of the spouse of the Canticles, “His banner over me is love” [Song 2:4]. This seems evident to me both from your instructions to the heads of the establishments of Alsace and from the general tone of your letter.

My dear Son, you always hint at a preliminary understanding with the members of the council. You would be correct only if I had not tried in every way possible to enlighten them about their miserable plot. This is why ever since last February, I have been calling their stubbornness a type of treason, and on other occasions but from consideration only, a coalition. They denied this; they were angered at the friendly and paternal expression, “a type of treason.” Then came the “providential discovery.” I immediately informed Father Caillet. The sight of my crucifix impelled me to take as the text of my letter *iniquitatis mentita est* [false witnesses have risen up against me].¹ My dear Son, did you read this letter? Father Caillet must have sent an exact copy to Brother Clouzet, and in the trust which he owes you, he should have shown it to you.

Brother Clouzet especially should have shown you the 4 simple questions I asked him during the quick journey he made to Bordeaux as the peacemaker between me and my council.² He should also have shown you his letter, the answer to my questions, severing all relationships. Read this letter attentively; I will not explain it to you, either for lack of time or especially because it would seem that I am complaining at being humiliated by their pretended triumph. I am far from complaining; I deserve incomparably more because of my infidelities in fulfilling the designs of God in the foundation of the Society and of the Orders attached to it.

Allow me, my dear Son, to pass over in silence the very numerous circumstances which accompany such a stubbornness on their part and to pause simply at the fundamental question: is it true that I resigned according to the Constitutions,³ and is my subsequent written resignation—which makes no mention of the reservations in the non-written resignation but which the Constitutions do not prescribe to be written and which was only an act of accommodation, this act of accommodation, innocent in itself, and which could not mislead the tribunal and could not be harmful to my opponents—still a true resignation in the sense of the Constitutions?⁴

I maintain that my resignation is according to the Constitutions, in spite of their claim to the contrary. In the meeting of the council where my resignation took place, I announced it in a clear and explicit manner, more than was necessary, and recalled the prayers which I had addressed to God for several years that I might resign the office of general in a manner useful for the Society. I proffered my resignation in a manner which could be useful to the Society. At the request of my council I followed this with a written resignation, pure and simple, but without any preamble; the preambles were suggested in the meeting of the council.

After the meeting Father Roussel stood, turned to me, and asked me what we are to do. I replied that the Constitutions tell us, and I quoted them vaguely. He retorted that I did not understand them. I gave him an example, such as naming Father Caillet as Superior General and I would become Head of Zeal. The meeting was not very long, but it was very emotional. Father Caillet and Brother Clouzet were present; I believe they did not say a word. We went on our way,

¹Letter no. 1313.

²Letter no. 1310.

³According to article 482, and reserving to himself the right to choose his successor.

⁴The expression is obscure, but the thought can be understood.

but shortly after I called Father Roussel privately and paternally reproved him for the violent manner in which he had just conducted himself. He answered even more violently that he had merely performed his duty as Head of Instruction, and that he preferred to resign rather than not to fulfill it. I told him his resignation would be accepted, but that it was not suitable this time. I believe my written resignation already existed. We parted. Three or four hours later I received a very long letter from him in which he attempted to prove that Father Caillet had come to my room. I believed I had a duty to read him the letter I had just received; he listened to the reading, blushed from time to time, but made no comment, at least as far as I can remember. In order not to leave this letter open on my table I placed it in the drawer of the same table, where there were already some other papers. The drawer was not locked with a key. Several weeks later I wanted to take the letter and place it in my desk which locks with a key, but I could not find it. It had been removed, but no other paper was disturbed. However, the letter could not be denied because its contents had been revealed to Father Caillet, who could not deny it. It was brought up in one of the council meetings held near the end of last February. It was acknowledged by both. However, Father Roussel claims the letter was confidential and maintains since then that I have betrayed his trust. The idea of confidentiality did not occur to me, after what happened about my resignation.

My dear Son, I will make only one remark. What weight can be given to this written resignation, whose formulation was not at all voluntary; or if a person wishes to be subtle, which was voluntary only in the willingness to give it in such a manner that it would not harm the first resignation given according to the Constitutions? This intention was not revoked when the resignation was given in writing. I stand by my first resignation, and I have always stood by it without any wavering, in the same way and for the same motives. Should a resignation of this importance not be free and voluntary? Should it be a human act, a moral act?

My dear Son, it seems to me that your charity verges on the prodigal when you say that in conscience Father Caillet could and can still resist me. The culpability of an act may be diminished; I believe that in him there are many extenuating circumstances and motives, but here we are dealing with facts.

You could argue that “the written resignation presented to you today contains several preambles, compared to another resignation which you made three years later to confirm the first. This means your intention has changed, and this is the reason for your opposition.”

I respond, and my reply is the same as when they presented it to me. I did not find the resignation in the form in which I gave it; I did not sign the preambles which the council added, and which should have been in the register. I was bewildered, and I sent someone on three separate days, one after the other, to compare the act of resignation presented to me with the register of the council.¹ Three times Father Caillet refused to allow the register to be seen. I wrote to the Archbishop of Bordeaux about this; he would not have refused the archbishop if His Excellency had demanded it. I do not know what happened. The act of resignation which they showed me contained irregularities.²

As for the second resignation,¹ it is again less true to the one they claim to be authentic and voluntary. It contains a denial in writing by Father Bouet, whose simplicity and good faith have been betrayed. If you wish, I will send you my correspondence with Fathers Caillet and Bouet.

My dear Son, it is inconceivable that they do not understand the principle, acknowledged by all the courts of the world, civil and religious, that there is no greater weakness than a lack of authority. In the present case, the council has no right at all to contest the resignation of the Superior of the Society, and still less that of its Founder. If from accommodation and because of the judicial process the Superior did not raise his voice to be heard by the entire Society, and also

¹Bro. Michaud.

²See letter no. 1325.

¹See letter no. 1296.

to give them a special opportunity to recognize the truth, he still wished to be in conversation with them. His kindness and his charity cannot give them an intrinsic power which they do not have. If they have received powers from a Superior, even these powers can be understood only as a delegation. This is what the Superior has always maintained, and the proof lies in the double protest made to Father Caillet,² made one after the other with a reasonable interval of time between. The first informed the council that because it did not execute the order which it had received to announce my resignation to the entire Society, I retracted it in order to make it known myself. The second confirmed the first and gave Father Caillet orders in the name of holy obedience, especially that of returning to me the key of the secretary's office which contained all the papers of the Society, of which he is the holder and custodian. Perhaps he was thinking of the register of the council, which he did not want anyone to consult or did not believe he could authorize them to see. What is certain is that he went secretly to ask the archbishop to dispense him from obeying this, as well as the order to seek a confessor other than Father Bouet. (In another letter, Father Caillet told me that Father Bouet gave him excellent advice; no doubt this is the argument he used with His Excellency in order to obtain the dispensation more easily.)

Were the members of the council informed that I had revoked all the powers which I may have given them as necessary during or after the legal action? In an effort to free them from deception, or as I said so frequently, "to open their eyes," I decided to give Father Caillet especially an evangelical means by which we could enlighten each other. He replied rather brusquely that he believed in the Gospel, but not in my interpretation of it. He spoke to various other people in a similar fashion.

After exhausting all the means of reconciliation, I revoked the powers which I had believed it necessary to concede. Who could ever believe that an authority could grant powers against itself?

My dear Son, I have just sent you an obedience for Ebersmunster.³ When you receive this letter, inform me if you have implemented its directives or if you still have reasons to delay, for I intend to push ahead. I do not have time to tell you more.

I embrace you very tenderly.

G.-Joseph Chaminade

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Father Chaminade invites the Archbishop of Albi to send someone to receive explanations about the measures suggested in his letter (no. 1342) and about the overall situation at Réalmont and Brusque. He probably did not wish to reveal everything he knew about Father Roussel. He expected at least a visit from the pastor of Brusque.

1348. To Archbishop de Jerphanion of Albi

October 22, 1844, Bordeaux

Original, Arch. of the Archbishop of Albi

Your Excellency,

I have had the honor of revealing to you my fears about the emergence of a schism in the Society of Mary, with Father Roussel more or less raising the standard on high. I do not doubt that Your Excellency, as well as your respected council, would be horrified at the very thought of such a possibility.

²See letters no. 1301 and no. 1309.

³Concerning the replacement of Fr. Meyer, who had been called to Bordeaux; Fr. Chevaux went to Bordeaux.

You may perhaps have found my last letter¹ too strong, emotional as were my earlier ones, disapproved even by the Archbishop of Besançon.² However, I ask you to believe that the original verdict of His Excellency of Besançon is more admirable than the judgment of Solomon. The priests of his province, whom he assembled, were astonished by it, as some reported to me.

In extraordinary circumstances, Your Excellency, God sometimes wishes extraordinary means to be used without the accompanying satisfactory explanations. This is why I asked Your Excellency to send me someone you trust, with whom I can speak freely and who would share all of our concerns and feelings regarding the novitiate at Réalmont. The pastor of Brusque has the same interests as you do in his pre-novitiate house. I have reason to believe that the only knowledge he has of what is happening comes from Father Roussel. I have told his young nephew, who made his promises of the novitiate the day before yesterday, to notify him and to invite him to come, implying a sense of urgency. I believed it was appropriate to insert in his letter a copy of the last letter I had the honor to write to Your Excellency.

I presume that he will not depart without discussing with you the important motive of his trip.

I am with the deepest respect Your Excellency's very humble and obedient servant.

P.S. If a delegate of Your Excellency comes with the pastor of Brusque, both will be my advisers in this matter of Réalmont and Brusque. I am still completely alone until the arrival of the priests whom I have requested to help me in my functions.

* * *

A new appeal to Brother Clouzet to retrace his steps. Father Chaminade recalls the attachment of Brother Clouzet to the assets of the Society of Mary, even before the crisis of the Father Chaminade's resignation. For a look at the character of Brother Clouzet and an evaluation of his qualities by Father Chaminade, see Inquisitio Historica, p. 288 ff.; Agmar 1852.30.

1349. To Bro. Dominique Clouzet, Saint-Remy

October 22, 1844, Bordeaux

Original, Agmar

My dear Son,

Only tonight am I able to read your last letter, dated October 12, Saint-Remy and stamped at Besançon on October 14. I am answering it immediately with my crucifix before my eyes, as is my custom.

My dear Son, you complain that my letter of September 30 does not answer any of the points about which you wrote to me on September 24. This is partly true, but nevertheless your complaint is uncalled for. In the interval you should have received a letter which Father Chevaux wrote to you from Ebersmunster, in which he informed you of the agreement he had made with Fathers Meyer and Perrodin. Father Chevaux followed closely upon his letter and must have shown you a copy of the same agreement, if he had only hinted at it before. Did I not write immediately to Father Chevaux to acknowledge and accept this agreement as being the most regular, the most canonical, and the most peaceful possible? All it needed was a sincere repudiation of your constant opposition to the true meaning of my resignation, one which is entirely conformable to the letter and spirit of the Constitutions. The agreement states that your repudiation could have been motivated by the force of the illusion under which you labored.

¹Letter no. 1342.

²Letter no. 1338.

I agreed to that; this is why I invited you to a sincere repentance, and it cannot be a guarantee for me or for the Society if it is not supernatural. This is why when you wrote to me, Father Fidon was also writing and asking for a prompt settlement. This is what I wrote especially to Father Chevaux, who has a great influence over you. But what happened? In imitation of Father Caillet, you argued according to your conscience. “In conscience you cannot admit that you have been wrong”; both of you are obliged in conscience to resist me to the end. Every settlement, even in the presence of the bishops, becomes impossible because we are entirely among ourselves, as the Archbishop of Besançon put it recently.

(Oh my dear Son, let me tell you this in passing! In my opinion, the original decision of the archbishop is more admirable than the judgment of Solomon, although and even because I find myself reprimanded. It certainly seems, according to your letter to which I intend to reply, that neither you nor any of those you attempt to draw to your side have understood it.)

Father Caillet, and you who follow his example, resist me “according to your conscience.” I resist you only “because of my conscience.” Both you and I wish to yield to everything that conscience does not imperiously command. How is it that this gift of God, the conscience, so valuable and so advantageous to human beings, can say “yes” in one person and “no” in another, in the same circumstances and on the same question? I have mentioned this to Father Caillet very often, but never a reply; however, he has frequently expressed some false principles about conscience, both spoken and in writing.

How correct you are, my dear Son, to believe that I should know you because for so many years we have been associated very intimately in Jesus and Mary, for time and for eternity. I have been convinced that you were sincerely “religious,” and this says it all; but some years before the lawsuit of M. Auguste, I was sorry to see you so attached to what some call “the assets of the Society,” and several times I have scolded you paternally on this account. I noticed this especially in your great display of emotion during the trial. I was greatly pained at this, and to excuse you I told myself that your intentions were wrong only through excess. I was even prepared to resign on the advice of M. Faye, for I saw nothing contrary to this in the Constitutions. You know I have always wanted you to be General Head of Temporalities and Father Caillet to be the General Head of Zeal, but assuming that Father Roussel would be excluded from all positions of authority, until Father Caillet began to erupt and gave me the signal to do the same.

The three representatives of the Society at Ebersmunster could not suspect you of harboring poor intentions, but they believed you had been tricked by an illusion. I can easily believe this, and that is why I ask only a declaration of “sincere repentance” and everything is forgotten, order will be restored, and the Society will become more beautiful, more pure, and more able to fulfill the intentions Jesus and Mary had in its foundation.

Oh, my dear Son! What kind of enchantment has prevented you from recognizing this until now? How far will you go if you constantly follow the evil plan of Father Roussel? He does not believe in it himself, but he needs it to attain human glory, the object of his ambition, without however ceasing to be delivered from his passions. My dear Son, you are still far from schism, as if Father Caillet. Yet at Réalmont Father Roussel haltingly raises its banner more or less high; Father Caillet promotes it with all his strength, and both strengthen it in your name.

Do not ask, “Why would there be a schism?” This is because your method of attack denatures the Society of Mary which has been approved by the Holy See; it denatures it and in fact, what is more understandable, it becomes a bastard Society. If Fathers Chevaux or Fontaine cannot explain this to you sufficiently, I promise to do so in another letter.

My dear Son, the command which I gave in my circular not to accept an order of any type—from the three Assistants—contrary to those I was giving them had evidently nothing to do with the *boni* which they had on hand. Any generalization of that directive was for some other motive, which should have made you reflect.

The great difficulty you must face in all your obligations, some of which you tell me are a threat to the Society, should produce the same effect of bringing you back to religious discipline. You can do this, you must do this both for your own personal peace of mind and for your own salvation and that of a great number of other people.

The postman is coming; I cannot continue. I will send your money order for 1,000 francs to the Superior General of the Daughters of Mary.

I embrace you very tenderly and with confidence.

G.-Joseph Chaminade

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At Réalmont, Father Roussel had just composed in rapid succession two memorandums (October 12 and 23) to the archbishops, the one official and the other called "confidential," which Father Caillet and Brother Clouzet signed after him without protesting against the insinuations it contained. Accepted with confidence by the archbishops, these would be the basis of all the future accusations brought against Father Chaminade. The complete texts with detailed criticism are to be found in Nova Positio (Agmar 1852.29). This is what Father Chevaux, after learning of them, wrote to Father Roussel.

I have read with great sorrow your confidential memorandum. . . . Under the honey and roses I have found malice and poison. . . . I see the most insidious calumnies mixed with some aspersions about some natural failings of our Good Father. I believe I detect an emptying of a heart filled with self-love, wounded, and seeking revenge. I hope I am mistaken, but I cannot shake off this feeling; besides, truth will the day. I assure you that I am greatly surprised at your way of judging the conduct of our Good Father. You say you have excused him and considered as virtues what others reproach in him as faults, and this for a number of years you spent with him, that you were habitually in his presence, etc. . . . How does it happen that for you, all his virtues become defects precisely at the moment when you form an aversion for his person because of the humiliating reprimands he has been obliged to make to you? Admit, my dear brother, that for a thinking person with a thorough knowledge of the matter, your accusations must become suspect and will not at all change the good opinion which he has formed of our Good Father. I hope that one day you will think about this as I do. No doubt there are faults or rather natural imperfections in our Good Father; but these serve only to enhance his merits and the luster of his works (February 19, 1845; Agmar 7.4.505).

Meanwhile, Father Chaminade tirelessly continued his efforts to reestablish order in the Society of Mary. This letter asks for an account of the agreement between Father Meyer and Fathers Perrodin and Chevaux as representatives of the Society of Mary.

1350. To Fr. Léon Meyer, Ebersmunster

October 23, 1844, Bordeaux

Original, Agmar

My dear Son,

I have received your letter of October 15, which left Sélestat on October 14. At almost the same time I received Brother Clouzet's letter, of which I will send you a copy with my reply to it. These men wish to pressure you by famine. . . .

I was just at this part of the letter, my dear Son, when I received a letter from Father Fontaine; I will enclose a copy, which is being made now while I make a number of reflections.

It appears you have not drawn up a report of the agreement made between you, Father Perrodin, and Father Chevaux as representatives of the Society. I believed you had, for I wrote immediately to Father Chevaux to tell him of this. I think you have a copy of that letter. What is to be done? Begin again.

Write a report which will contain the preambles necessary for the agreement, for example, (1) whereas the members of the council, later called members of the General Administration of the Society of Mary, having attacked without any right the validity of the resignation of the General and Founder, made according to the Constitutions.

(2) Whereas the said members of the council were bound to inform the Society of the resignation of its General after a normal delay, if the circumstances demanded it, and to explain this short delay by reporting the circumstances; but on the contrary, this fact was revealed only at the time they ordered a General Chapter.

(3) Whereas the procedure the members of the council adopted to give to the actual General and Founder a successor and Assistants denatures the entire Society and changes the spirit of its institution and results in a Society which could be labeled “bastard,” etc. . . . If you wish, you may add other preambles.

I am obliged to stop here, for it is time for the courier. This document should be signed first by the three representatives, then by the directors of the establishments. Those who do not wish to sign disown me, and I disown them.

* * *

The Archbishop of Besançon withdraws from the matter after seeing the stand taken by the Archbishop of Bordeaux and states that the problem should be referred to the Holy See. Father Chaminade is apprehensive about the slowness of Rome and asks that the Society of Mary be consulted to show the council the will of the Society.

1351. To Fr. Jean-Baptiste Fontaine, Saint-Remy

October 24, 1844, Bordeaux

Copy, Agmar

My dear Son,

I have received your last two letters of October 11 and October 17, and at almost the same time the letters from Fathers Chevaux and Meyer—two from Father Meyer, one yesterday and another before I could reply to it. I have read only your first letter, dated October 11, which arrived in the middle of the retreat at the novitiate of Sainte-Anne. Your second letter was faithfully forwarded to me by Father Caillet, and I have already begun to answer Father Meyer. I interrupted it in order to compose some remarks for him as suggested by all these letters, as you can see from the copies I will have made for you.

The way to end our deplorable discussion, and which is open to me alone, is to consult the dispersed members of the Chapter. This means was available during the vacations and the annual retreat. However, a good written report is essential in the present state of the discussions. These members of the council do not comport themselves with the simplicity they want us to admire in them; but I must not anticipate the answer I am to give to your letters.

The means is simple and canonical. The inquiry made by Their Excellencies the Bishops is good, but it is a type of dispensation. The Archbishop of Besançon, who is an able jurist, indicates this. But no one wants to see things as I do. Let me explain. The archbishop finds himself obliged to judge a very serious case which is pressing, and there is no time to go to Rome. The case is not just between two opposing parties; one of them is aided by the influence of the Archbishop of Bordeaux, and its decision will be that of His Excellency. The Archbishop of Besançon is obliged to judge in haste because the party opposing the General and Founder, always aided by the influence of the Archbishop of Bordeaux, is going to convoke a General Chapter, which on the one hand could become the moral and religious tomb of the Society of Mary and on the other could compromise his episcopal authority. What does the wise prelate do in a situation which appears insoluble and in which he should appear as an impartial judge?

He blames the General and Founder (and he would have been, in fact, very blameworthy if he had done otherwise).

The Superior proclaims the resignation of the heads of the offices; they no longer have the authority to convoke a General Chapter. What else does he do? Because the decision is no longer urgent, he refers it to one who has authority, to the Sovereign Pontiff. He no longer has a need to concern himself with the approbation of the Archbishop of Bordeaux. But the slowness of Rome! Who will govern the Society in the long interval? He can do much more than a council of the General Administration. In order to know the will of the Society, he has no need to convoke it in Chapter; he can do this with the members dispersed.

I had thought, my dear Son, that the general agreement of the Society was completely manifest, but because Brother Clouzet and Father Caillet do not think so, we must face the problem again; this is not very difficult, but rather painful and more compromising for these men. The “Short Address” must be given another viewpoint. We could have examined the problem and written an acceptable report without preambles.

For the moment, I am obliged to stop here, my dear Son, but I promise to reply directly to all the difficulties in your letters little by little, if I do not do it all at once, unless you find the solution in everything I have already written.

My dear Son, I embrace you tenderly.

* * *

During the interval, Father Meyer convinced Father Chaminade of the reasons which oblige him to remain at Ebersmunster, and it is agreed that Father Chevaux will go to Bordeaux to help Father Chaminade. Then Father Chaminade turns to Brother Clouzet, reproaching him for following Father Caillet and for not residing in Bordeaux. Article 471 of the Constitutions, “the Assistants are appointed by the Society of Mary at the General Chapter and represent it in some way to the Superior General,” does not apply. None of the three had been elected by a General Chapter. Note Father Meyer’s remark that the Constitutions have not yet been approved by the Holy See.

1352. To Fr. Jean Chevaux, Saint-Remy

October 25, 1844, Bordeaux

Original, Agmar

My dear Son,

Your letter of October 18 edified and pained me, but it did not upset me; my confidence is in the Lord. I hope, as you do, that your illness will not have unfortunate consequences. It leads me to make the following timely remarks. (1) Brother Clouzet would rather see you than Father Meyer with me. So come to Bordeaux as soon as your health permits; you will be occupied only according to your strength. (2) Father Meyer, being an Alsatian and knowing German and those who speak it, can get along better. Also, it seems the workload is increasing at Ebersmunster. It seems four Alsatian priests are going to the novitiate, without counting the excellent priest, the delegate of the Bishop of Ratisbonne. You know perhaps better than I do all that the Blessed Virgin does for the Society which glories in bearing her name. But it must be sufficiently shaken, purified, its Founder always winnowed like chaff, for he is perhaps more impure than all his Children. Behold! In the name of Father Roussel, supported by the names of Father Caillet and Brother Clouzet—according to them, they alone are capable of administering the Society—a schism is born! “If God is for us, who can be against us?” [Romans 8:31]. I believe a schism is

not what Brother Clouzet had in mind, but why does he blindly follow the false doctrine of Father Caillet, all gilded in appearance, and even delude himself? When Brother Clouzet came to Bordeaux as a peacemaker, why did he not answer me when I asked him by what right he was opposing me . . . that it was in virtue of article 417 of the Constitutions!⁹

No doubt with the intention to oppose them more effectively in your letter of October 18 and Father Fontaine in his of October 17, you carried the argument to its limit when you tried to show how they could find reasons in article 417, and therefore a duty, an obligation of conscience to reduce me to a moral silence toward the Society of Mary just as I would have if I were physically dead.

Instead of arguing so much, my dear Son, (this is what sophists like to do), explain the articles of the Constitutions which someone wants to find obscure by other articles of the Constitutions about the same topic. For example, in article 417 it says, “The Assistants are named by the Society at the General Chapter and represent it ‘in some way’ to the Superior General; they should reside near him.” The Assistants say, “Our powers are clearly stated here; we have the right to sue, to judge, to condemn our General to a moral death; just look at article 481.” The Assistants find their strongest arguments in the purpose of the plan which they have hatched. Very well! My dear Son, read article 417 entirely and the chapter, or paragraph 2, “About the Assistants General.” The reading will be most salutary for them—or at least it could be, for they will be confronted with their usual duties. Oh! If only they had fulfilled them! Oh! Especially if Brother Clouzet had resided in Bordeaux, as he had promised at the time of my resignation, things would not be as they are. Tell them to read attentively also articles 482 to 484 and the following. They deal with our case.

If I have not resigned according to article 481, I am highly guilty, especially as Founder of the Society; I would be a traitor to the Society, a parricide in the moral and supernatural order, a monster of iniquity, as I told the council. I said this verbally and in writing. But I said so especially in the name of conscience in all our discussions on the question. One day at least three or four months ago, Father Caillet asked in council what my conscience truly demanded. I replied that I could not resign according to their views because of the serious abuses which existed in the Society, especially in the General Administration, and I gave some details (abuses against the Constitutions which a Founder does not reform before his death later have the force of law). I was too frank with them, and never again did they ask why my conscience prevented me, the conscience of the Founder of the Society, of the Institute of the Daughters of Mary and of its Third Order Regular. But discussions since that time have become more heated, and several times the attacks against me have come almost to violence. In the actual situation they take the form of a schism which they wish to consummate.

Discover for yourself, my dear Son, and have these men, especially Brother Clouzet who is still near you—find out whether the Constitutions which state that the General Chapter names the Assistants and that these represent the Society to the General; see, I say, whether they represent the Society in the way or manner indicated in the Rule. There is no better way to explain the Constitutions than by the Constitutions. What an abuse, not to say a profanation of the word “conscience” to apply it to their opposition to the Constitutions!

They say without ceasing and everywhere that conscience orders them to persecute me because I am acting against the Constitutions, and they quote article 417 to those who do not understand the Constitutions.

I must stop here in order not to compromise anyone. But I can add here that the three Assistants were not named by the General Chapter, but by the Founder of the Society of Mary and the author of its Constitutions. Well! These men pretend that from the day of my resignation they not only understand them better than I do, but that I do not understand them at all!

⁹ Article 417. “The Assistants are named by the Society at the General Chapter and represent it in some way to the Superior General.”

As irrefutable proof, they affirm that I have lost my reason. One day I met Father Caillet and said to him gently, “You should have me condemned to silence!” I cannot describe his reaction, but he winced and said nothing. He constantly speaks in the same terms, especially at a distance from me.

I will stop now, my dear Son; I believe you are well enough acquainted with the powers which they received from the Society but which did not dispense them from the duty to inform the Society of my resignation, or my two resignations if they wish, one spoken according to the Constitutions and the other written from accommodation. They had the authority and perhaps even the duty to put into writing both their interpretation and my opposition to this interpretation, which makes the written resignation null and void.

From your reading of the Constitutions you can see that the authority of the council is only a delegated authority. They are obliged to follow their mandate. Is it not inconceivable that they attribute to themselves the authority morally to kill their superior in order to govern in an interim which they prolong according to their good pleasure? By applying these miserable principles, Father Caillet, president of the Administrative Council, has usurped the authority to dispense Brother Clouzet from assisting at the council meetings, an essential article of the Constitutions, and without which he has no authority.

My dear Son, may the Lord shower you with abundant grace and peace.

G.-Joseph Chaminade

* * *

Sensing that he is losing ground, Father Caillet returns to Father Chaminade; in accord with Father Bouet, he proposes leaving the solution of the conflict to the three Archbishops of Bordeaux, Besançon, and Albi. Father Chaminade refuses to accept this suggestion because he believes, erroneously, that the Archbishop of Besançon has already settled the question. He preaches prudence to Father Bouet; he recalls the spiritual intimidation of which he has been the object and reproaches him for the uneasiness which he has caused in the Society of Mary.

1353. To Father Bouet, Bordeaux

October 30, 1844, Bordeaux

Copy, Agmar

My dear Son,

In your letter of October 25 you urge me “to accept a very simple manner of arriving at a compromise, that of placing this matter into the hands of the Archbishop of Bordeaux and of the two others who surely have and deserve your confidence. It is my hope that the discussions could shortly end.”

My dear Son, I see with a great deal of pain that you continue to be duped, involuntarily perhaps, by Father Caillet. Your simplicity and your rectitude make it a principle for you to take him at his word. True, you would be obliged to do so if the Lord had said only, “Be as innocent as doves,” but he said, “Be as clever as serpents and innocent as doves” [Matthew 10:16]. I believe you are in a position to apply this Gospel precept by recalling all the circumstances, both before and after your decision. If you cannot do this, take the trouble to come and see me and you can judge, at least, if you have joined prudence with simplicity in dealing with Father Caillet. If you are able to practice evangelical simplicity, you can also practice prudence; the lack of practice of this virtue is the principal cause of all these miserable discussions and of all the evils which can follow.

Because you may not like to come to see me or to set a convenient time to receive me, I have had a copy made of the letter I sent you last May 28, and which you returned to me with your reply at the bottom of the page. You will see there (1) my interpretation of the familiar remark, “Yield, my Good Father, yield! I trust that God will take your gesture into consideration”; (2) that I did not wish to do anything in which there might be sin; (3) that in resigning as was demanded, I would be sinning gravely; (4) that I believed Father Caillet was seriously deluding himself, and that he had encouraged Father Roussel and no doubt Brother Clouzet to do the same. How deplorable that Father Caillet had become so deluded! (5) That in my letter to Father Caillet I did not at all consider everything finished. I suggested that you pause and reflect and that you compare what I had said in my previous letter with your exaggerated “Yield, Yield!”

Imagine my astonishment at the return of your letter when I found that you had written, “Jesus, Mary, Joseph! My response is unequivocal, yield!”

I resigned in the terms approved by my conscience, or at least which I believed it permitted me, interpreting your intentions. Father Caillet was angered because I was not dead as he had intended. He reported to you that I was not obeying you; from this. . . .

Finally, as my former confessor, and moved also by a filial love which is at the bottom of your heart, you determined to hurl the bolts of heaven at me in the belief that the love of superiority still dominated me—even though I had renounced it as much as I could—and that the cries of my conscience as Superior General and Founder were only the effects of a deep-rooted self-love which, according to Father Caillet, must be uprooted forcefully by placing before me the greatest torments of hell. *Potentes, potenter cruciantur.* (For those in power, a rigorous scrutiny impends,” Wisdom 6:7.)

When you gave me the order to resign just before Pentecost, I was far from believing that it was an order; I took it only as advice which you gave me to avoid the scandal threatened by Father Roussel. I was not slow to understand that you believed yourself authorized by the remarks of Father Caillet to give orders outside Confession, which I condemn and which in effect is very reprehensible.

As a father, my dear Son, I take the occasion which your letter offers me to make these observations. You have been the principal cause of the scandalous commotion in the Society of Mary; you can and you must become the principal cause of order and peace. If because I am greatly pressed for time I have not sufficiently explained things which will urge you to make a painful decision, I will offer you all the explanations you may desire, either orally or in writing, in spite of my many occupations.

I embrace you very tenderly. Never has any trace of bitterness toward you taken root in my heart; I have pitied you, and that is all.

* * *

Here is the reply to the compromise suggested by Father Caillet. Father Chaminade refused to submit the quarrel to the three archbishops because they had already given a negative decision. The only way to prove the treason is to await a providential discovery such as that of the letters of Father Roussel, dated January 14 and January 17 (letter no. 1311 and the note). He writes about the disappearance of the register of the council and Father Caillet’s refusal to allow Father Chaminade to compare the texts (letter no. 1356). He announces the return of Brother Prost to Bordeaux, and he still hopes for Brother Clouzet’s return.

1354. To Fr. Georges Caillet, Bordeaux

Bordeaux, October-November, 1844

Rough Copy, Agmar

My dear Son,

I was finally able to read your letter of October 26 and the documents which it contained. I read them all with pleasure because you seem to desire an end to the great disturbance which has been agitating the Society of Mary for such a long time, and this desire is according to God. God's Spirit is inspiring you.

To reach this you suggest a compromise, to leave the decision up to the three venerable archbishops to whom we have especially explained the causes of our internal troubles. This means is excellent, but it has already been used with all the success anyone could expect. As you suggested, we chose the Archbishop of Besançon to finally settle our differences.¹ I informed him of the consultations, since you would not. When I was certain that each of the three Assistants had consulted alone and secretly with the prelate of his diocese, I informed him of our agreement, that we considered him to be the competent judge in these circumstances because we were not able to have recourse to the Sovereign Pontiff. He did pass judgment, and his wise decision is worthy of the judgment of Solomon. This is what I wrote at once to Alsace and what I explained a few days later to Father Chevaux.

Before or during the assembly of the priests of the Society of Mary, the Archbishop of Besançon wrote to the Bishop of Strasbourg to learn out what was being done in Alsace about our difficulties. He was informed, he was satisfied, and he considered the entire matter at an end.

I am sending you a copy of the letter of Father Meyer in which he gives an account of the settlement resulting from the discussion which he held between himself, Father Perrodin, and Father Chevaux. I recognized the appropriateness of this council of the representatives of the Society; they are eyewitnesses of the central houses who can tell me what is said in the directors' meetings, especially since I already have particular reports from each director. I immediately accepted this agreement; I sent copies to Father Chevaux, to M. . . . , perhaps even to Father Perrodin, and I believed I should notify the entire Society in a brief document with the title "A Short Address." I had a number of copies made. The one I sent you was for you especially. The next day, the morning post brought various letters which persuaded me not to send this document to everyone, but only to Fathers Meyer, Perrodin, and Chevaux.

In sending it to Father Meyer, I advised him not to distribute it before showing it to the Bishop of Strasbourg and asking him to add a few words expressing his satisfaction now that everything had been settled. Father Perrodin was to ask the same of the Bishop of Saint-Claude and to treat Father Roussel as tactfully as possible.

Last Friday I was replying to a letter received the day before from Father Meyer when the post brought me long letters from Fathers Fontaine and Chevaux. After I had read them, I used the little time I had to tell Father Meyer that the agreement they had made near the end of the retreat should be made into a true report, and I gave him a sample with three preambles and one, etc. The report is to be sent to the head of each house.¹ If he finds any director who refuses to submit, it should be presented to all his subordinates. My dear Son, I want to see the end of this as much as you do, and I pray for God's blessings on those who have been faithful in our time of trial.

Among many other difficulties, the letters of Fathers Chevaux and Fontaine discuss a basic point, that of the authority of the members of the council. Their reasoning on this essential point has been colored by concern for status and by traces of sophisms. I am continually exhorting Father Chevaux to speak to Brother Clouzet to bring him to repent, to acknowledge his

¹ Fr. Chaminade exaggerates the scope of the possible agreement.

¹See letter no. 1350.

mistakes, and to send me a letter of reparation. How can Brother Clouzet repent for something which he believed in conscience he was obliged to do? Fathers Chevaux and Fontaine reflect a great deal on article 417 of the Constitutions, which states that the Assistants are named by a General Chapter and that they represent the Society to the General. All of that is true; the Assistants have powers, rights, and consequently duties, but not those which they assign to themselves. How are we to solve these difficulties? Very simply; when we meet with some obscurity about any point of the Constitutions. . . .¹

* * *

1355. To Fr. Georges Caillet, Bordeaux

November 2, 1844, Bordeaux

Copy, Agmar

My dear Son,

You tell me in your letter of yesterday evening that my reply is too long in coming,² that it does not take long to say “yes” or “no”. . . . In general, it is true that a person needs little time to say “yes” or “no” with the supposition that he has sufficiently examined the question to make a decision. This is not the case where a response could seriously harm those who are not careful. For instance, must a person pay tribute to Caesar or not? [Matthew 22:17]. Should I myself wish to compromise my position as Superior General, already compromised by my council?

You say the judges³ are worthy of every confidence. This is very true; but they have already judged by an overturned order. The Archbishop of Besançon has given a decision as wise as the judgment of Solomon.

I believe, my dear Son, that I cannot answer with a “yes” or a “no” without thinking seriously about both because of the serious consequences which either one could cause. Suppose I should say “no”; must I explain why I have not said “yes”? Must I not support the judgment of the Archbishop of Besançon? And to support him does not mean only that I must show that His Excellency was a competent judge, but also that his verdict was true, that my written resignations have stood with an appearance of truth only because of the denial of the resignation suggested by the Constitutions, and thanks to a true coalition among the members of the council, which is a type of treason. But is someone to prove treason in the face of denials? We must await providential discoveries, and these come one after the other, as you know.⁴

My last allegation, which you understand as little as my previous ones, is that I do not recognize my first written resignation as the one which I have signed and the one which you would not permit me to compare. Is a person not led to believe that someone has tampered with the register of the council? I cannot say exactly when it was needed. The document which was shown to me contains other irregularities which could greatly compromise either the members of the council or the Secretary General, or both.

If union exists between the members and their Superior, the disappearance of the register would be a trifle which would disturb no one; but in the case of a disagreement, public order would suffer; seculars, religious, and ecclesiastics would be affected.

Now, my dear Son, if I make these remarks to you it is because of my friendship for you. Anyone who cannot think like this cannot truly be your Father. My dear Son, you say that I need very little time to reflect on the steps you suggest; I am using almost as much time in giving you

¹The letter is unfinished.

²To the compromise proposal.

³The three archbishops.

⁴First the discovery of the letters of Fr. Roussel to the Daughters of Mary, then the doubt raised about the authenticity of the written resignation.

my answer. How tragic that you have never wished to unite yourself to me in the name of Jesus Christ, in trusting that he would unite our minds and our hearts in the knowledge and love of truth!

Father Prost has arrived from Réalmont.¹ He could no longer bear it there. There was no outburst, but Father Roussel told him that I had asked him in writing to come to Bordeaux. I have also received a letter from Saint-Remy to which Brother Clouzet added a word, as he used to do in former times. All I need from him now is a letter of repentance. It is evident that he is holding out only to follow your example, or because of the promises you made in the beginning.

I greet you, my dear Son, and wish you the grace and peace of the Lord.

* * *

¹Fr. François Prost, the director of Réalmont, found himself in a strange situation because Fr. Roussel had come to stay there. When the situation became more and more intolerable because of Fr. Roussel's activities, he decided to go to Fr. Chaminade in Bordeaux.

In Expectation of The Judgment from Rome

November 1844 to July 30, 1845

Another letter to Father Caillet had been announced by the preceding one. Again Father Chaminade narrates in detail the events of his two resignations of 1841 and recalls especially the role played by Father Roussel. He recalls the intervention of M. Faye and of the archbishops and Father Caillet's consultation of Archbishop Donnet. He takes Father Caillet and Brother Clouzet to task for their worries about finances, explains his ideas on the collective poverty which should reign in the Society of Mary, and speaks again about the "assets of the Society of Mary. He recalls two visits Father Lalanne paid him at Sainte-Anne during the retreat and mentions that he once was very close to Father Colin.

We know very little about Father Chaminade's relationships with Father Colin and the Marists; Father Chaminade is first mentioned in a letter dated November 13, 1832, from Father Colin to Blessed Champagnat. "I have received from Father Chaminade, Superior of the Society of Mary of Bordeaux, a letter in which he invites us and states that he will be in Agen for some time where we could meet him" (J. Coste, G. Lessard, Origines Maristes, 1786-1836; 4 vols., Rome, 1960-6; vol. 1, p. 537 ff.; vol. 2, p. 498).

1356. To Fr. Georges Caillet, Bordeaux

Bordeaux, November 3, 1844

Rough Copy, Agmar

The General and Founder of the Society of Mary

To his dear Son, Father Caillet, a priest of the Society of Mary.

My dear Son,

We have been waging open warfare for almost four years. It was very violent in the first years of my two resignations, until the rather sudden departure of Brother Clouzet. My dear Son, you can know better than your two colleagues that I made my two resignations consecutively, the first according to the Constitutions and the other written merely to oblige—that is to say, the one not only according to the letter but also according to the spirit of the Constitutions, and the other written purely and simply as Father Roussel demanded of me in council. When I say "purely and simply," I mean that it was Father Roussel who told me, while I was writing it, "It must be pure and simple." "I understand," I replied. "It will be correct." I saw that I could do it that way without misleading anyone. I had the greatest confidence in the members of the council; moreover, this was a matter which concerned them all.

This is how it happened. Hardly had I pronounced my constitutional resignation than Father Roussel asked me to put it in writing. I asked him to draw it up himself, which he did on one small square of paper, which I then recopied and signed; then it was proposed in council that there should be various preambles, which they appeared to write in the register of the council, and it is not possible that these had not been written because someone read them aloud afterward; but I was never asked to sign them, which surprised me. However, I did not say anything because I thought the resignation I had made was sufficient. In fact, with the pretext that my resignation needed to be on stamped paper, Father Roussel gave me another sheet to sign, which I did blindly, from the complete confidence which I had in everyone. This is the one they kept as the original and which they show me today as my first resignation, to compare it with a second in a letter which I wrote to you more than three years later, in the heat of our discussions. My dear Son, these facts may be recalled with some slight variations, but basically these are the facts.

I was surprised at some irregularities in the statement of resignation which they showed me, in the wording of the preambles, and at the time I remembered only the first which I had copied and signed. I was very eager to compare it with the register and to see at the same time if there were other statements related to it. Therefore, I sent Brother Michaud to compare the document of resignation with the record kept in the register of the council. Three times you refused him that permission, without any reason. I then wrote to the Archbishop of Bordeaux informing him of the triple refusal, convinced that he would oblige you to give me the satisfaction of comparing a document of such great importance to the dismissal from my generalate which you were pursuing. No doubt the many concerns of His Excellency prevented him from giving attention to such a small item in my letter. I am surprised that you did not recall this circumstance to him, for only a few days ago you told Brother Michaud that you would show the register to the council only on the order of a competent authority. Do you mean, my dear Son, a competent ecclesiastical authority superior to that of the Archbishop of Bordeaux? Or do you mean a superior civil authority, such as that of the president of the Court of First Instance, to whom I had to appeal concerning the documents which you are holding?¹⁰

My dear Son, I did not at first intend to recall all these miserable details to you, but only to say at the beginning of this letter that I resigned twice; that both cases in their own way were authentic, the one constitutional, the other in writing and done as a favor and which could mislead no one. The second was written, but it did not destroy the validity of the first, and since you deny it or have only a slight remembrance which made no impression on you or on your colleagues, I must prove to you first of all that it does not matter whether the constitutional resignation precedes or follows the one which some call “the written resignation,” or the only valid and true one.

Happily, up until now we have not had an example of a similar case, but if we read with an open mind the two articles of the Constitutions regarding this, we conclude that it is absolutely immaterial whether it was before or after, providing they are connected. Now Providence has arranged the facts so that they bear clear witness that I resigned according to the Constitutions, as you cannot deny. Because you were a participant in these activities I do not need to dwell on them, but I will speak of them to those who claim to have a right to form an opinion, although this is past judging.

Furthermore, I will not speak to you about that stormy council meeting which took place just before the departure of Brother Clouzet. The storm has left its traces even up until the present time, in the form of long and painful discussions—these traces suggested to M. Faye, your lawyer and defender, that the Archbishop of Bordeaux should be secured as the arbiter by whose authority the matter would be settled.

My silence at the proposal was a tacit consent. But you would have none of it. You were alarmed, and before I could reply to M. Faye you had him write me a letter which could be called alarmist. What! Memorandums to be consulted! To confide such a matter to the Archbishop of Bordeaux! I kept silence. However, M. Faye’s letter is truly clever and worthy of a skilled lawyer.

You know, my dear Son, that there was an agreement between us to choose the Archbishop of Besançon to give the final judgment. We considered all the archbishops and bishops who had petitioned for the approval of the Society and its Constitutions as our Superiors in case of an emergency.

My dear Son, we continued our skirmishes until my second protest. What was to be done? My second protest contained orders which I could give in virtue of my first protest. This first protest necessarily stripped you of the false right by which you hounded me. Let me continue.

¹⁰In 1836 when Bro. David Monier had created certain difficulties (see letter no. 930).

The orders which I had given you troubled your conscience somewhat. What was to be done? You consult, you produce written memorandums. Is it possible? Some advisers tell you that our Superior in the forum of the conscience is the archbishop, that his jurisdiction is more extensive than mine, that I myself am under his jurisdiction. You make bold to consult His Excellency. On your word, you are dispensed from the obedience which you owe to your immediate superior. From now on it will be very easy to set aside the yoke of obedience when it becomes too heavy! Why is so much said of the power of an obedience?

My dear Son, to introduce a certain order into the summary of the discussions which have taken place up to the present, I will connect them to three memorable events which are related to the agreement we made among ourselves to resort to arbitration by the Archbishop of Besançon. (1) The first was my first protest of June 23, 1844. (2) The second was my second protest of July 12 of the same year. My dear Son, you acknowledge receiving both of these, but you were determined not to pay any attention to them. (3) There is the subsequent decision of the Archbishop of Besançon.

My first protest. I am not sending you a copy of my first protest because I suppose you have one, but I will send a copy to those who have a right to be informed.

I have reread my first remark; it points to the small importance you and your colleagues seemed to attribute to the feelings which impelled me to dictate it, to voice the concerns of my conscience and my desire to obey Jesus Christ. Because the concern here is only for the value of my resignation in itself, I will speak here only of its complete nullity, of the abuses which followed the use which was made of it, and of the dangers to which it exposed the Society.

1. First of all, its nullity. That resignation, called the “written” one, is a resignation of pure accommodation, voluntary in itself, as if I were resigning from my generalship, but not voluntary in its intent. It was null by the very fact that it was not voluntary, and this is why ever since the beginning, a veil of secrecy has surrounded the discussions which immediately began between the General and Founder and the members of his council.

2. It is null because of the use the Assistants made of it and the abuses which followed. By this resignation the Founder becomes a dead man. In the process, he truly betrays all the members of the Society of Mary, as well as all the Daughters of Mary of the two Orders. None of them would have entered their respective Orders except for the confidence they had in him to maintain the Orders he had founded, to teach them their spirit, and if he should resign or become seriously ill, to do what is necessary so that the Society and the Orders attached to it could continue to advance toward the goals for which they were founded, etc. He would betray them even more outrageously in knowing all the consequences of his act. Can anyone actually suppose that in the resignation which is called “written,” the Founder could have had the intention to produce such dire consequences? And when they persisted in maintaining that this pretended resignation was the only valid one, did he not demolish it and reduce it to nothing by stating that he would be a monster of iniquity if he admitted it?

I am not saying here, my dear Son, that as a true member of the Society of Mary you should have undertaken the defense of your Superior. Could Brother Clouzet also be indifferent toward him? A concern for money united you in the same desire, that of completely removing your Superior and removing him in such a manner that he could no longer speak to the members of the Society of Mary or to the Daughters of Mary, or about the Society or the Institute of Mary.

My dear Son, at this moment I seem to hear your interrupt me very rudely and saying, “That is not true!” To which I will answer as I did on one occasion, face to face, after a meeting of the council held near the end of February. You had told me very gently, “You realize that you are completely incapable of dealing with any temporal business; you must occupy yourself purely and simply with spiritual matters.” I replied, “Do you believe that this is my nature?” “Oh, yes!” you replied. “At no time have you handled them well. But the Society we represent is willing to pay all your debts. See the harm you are doing to it; nevertheless, we will pay your debts in spite of the financial straits in which you have placed us. Moreover, you are a religious just like the

others; you will be treated as they are; you should be satisfied. You are never to concern yourself with monetary matters, you are never to give any advice concerning temporalities. Busy yourself with spiritual matters.” I ventured one more remark. “In religion, and especially in the Society, there are very few temporal matters which are not mixed—that is, that are not both temporal and spiritual.” You appeared somewhat troubled and then you withdrew; but a short time later I had the opportunity to tell you, “In no way do I harm the Society by using its assets according to the ideas of faith, and to prove this, take the present case, which is bothering you. If I had not treated Father Lalanne as I did, if I had excluded him from the Society as you stated I should, you would have had to pay him at least 7 or 8 times more than you actually did, and the Society would have been almost completely ruined.” I was about to prove this to you when you withdrew.

But the three Assistants had made up their minds; they did not want a General who did not think as they did, they wanted one who would treat material goods as though they were not especially consecrated to God. The Society believes, and the Constitutions declare, that all of our goods are consecrated to God in a special manner and that we must use them only according to the teachings of faith. God had placed faith in reason, and reason uses the light of faith. It is very true, my dear Son, that if on entering the Society you did not have the intention to make a personal vow of poverty, and if you did not consider that it obliged you collectively, if you did not interpret it as the Society intended, I believe you could be dispensed from your vows to enter another Order where the spirit of poverty is not so all-inclusive. (This is a question which was debated nearly 50 years ago.) However, there would then be two Societies, one of the owners and proprietors of goods in common, and the actual Society.¹

But here a great difficulty appears. The assets of the Society are chiefly in the hands of the opponents; to which Society do these goods belong? This question can hardly be settled except in the courts. A few days ago I received with great pleasure a letter in which one of our priests, foreseeing this question, told me that he was ready to become a beggar. While these may not be his very words, they express his meaning. I saw that he took his state to heart, and he did not want a lawsuit. He supposes, erroneously, that you still have some semblance of a title, whereas you have none; you do not even have the one you used up until my first protest. There has even been an anti-canonical abuse up to the present time.

But the desire of the Society which has been so clearly expressed and to which I adhere with all my heart is to secretly legitimize everything, providing you give proofs of a sincere repentance before God. You will certainly not be dishonored. Can you speak of dishonor if you and Brother Clouzet are entrusted with the same offices you have held for so many years? The Society itself would be dishonored. My dear Son, be careful of what you do by continuing to hound me. You could completely destroy the Society. You could perhaps use the same argument against me and say, “Stop resisting us, and the Society is saved.” No, my dear Son, it would not be saved. Even if it should appear to be, it would nonetheless be denatured, as I have repeated and have proved. Perhaps it would be better if it did not exist at all.

A few days ago I received a letter from a superior of an establishment of the Marists who knows enough about our difficulties and who invites me to write to his General,¹ with whom at one time I was on very intimate terms. At one time he also was very upset by some of his priests. I have not yet had time to write to him, but I will do so as soon as possible.

I have also received a letter from Father Lalanne near the end of the vacation and upon his return from Bordeaux to Lyons. When he last came to Bordeaux, I was giving the retreat at Sainte-Anne. He came twice to see me; the first visit was one of mere politeness, but I gave him

¹Note by Fr. Chaminade. “I have already called it, in my writings, ‘a bastard Society,’ because it exists and supports itself only by reason, whereas our Society exists only by reason and faith. I do not mean that one Society does not have faith; it may perhaps have a more lively and a more enlightened faith than most of the members of the other Society.”

¹Fr. Colin.

an appointment at which we could speak more freely. He came punctually. I then spoke to him as a spiritual Father about everything that had happened and of the need to save his soul. He seemed touched, but that is all. The letter I mentioned was to consult me about what he should do in a sincere desire to remedy the past and to save his soul. I have not yet answered him. However, I have considered it, and I believe I have found what I should say to him.

How many things I still have to say to you, my dear Son, if you were disposed to receive them! How many prayers are said for you and in so many places, so that all obstacles to your return may be removed! Let me conclude the first point of my protest, which I have called memorable, by demonstrating—yes, demonstrating—that you have hounded me, judged me, without any right, not only without any obligation but also in the face of a contrary allegiance. I will return to explain myself about two other famous occurrences in another letter. I am sending you this one. In addition, these arguments can answer the objection which Father Roussel made immediately after the council in which I signed my resignation. You should remember that the meeting ended very peacefully. Father Roussel suddenly turned to me and asked what we should do. I replied, “What the Constitutions tell us, etc.” He replied, “The Constitutions have not foreseen this case.” I then explained what I meant. He replied that I knew nothing about the Constitutions.

In fact, for the last 4 years Father Roussel has succeeded in persuading everyone interested in our trouble that I do not understand them. When he faced a more determined resistance, he secretly spread the rumor that I had lost my reason through senility. And you, with the same secrecy, have exploited this very cleverly and have led the opposition up to the present time. I do not say that this is the only means, but it greatly helped the others.

Example. You say that the General of the Society has resigned his generalship and placed it in the hands of the members of his council. The Council says, “It is up to us here to judge an important question.” It is useless to give . . .²

* * *

Father Chaminade declares that if the case is to be brought before a superior, it is to be submitted to the pope and not to the archbishop.

1357. To Fr. Léon Meyer, Ebersmunster

November 4, 1844, Bordeaux

Original, Agmar

My dear Son,

On Saturday, November 3, very opportunely, I received your letter of October 27. At about the same time I received the formula of the compromise with a cover letter from Father Caillet. I will have copies of both made for you. During these beautiful feastsdays, I have been unable to reply to them. I spend all my time teaching or hearing Confessions of the postulants and novices at Sainte-Anne. At the first free moment, I will see to it.

I have received another letter from Father Caillet in which he urges me to reply either “yes” or “no.” To reply to the second letter, I set aside my answer to the first; enclosed is a copy. I had just sent it to Father Caillet when I received the letter I am answering.

After a glance at the compromise I recognized a notorious trick, a diabolical ruse, which led me to ask for or to order prayers. After the wise and binding decision of the Archbishop of Besançon, even supposing that His Excellency had not answered the real question, how could

²The letter is unfinished.

they propose another while they pose as deputies or representatives of the Society of Mary who are persecuted by their General and Founder? And you are telling me that the Archbishops of Besançon and Albi seem willing to reopen a verdict about a question which has been settled, for recourse to the pope was part of that question!

Let us at first state principles, as first principles by reason of their evidence, first of all that the Society intrinsically has the power to perpetuate itself in its own organization, both according to the letter and to the spirit—in a word, to perpetuate itself exactly as it has been approved, and that this is the type of perpetuity which makes the elections and dismissals canonical.

The Sovereign Pontiff is the only natural judge of the differences which can arise concerning the religious Constitutions of the Society of Mary, just as the king is the only judge of differences which could arise because of the Civil Statutes. This consideration has so rarely prompted me, when speaking of the scheme of my adversaries (which indeed is only a question of money), to introduce considerations based on reason. The possession and use of goods in the Society is a mixed matter which concerns both religion and administration. I told him this, but without proof. Not having an answer to give me, they are trying even harder to end our dispute.

Because from compassionate charity the archbishops also want to see an end to it, I will immediately write to the Archbishop of Albi and to the Archbishop of Besançon that I am willing to accept the compromise, but that they would please (1) verify the authority of the parties before deciding; (2) . . .

I must stop here, my dear Son, for the mail is about to be picked up. Tomorrow I will continue.

I embrace you tenderly in the Sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary, where I believe you place all your confidence.

G.-Joseph Chaminade

* * *

Father Chaminade informs the Archbishop of Albi why he cannot accept Father Caillet's compromise. Father Prost has left Réalmont without leaving any debts.

1358. To Archbishop de Jerphanion of Albi

November 7, 1844, Bordeaux

Original, Arch. of the Archbishop of Albi

Monsignor,

I am taking the liberty of enclosing with this letter to Your Excellency (1) a copy of a compromise which Father Caillet wants me to sign, (2) a copy of his cover letter, and (3) a third copy of a provisional reply to Father Caillet about a second letter which he wrote to me several days later on the same subject.

Father Caillet knows the high regard I have for Your Excellency, and that I have such complete confidence in you that I cannot refuse you anything that it is in my power to grant. I can say the same with respect to the Archbishop of Besançon. I am therefore very disposed to say “yes.” On the other hand, my conscience tells me to say “no, you cannot do that without becoming a criminal.” I ask my conscience why.

It replies (1) that the circumstances are no longer the same as when I agreed to recognize the Archbishop of Besançon as a competent judge in the serious question which is troubling us. My authority as Superior General comes from the Sovereign Pontiff, the Vicar of Jesus Christ on earth. Therefore, I can relinquish this authority with which he invested me only into his hands, except for an urgent case. Now the urgency no longer exists.¹ By rights, I am completely free.

My conscience tells me (2) that according to the Constitutions, my Assistants have no authority to pass judgment on my resignations. They are obliged to receive them and to send them to the Society, which alone can judge them and accept them. True, they have duties to fulfill toward their Superior General, and in this they represent the Society which has duties to its Superior. To be convinced of this, a person has only to read the Constitutions, especially the chapter on the Assistants where this is stated in article 417, from which they have taken the passage they have used to stir up the storm which has ravaged the Society for such a long time.

If it were possible, Monsignor, to make a compromise in which the objective would be changed and in which my authority itself would not be affected, then I believe it would be fitting to add to the three respectable archbishops the Bishop of Strasbourg, who was consulted by the Archbishop of Besançon about the state of the Society of Mary before making a decision about the actual question.

Since the decision,¹ I have found it necessary to consult the Bishop of Saint-Claude concerning the questions of jurisdiction which were brought about by the changes which I was obliged to make.² I could not avoid speaking of Father Roussel, who is the ringleader of all our discussions. The protection which the Archbishop of Bordeaux gives him does not seem to daunt him. Saint-Claude is the diocese in which we have most of our establishments, both of men and of women, and the bishop is like their father and has always been their protector. From consideration for Father Roussel, who is a member of his diocese and well known to His Excellency, I have not informed him of what has happened and have advised that he should be told only what is absolutely necessary.

Father Prost has been here since November 2. He notified me that he was leaving Réalmont. I asked him why he had left without orders; he replied that he had taken the initiative, that the situation had become unbearable, that Father Roussel interpreted his presence as an approval of his own conduct, and furthermore that he had settled all his debts and that Réalmont owes nothing, except for the debts contracted by Father Roussel.

I am with the deepest. . . .

* * *

Without any authority, on October 15 Father Roussel contracted with the pastor of Cordes for the foundation of a school. This contract is invalid according to the Statutes. Father Chaminade informs Archbishop Donnet that he cannot move Bro. Philippe Roussel without displeasing the pastor of Brusque and the Bishop of Rodez. He could have satisfied the Archbishop of Albi for personnel requirements without using Father Roussel as a representative of the council of the Society of Mary.

¹The convocation of a General Chapter.

¹Pronounced by the Archbishop of Bordeaux.

²See letter no. 1346.

1359. To Archbishop Donnet of Bordeaux

Early November 1844, Bordeaux
Original, Arch. of the Archbishop of Albi

Your Excellency,

In order to persuade you and also to convince the most respectable Archbishop of Albi, whom I honor most sincerely both in his person and for the choice he made of his three vicars general, I am enclosing a copy of the letter I sent him last October 8. His Excellency is asking for religious not for himself, but in the name of Father Roussel, who shuns me and who according to our Constitutions no longer belongs to the Society of Mary. Furthermore, I cannot allow him to station at Cordes the religious he has selected without compromising myself with the Government.³ I cannot give him Bro. Philippe Roussel without risking a confrontation with the Bishop of Rodez, who so loudly protests not so much against the Society, but against the pastor of Brusque who had ceded the house before His Excellency, who had plans for it, could ask him for it.¹

Had the Archbishop of Albi asked me directly, without going through Father Roussel as a representative of the Society in his capacity as a member of the General Administration, I believe I could have satisfied his every wish without any of the objections I have mentioned.

* * *

1359-2. To Archbishop de Jerphanion of Albi

November 12, 1844, Bordeaux
Copy, Agmar

Father Caillet has hastened to inform me of the contents of your letter to the Archbishop of Bordeaux. In answer to His Excellency, I sent him a true copy of my answer to your dispatches of October 4. I added the following comments.

“Monsignor, in order to persuade you and also to convince the most respectable prelate of Albi, whom I honor most sincerely both in his person and for the choice he has made of his three vicars general, I am enclosing a copy of the letter I sent him last October 8. . . . His Excellency is asking for religious not for himself, but in the name of Father Roussel, who shuns me and who according to our Constitutions no longer belongs to the Society of Mary. Furthermore, I cannot allow him to station at Cordes the religious he has selected without compromising myself with the Government. I cannot give him Bro. Philippe Roussel without risking a confrontation with the Bishop of Rodez, who so loudly protests not so much against the Society, but against the pastor of Brusque who had ceded the house before His Excellency, who had plans for it, could ask him for it.

“Had the Archbishop of Albi asked me directly, without going through Father Roussel as a representative of the Society in his capacity as a member of the General Administration, I believe I could have satisfied his every wish without any of the objections I have mentioned.”

In a very few days, Monsignor, you will receive much more thorough explanations. I was about to begin these when Father Caillet came and occupied the time I meant to give to this work. I will have them for tomorrow.

I am with the most profound respect. . . .

³Fr. Roussel, who had no authority from the moment he had tendered his resignation and was dismissed by Fr. Chaminade, had just concluded a verbal agreement with the pastor of Cordes for the foundation of a school; this agreement was invalid according to the terms of the Statutes of the Society.

¹Fr. Chaminade could not remove Bro. Philippe Roussel, the director of Brusque, without displeasing the pastor of Brusque and the Bishop of Rodez, whose diocese included Brusque.

* * *

Letters were sent to the Meyer brothers: one to Benoît, whom Father Chaminade sends to Strasbourg to strengthen the new foundation, and one to Léon to keep him informed and to ask for explanations.

1360. To Bro. Benoît Meyer

November 21, 1844, Bordeaux

Copy, Agmar

My dear Son,

I am answering you by return mail, dropping every other occupation, however pressing it may be.

When I accepted the establishment in Strasbourg, I meant to accept both the secondary and the primary levels, and I will never accept the one without the other. M. Saglio is here where I am presently dictating to Father Prost, whom you know; he assures me that the secondary classes are not as immediately necessary as the primary, that the latter are urgently needed at the beginning of the school year, and that M. Wilhelm would remain as long as he was needed.

For quite some time now, my dear Son, I have been told by various correspondents concerning the Strasbourg situation that M. Wilhelm is very much inclined toward the religious state. They believe he will soon ask to be admitted to the Society of Mary. When they praise him, they usually add that he is worthy to belong to an Order which glories in bearing the holy name of Mary. In fact, the hearts of many of those who hope for salvation respond most favorably to the sound of this name. And you know what Saint Gregory the Great has to say about this.

Now as for your other remarks, my dear Son, the type of anarchy which has prevailed for some time in the Society of Mary—and of which M. Saglio certainly became aware during the week he spent in Bordeaux—is responsible for some rather surprising consequences. In God's providential designs, he has allowed these to happen. May God's name be blessed!

On this very day, the precious day of the Presentation of the Blessed Virgin, one of the main pillars of this anarchy succumbs and witnesses to the truth. A second is rotten to the core; it is impossible that he will not succumb soon—patience!

For a long time now, I have wanted to consult the Bishop of Strasbourg. His Excellency is highly esteemed by his clergy. I will do so if the anarchy lasts a few more days and if order is not completely restored.

I do not believe in the near future I will be able to provide the dean with suitable teachers for the schools of the diocese. Please assure him of my deep respect and my desire to be of service.

* * *

1360-2. To Fr. Léon Meyer

November 22, 1844, Bordeaux

Copy, Agmar

My dear Son,

I hardly have time to send you a copy of a letter, or rather of an answer which I sent yesterday on the holy day of the Presentation of the Blessed Virgin to your brother Benoît, the deacon. Before mailing it I had Father Chevaux read it, and he says he had already written to you in the same vein, or perhaps it was to your brother or to someone else, for Father Chevaux said

simply, "I have already written in the same vein." If you or your brother knows what he means when he says that his letter and mine bore the same message, please enlighten me.

In a few days I will explain to you the means which the Blessed Virgin wishes me to use to calm the present storm.

I embrace you most tenderly, my dear Son.

* * *

Without waiting for Father Chaminade's reply to the suggested compromise, already on October 28 Father Caillet was urging the Archbishop of Bordeaux to take sides. On October 31, without consulting Father Chaminade the archbishop sent his case to Rome through the nuncio in Paris (Agmar 7.3.47). The same day, he informs Bishop Mathieu of the step he has taken, of the documents he has sent to Rome (Agmar 7.3.48bis).

On November 8, the archbishop summons Father Chaminade. In Father Caillet's words to Brother Clouzet, "At last the Archbishop of Bordeaux has acted in the best interests of our dear Society. Last Friday, November 8, he summoned the Good Father and informed him that the quarrel between him and the General Administration of the Society of Mary had been submitted to the Sovereign Pontiff, and that henceforth Father Chaminade would cease acting against our wishes; he would restore all things as they had been and allow us freedom of action until the papal decision. He told him he must avoid sending new priests to Bordeaux to replace the three actual General Heads. Otherwise, they will not be given any faculties and may even be placed under interdict, etc. . . . Finally, he gave him the order to release the members of the Sainte-Anne community, so loudly requested by the various dioceses of the Midi" (Agmar 7.3.62).

"The interview was brief," added Father Caillet, "and His Excellency treated the Good Father rather harshly." However, in a letter to the Archbishop of Besançon, Archbishop Donnet thanks him "for the happy suggestion to treat the holy man with patience and moderation" (December 1, 1844; Agmar 7.3.73). Note the inadvertent admission by the prelate of Father Chaminade's reputation for sanctity.

Meanwhile, Fathers Meyer and Perrodin were unable to come to Bordeaux at Father Chaminade's request (see letters no. 1331 and no. 1346). Father Chevaux was ordered to take their place, and with the formal approval of the Archbishop of Besançon he set out to join Father Chaminade. On his arrival in Bordeaux on November 17, Father Chevaux learned that the threat of an interdict hangs over him; it took the intervention of Father Caillet to settle the matter (Chevaux to Clouzet, November 20, 1844; Agmar 7.3.65). However, Archbishop Donnet did not speak of an interdict. "The only condition Father Chevaux had to meet was that he was to ask for the faculties in person. From the enclosed letter, Your Excellency will note that Father Chaminade holds very much to having his priests proclaimed under interdict."

This account is contrary to what Father Chevaux has written to Brother Clouzet on November 20. In the following letter, Father Chaminade speaks of a general interdict by Archbishop Donnet affecting all the priests of the Society of Mary. He protests his obedience to the bishops but acknowledges his duties to the Government.

1361. To Fr. Georges Caillet, Bordeaux

November 28, 1844, Bordeaux

Original, Agmar

My dear Son,

You did not think it was expedient to abide by the decision of the Archbishop of Besançon which had been so impatiently awaited. And now we have Father Chevaux who, without advising me, asks His Excellency to tell him how he should behave toward me.

The prelate gives him directions, applies to him the ruling he made at Besançon, and in so doing confirms it. He quotes for him the passages from Canon Law that motivate his action. You must know of this letter; it is from Paris and is dated October 23.

Only yesterday Father Chevaux sent his letter to the Archbishop of Bordeaux begging him to lift his general interdict against all the priests of the Society of Mary who would enter his diocese.

In fact, if His Excellency does not relent, I think there will be a great scandal which neither you nor I could prevent. The gathering storm threatening the Society of Mary may be dissipated if Canon Law is observed and the Blessed Virgin protects us. The fateful prospect troubles the soul of the superior of Besançon. The Ordinary of Strasbourg may have the same fears, for he wrote some days ago that he acknowledged me as Superior General. He did this at the urging of a certain clergyman in the city who has great influence. This does not surprise me. The prelate in Besançon decided after consulting his colleague in Strasbourg, and the latter answered only after careful consideration. I could make further reflections, but my time is too precious to be spent on futile discussions.

Do not think for a moment, my dear Son, that my imagination, impressed as it is by what it sees and fears, is seeking ways to persuade the Archbishop of Bordeaux to take steps he might later regret. No, my dear Son, with the grace of God I will never stoop to such stratagems, which are so readily labeled pious. The first part of the letter from the Archbishop of Besançon awakens these thoughts in me; they have long troubled me. The same thoughts had motivated me to write the two protests, which unfortunately you did not take seriously. This is how the Archbishop of Besançon opens his letter. "Paris, October 23, 1844. My very dear Friend, I am most painfully aware of the actual situation of the Society of Mary, and I see it tottering on the brink of an abyss. May the Lord preserve it!"

Father Chevaux would not have dared to make these remarks to the Archbishop of Bordeaux because he is considered a stranger, and while His Excellency did allow him to say Mass, it was only after he had you count the days to see if my orders had been given after the general interdict. But I expect that because of the prelate's confidence you could allow yourself such observations.

Moreover, my dear Son, as I have said so often, I am resigned to everything. I will obey His Excellency. I realize that his authority extends to all the priests of his diocese or who enter it, however loved, esteemed, and treated with partiality by their own bishops. Here again, my profession of faith in this matter is found in the Constitutions of the Society. In every diocese we consider ourselves the delegates of the ordinary, sent to do his work. He welcomes us as missionaries from the Sovereign Pontiff; therefore, he can dismiss us. Ours is the strict obligation to obey or to withdraw.

But can we silence the other prelates who also have called us to their respective dioceses? This is where the scandal comes in, and the public disclosure of our quarrels. Already, and you are more aware of this than I am, there is talk in Bordeaux not against you, and still less against His Excellency, but against me. My friends are keeping me informed. Will I not be obliged to speak of my conscience? If these rumors come to the knowledge of people who are favorable to the Government, will I not need to explain my ongoing four-year struggle? But what is someone to think of a Superior General who for religious considerations allows abuses to creep in and says nothing to the Government which appointed him?

My dear Son, I believe that because of the archbishop's confidence in you, you must speak of these things to him, unless he brings up the subject himself and after reading Father Chevaux's letter he revokes the interdict and allows the decision of the Archbishop of Besançon to prevail. I had chosen him to act in the name of the Sovereign Pontiff strictly because I considered the situation to be critical. The Sovereign Pontiff is the Superior of the Society in general, while the bishops are the true Superiors of the establishments which they accept into their dioceses.

I am not replying here, my dear Son, to the criticisms and reproaches which the Archbishop of Bordeaux has leveled at some of my writings; I will do this later, and hopefully with sufficient clarity to satisfy him. However, for the second time I say, let us not waste our time; let us obey the prelate's orders.

Please accept my most paternal greetings.

* * *

This letter was followed by another addressed to Father Chevaux, and through him to the Archbishop of Bordeaux. Father Chevaux was insisting with Father Caillet that the Society of Mary needed strong leadership; that this leadership did not reside in the council, which had not met in 5 months; and that consequently the Good Father had the right as Founder to see to the interests of the Society of Mary and to do this in complete freedom. He then gives the reasons based on justice with which we are familiar, and he concludes with this urgent appeal.

“What should you do now? What the Good Father has been asking for a long time, to join with him as his Assistants and advisors—this is the true rallying point. In doing this, you will restore peace and quiet to the Society, you will bring it back to life. What will you gain from your pitiful discussions? Will you save the Society? Well, you can do so by giving them up. Trust me; join with the Good Father, but do not expect him to yield; he never will. He is thoroughly convinced of the justice of his claims to the extent that ‘if I had to go to the scaffold, I would do so rather than neglect to say what I believe necessary.’”

Did these efforts convince the Archbishop of Bordeaux? Perhaps they led him momentarily to doubt the wisdom of his decision, and they gave rise to an incident which was to have far-reaching repercussions. Father Chevaux tells us that on December 7 he had visited the archbishop and was received with unaccustomed warmth. “We spoke at length of our problem. He told me of a letter from the Archbishop of Besançon, who affirms that everything is quiet in the north, that almost all the houses are favorable to the Good Father and in his opinion, Their Excellencies should permit them to choose between the Good Father and the Administration. The archbishop tells me he shares this view. After presenting the reasons why I believed in the justice of Father Chaminade's cause—to which he listened with sympathy—I asked him to call on the houses to side with the Good Father. He welcomed my suggestion but proposed that I have the directors inform him, and not the Good Father, of their choice. I suggested a middle course and asked that they send their preference both to His Excellency and to Father Chaminade. The Good Father wants you to visit the communities in Alsace, to elicit from the directors and the brothers a gesture of solidarity with the person of the Good Father, and to acknowledge him as the legitimate Superior. I will write to Father Perrodin and ask him to do the same in the Jura” (Father Chevaux to Fr. Léon Meyer, Agmar 7.3.82).

“The Archbishop of Bordeaux seemed to be satisfied [with my arguments in favor of the Good Father] but said he was unwilling to make a pronouncement because he had taken the case to Rome. Moreover, he was leaving the communities free to side either with the Administration or with the Good Father. To me this statement seemed filled with danger, so His Excellency advised me to have the Good Father issue a circular inviting all the establishments of the Midi to rally to him. . . . The Good Father asked me to write this circular, and I am sending you a copy. I am going to write to Father Caillet to advise him of my action” (Father Chevaux to Brother Clouzet, December 10, 1844; Agmar 7.3.82).

The support for the cause of Father Chaminade which this interview seemed to promise was as valuable as it was unexpected. Already on December 9 the promised circular had been written, and copies were sent to the Society of Mary (Agmar 7.3.81).

Immediately after the sending of the circular, Father Chaminade sent Father Chevaux on a special mission. He was to visit Their Excellencies of Montauban and Albi to acquaint them with the true nature of the difficulties, then to stop in the communities of the Midi to answer their questions and to collect the signatures, as explained in the circular. The lengthy formula of adherence presented to Bro. Pierre Mazières, director of the primary schools of Moissac, shows the importance and the significance which Father Chaminade attached to this option on the part of the members (letter no. 1361-2).

In a solemn letter to Father Chevaux the day after his departure, Father Chaminade, as if to draw up a program for his mission, clearly presents the situation of the Society of Mary and the danger of a schism, which is more threatening than ever.

1361-2. Declaration of Adherence

December 1844, Bordeaux

Declaration of Adherence, Prepared by Father Chaminade

I, the undersigned, director of the primary schools of Moissac, holder of a superior certificate, after being informed of the decision pronounced by the Archbishop of Besançon in the dispute between the General and Founder of the Society of Mary and his three Assistants, and especially after reading a letter from the same Archbishop of Besançon written by him and addressed to Father Chevaux, who had consulted him on the matter of obedience he owed to Father Chaminade, the Superior General and Founder;

I realize and do confess that I am very guilty for not listening to the voice of my Superior, and I renew all my promises of obedience to him. I will instruct my subordinates whom I have left in error, and who will repudiate it with me.

In the presence of Jesus Christ and of his august Mother, I declare that I am bound invincibly to the Society of Mary by the sacred vows of religion which I have pronounced in it, and I am obliged to observe the natural interpretation of the Constitutions whose articles are not to be taken separately, but whose meaning is clear and methodical when they are considered collectively.

On the strength of this first declaration, the undersigned believes that each member of the Society who makes a personal vow of poverty interprets it collectively—that is, he believes that all present and future goods of the Society are offered especially to God and that the General, who is the representative of Jesus Christ, can use them only according to the spirit of the vow of poverty which each member has made. The General may and must use the goods of the Society for the works of the Society.

In the same spirit of solidarity with the Society, I ask my Superior and General not to resign from his generalship as he intended (1) until all the older members understand fully their religious and civil commitment to the Society, (2) and until the apparel, whether clerical or lay, is chosen in accordance with the principles agreed upon at the foundation of the Society of Mary. Each of the three categories in the Society must have a true uniform apparel.

It is my earnest desire that if other abuses exist in the Society such as those I have mentioned they will be suppressed, and if I can help in any way I will do so with all my strength, but before the Founder given us by God resigns his office of general.

So help me God. In witness whereof, in Bordeaux, December 6, 1844.

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The Primary Schools of Moissac¹

The conscientious Brother Mazières, holder of a superior certificate, director of the establishment of Moissac, weary and overwhelmed by his many occupations, finally had the happy idea of coming to Bordeaux to his Father in religion. He will tell how he was received. The Superior General, whom the entire Society calls the Good Father, first reproached him for not obeying his circulars, for not answering his letters, and especially for not having recourse to the Bishop of Montauban. Every bishop who has accepted an establishment of the Society in his diocese is the representative of the Sovereign Pontiff and is the natural Superior of the community in its most urgent needs. However, the community may consult him and ask for his protection only after notifying the immediate Superior. Otherwise this would be a clandestine consultation, criminal in nature, and would make the permission or the dispensation null and void.

The Superior General gave him a paternal answer. “My Son, repent sincerely before God of the sins you have committed in his sight; correct the wrong done to your brothers which could have dragged them into the abyss of a schism; renew your promises of obedience, prove your devotedness to the Society of Mary of which you are a member, and zealously use all the means at hand to suppress the very grave abuses that are afflicting the Society.

“After you have done this, I promise to give you two novices to replace the two brothers whom you have regrettably allowed to be taken from you.”

* * *

1362. To Fr. Jean Chevaux, Montauban

December 16, 1844, Bordeaux

Copy, Agmar

My dear Son,

Brother Michaud sent me the answer you wanted to give to M. Faye. I thought it was prudent to send it, but it did inspire me to write to you.

Exactly where do we stand today?

The Archbishop of Bordeaux has positively decided that my resignation—which my Assistants admit was given truly, purely, and simply—does not deprive me of the government of the Society until it has been accepted by the Society, or rather by the Sovereign Pontiff who must first pronounce himself on our disputes of the last 4 years, because I claim that this resignation was a pure act of condescension which could harm no one. I maintain and have proved that it is strictly invalid because of these facts. Only by inadmissible sophisms and denials have my Assistants been able to continue the debate.

Because of the urgency of the situation, the Archbishop of Besançon was asked by both parties to render a verdict. He did so. The party in opposition to the General and Founder would like to cast some doubt on that verdict. The archbishop banishes this doubt by a motivated confirmation of his decision. And, my dear Son, you have it from the hand of the respectable prelate of Besançon.

The Archbishop of Bordeaux fears a schism. He would like the entire Society to decide on its government by voting either for the Administration or for the General and Founder.

¹This page was added to the declaration of December 6, 1844.

The Archbishop of Besançon sees the possibility of a schism in this procedure, and this would be a terrible calamity. However, he does give his consent after seeing that most of the houses in his diocese, and in the Jura and Alsace, want their aged Superior.

The aged Superior is willing, provided the election is by the entire Society— that is, by all the members and not just the directors who, as the Assistants affirm, constitutionally represent the Society. This would be true if in the present instance they were delegated by their communities. But because this is a party struggle, only the directors are informed of the wishes of the Assistants or the administrative council, while their subordinates are kept in complete ignorance of what is happening.

Today, they can take an entirely different course and continue the schism they have begun; here is how they can do this.

In the Midi, since our respective circulars the schism has penetrated all of our houses, with the exception of a small number where one of the members with whom I had a conversation was able to introduce some light, almost by accident. The schism continues in spite of the knowledge of (1) the opinion of the Archbishop of Besançon, (2) the more positive decision of the prelate in his letter to you from Paris, (3) the letter he wrote to the Archbishop of Bordeaux, (4) the circular you sent to Father Caillet and at the same time to all the directors, and (5) the refusal of any compromise by M. Faye in the name of the administrative council.

Today, at the suggestion of the Archbishop of Bordeaux, the directors who will be consulted in view of an election will be in a situation most favorable for a schism. They will be able to assemble their subordinates to tell them what the circular prescribes, that for the past 4 years they have kept silent in their interest and in that of the Society; that the Superior General of the Society had submitted his resignation nearly 4 years ago; that although it cannot honorably and in conscience be revoked, he is resisting by his writings and by all sorts of means; that they have consulted the Archbishop of Bordeaux and that this worthy prelate, who is the Superior of that portion of the Society which is in his diocese and consequently of the very General of the Society, had decided that the administrative council, or rather Father Caillet, the president of the council (although he was the only council member present, his two colleagues being some distance away) had the right to prosecute his Superior while acting under obedience.

What reaction can be expected from the members, whatever their love and attachment for their aged Superior? There will probably be a good number who will understand the truth amid the thick clouds of illusion, but there will still be a schism. Will the considerable minority not be hesitant?

(6) Right now there is an example of this situation in the person of Brother Mazières, the director of Moissac, who is resisting vehemently, using the arguments of the so-called administrative council. I had to send the documents to the pastor of Moissac, adding that if he did not comply without the slightest delay, I was going to send them to the Bishop of Montauban. . . .

I thought I would stop here and continue a few hours later, drawing conclusions from what I had said; but (7) I have just received and opened two letters addressed to you. One is from Brother Bonnefoi, the director of the small establishment of Barsac with its rather disreputable reputation, who refuses to enlighten his two brothers regarding the situation, and the other is from Brother Silvain, who was transferred from Orgelet to Saint-Claude because of the extreme lack of harmony in this community of 10 religious. The porter has taken over his class. Brother Hausséguy adds a few words to Brother Silvain's letter; he says that instead of the one good teacher he was seeking, he received three almost at the same time, two from Courtefontaine and one from Orgelet, Brother Silvain. How is Father Heymann getting along at Orgelet? He had written to me from the Trappist monastery, but I had not yet answered him. You see, my dear Son, the disgusting mess which anarchy has produced and which seems to be veering toward a true schism?

Let me now draw some conclusions from the procedures prescribed by the circular you distributed according to the wishes of the two respectable Archbishops of Bordeaux and Besançon.

1. To decide by election between the Superior of the Society and the Administrative Council gathered in Bordeaux. That Their Excellencies of Bordeaux and Besançon confer provisional titles on Father Caillet and Brother Clouzet, I agree, but not on Father Roussel. This cannot be the intent of the respectable prelates, not with the looming threat of a schism. The Archbishop of Besançon agreed with the Archbishop of Bordeaux. Both thought that a simple gesture was all that was needed to bring peace; however, we see the opposite, especially in the houses of the Midi. What will happen in the north? According to Brother Silvain's letter to you, he believes Brother Clouzet alone can reestablish order in the Jura, at least this year. He does refer to me with affection and respect.

Therefore, Father Roussel will have to be replaced by Father Fontaine, who is the choice of Father Caillet and Brother Clouzet and who has been accepted by me. All three will be happy because Father Fontaine had been their choice from the beginning, before and after the lawsuit, until Father Roussel understood that he would not be given the position he coveted. He then revived the discussions, harping on the pure and simple resignation instead of the true abdication, under reservation, which I had made.

Father Roussel is unacceptable because this interim government will last longer than the Archbishop of Besançon thinks. He is unacceptable because he is the reason there can be no understanding between me and the council. His immorality, his lack of faith and piety, and his talent for manipulating his two colleagues on the council would force me to die rather than to see him as Head of Instruction or even as a simple director of a house of the Society. The Society is ignorant of these deplorable facts, yet it is asked to keep Father Roussel in office! Even without the possibility of a schism, can I withhold this revelation from the Society? Would I not be betraying it? I will not need to if, fortunately, he is replaced in a legal manner.

2. If in the carrying out of the procedures prescribed by the circular my candidacy should evoke doubts in some community, members of that community must be given time to seek information, for every election must be free and voluntary. All this seems so clear and evident to me that I would be willing not only for the Archbishops of Besançon and Bordeaux to be informed, but also that Their Excellencies the Bishops would withdraw their protection from our houses in their dioceses which, according to our Constitutions, are formally schismatic. You must have read several times, my dear Son, the paragraph on "Government or Preliminary Notions," which states clearly and formally what I have just said.

3. It must be understood among us, my dear Son, that no religious, whatever his rank, may consult an archbishop or bishop about our present problem without first placing in his hands our Constitutions on the Government of the Society of Mary. Their Excellencies do not need to know them as we do. Any demand or consultation in view of a dispensation or a permission can easily become clandestine, making the dispensation or permission null and void; this was the case with Father Caillet and the Archbishop of Bordeaux, and caused even greater harm. You are sufficiently aware of this situation, so I do not need to go into detail.

For this reason, my dear Son, I asked you to take our Constitutions along on your visit to the Bishop of Montauban, to have a good grasp of the second section on government, and to point it out to Their Excellencies of Montauban and Albi. If you did not have a copy, the archbishop could easily obtain one from Réalmont.

My dear Son, I would like to have some news about your health and the details about all your actions. You have with you M. Faye's answer, your report on the interview with the Archbishop of Bordeaux, and the original of the circular. Please send me copies by return mail. I wanted to write this the moment I was free; copies will be made and sent to the north.

I embrace you most tenderly, my dear Son, in the Immaculate Heart of Mary.

* * *

While Father Chaminade was making his visitation of the houses in the Midi (December 13 to December 26), he wrote to several people to explain or to recommend this mission. He assured Brother Clouzet that he was of one mind with Father Chevaux, except for the mental reservation which Father Chevaux claimed he had when he resigned and for the comparison he made of the Good Father's conduct on resigning to that of a father of a family, "attesting to the fact that his son had studied at home in order to be admitted to the baccalaureate examination, a formality required by law but evaded without scruple when necessary." Father Chaminade rejected this interpretation and asked Father Chevaux to retract it (letter no. 1363-3).

1363. To Bro. Dominique Clouzet, Saint-Remy

December 17, 1844, Bordeaux

Original, Agmar

My dear Son,

A letter from Saint-Remy has just arrived for Father Chevaux. He is absent visiting our houses in the Midi and on a special mission to consult Their Excellencies of Montauban and Albi; a final decision must be made about Réalmont and the diocese.

On passing through Moissac, he obtained the submission of our community there. I am sending two novices to replace the two which Father Roussel took from them. When Father Chevaux left for Bordeaux, Brother Mazières still belonged to the rebellious faction, as did Father Caillet. You have read Father Chevaux's circular; I agreed with it except for the mental reservation and the comparison. When he left last Friday, I was able to give him only the advice he needed; the rest I sent him yesterday and this morning. So you may have a correct idea of our position here, I am going to send you a copy of my letter to him.

My dear Son, I have read the letter sent by Brother Lambert and addressed to Father Chevaux at Saint-Remy. I also read at the end of the letter your usual lamentations about the disorders which are flooding the Society of Mary, and to myself I said what I always say, "He is the main cause of the hardships we are experiencing and of the disorders which are afflicting us." Could I say this if for the past 4 years you had not been the cause of the anarchy which is devastating us? I warned you several times, and rather strongly, but to no avail. Also, consider your relationship with Father Caillet, who cannot sever his ties with Father Roussel; you and Father Caillet are well aware of what is involved. How can God possibly bless such an administration? Several hundred people have been praying for some time that it might be disbanded.

However, let us forget the past. Support the circular as much as you can by letting it be known through Father Meyer and Father Perrodin that you have notified Father Chevaux of your adherence and submission to me. After this, with the circular in hand, pronounce the adherence and submission of everyone at Saint-Remy. Then we will see what more needs to be done.

I have no doubt, my dear Son, that God has allowed this great disturbance in the Society to purify it and its Superior and Founder. With pleasure I see the profound results in the first community to submit—that is, the house of Moissac.

You, my dear Son, must pray, pray to the Lord and his august Mother to open your eyes. Act in consequence and the Society will be saved. I hope it will fulfill the designs of God who has inspired it.

My dear Son, I embrace you with a completely paternal tenderness.

P.S. The Good Father has asked me to include a statement from Brother Mazières; he and the establishment of Salles have submitted. Michaud.

* * *

Father Chaminade invites the Archbishop of Albi to take part in the conflict.

1363-2. To Archbishop de Jerphanion of Albi

December 17, 1844, Bordeaux
Original, Arch. of the Archbishop of Albi

I am writing to Father Chevaux. It is the same letter I sent him at Montauban; he must have left there to visit with Your Excellency. I offer him serious considerations so that his efforts at conciliation might not be detrimental to his mission. I sincerely hope, Your Excellency, that you will not hesitate to take a firm stand in favor of the Society of Mary, which has the happiness of being in your diocese and of being established at Réalmont.

Please tell Father Chevaux, Your Excellency, that I have just received news of the submission of the community of Moissac; I have not yet read the full report.

I am. . . .

* * *

Father Chaminade tells Father Meyer of the steps he has taken.

1363-3. To Fr. Léon Meyer, Ebersmunster

December 18, 1844, Bordeaux
Original, Agmar

My dear Son,

Conformably to the decision of the Archbishop of Besançon and also to that of the Archbishop of Bordeaux before Father Chevaux's serious interview, he wrote a circular for the purpose set by the prelate. Father Chevaux read the circular to me very rapidly. I approved the purpose, but not the reason he gave for the written resignation condescendingly given or the mental reservation and the comparison he added. He left after having it copied without any amendment. You, Father Perrodin, and Brother Clouzet must have received it. Father Caillet also received it and showed it to M. Faye. The latter answered in the negative in spite of all the arguments of the Archbishop of Besançon, and repeated only the sophistic reasons given by the General Administration. Since that day I have ascribed the schism to Fathers Caillet and Roussel, to Brother Clouzet, and to all those who follow under their banner.

Meanwhile, Brother Mazières, the director of the community of Moissac, a member of the schismatic party, came to Bordeaux to ask me for two teachers to replace the two Father Roussel had transferred to another school, which is also schismatic. Along with the other enclosures to this letter, my dear Son, you will find the feigned submission of Brother Mazières. I say "feigned" because he returned the forms after copying them but did not sign the second, which was to be his submission. I did not send the two substitutes and rebuked him for his dissimulation. He answered as an adherent of the schism. I sent the papers with his reply to the pastor of Moissac, saying that unless he submitted them in due form in a spirit of faith and piety, I would write to the Bishop of Montauban and ask him no longer to recognize the establishment as belonging to the Society of Mary.

This was the situation when I sent Father Chevaux to visit the houses of the Midi; he was to go first to Montauban to inform His Excellency of what was happening, and then to Albi to confer with the archbishop about our future relationship.

Father Roussel is still at Réalmont. Father Chevaux left for Montauban. I had very little time in which to give him the advice he needed, so after spending Saturday and Sunday in the novitiate, I wrote to him. I am sending you a copy of that letter and one to Father Perrodin, and one even to Brother Clouzet. I am also enclosing a letter which I believed I should write to Brother Clouzet. See that you work well with Father Perrodin. If you work hand in hand, our troubles will come to an end, the schism will be halted, and we will reorganize the Society. See that Father Perrodin receives a copy of this letter and also of the one I wrote to Brother Clouzet.

On his way to Montauban, Father Chevaux made a providential stop of a few hours at Moissac. He spent these with the community, where Brother Mazières and his religious submitted in heart and mind just as I had asked; this morning I sent them the two teachers they needed. According to all appearances, this establishment will acquire renewed fervor.

I am in a hurry, my dear Son; I embrace you tenderly.

G.-Joseph Chaminade

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In the expectation of an early peace, Father Chaminade dictates for the benefit of Fr. Antoine Fidon a "Serious Review of the Resignation of the Superior General and Founder of the Society of Mary," where, with not a little subtlety, his surprising mental activity in spite of his age and his fatigue is evident.

1363-4.

Between December 13 and 17, 1844, Bordeaux

A Serious Review of the Circumstances
Surrounding the Resignation of the Superior General and
Founder of the Society of Mary and of other Institutions Dependent on Him.

N.B. Toward the end of the year 1840, M. Auguste Perrière, one of the first members of the Society and former Head of Temporalities, summoned the General and Founder of the Society before the tribunal of first instance for the payment of a sum which he thought was due him. A friend of the Society and a special friend of the three members of the Council of the General consulted with the lawyer for the General. His verdict was that if the General were to resign, his successor would win the lawsuit. The General and Founder saw at a glance that Divine Providence was giving him the means of realizing his heart's desire. In fact, for many years he had been praying and searching for the member who could replace him before his death. In fact, for many years he had been praying and searching for the member who could replace him before his death. The council is assembled. He explains his purpose to his council. When he is finished, the council requests that his resignation will be expressed purely and simply in writing, so they will be able to use it in court. The Superior obliges. Peace reigned during the entire Council meeting, but at its conclusion, with the members standing, a lively discussion erupts as to the true nature of this resignation. The Assistants and members of the council, deny this, but in its wisdom and predilection for the Society which is called to do so much good, Divine Providence saw to it that irrefutable traces remained. The story is told elsewhere.

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A General Question

How is it possible, a person may ask with astonishment, that a discussion on a serious matter, but one which the Constitutions must have foreseen, could last for 4 years and lead to a disastrous anarchy? Can such murkiness be imagined in Constitutions approved by the Holy See? Why must the solution be left to the pontifical authority?

Answer. There are two ways of looking at a text of the Constitutions, at any code of law, or even at Sacred Scripture. One is to consider the other texts which help to define it, its purpose and its spirit. The other is to look at it separately, to argue about the meaning of the words, comparing one to the other and drawing conclusions. Using the second method, the three members of the council or the Assistants made texts that were favorable to the Good Father actually argue against him. Let me give only two examples: the text from article 471 and the one from article 481, which is linked to article 482.

The counsel for the Assistants examined these texts separately and theoretically and concluded that the General Administration had the power to pass judgment on the resignation of its Superior, to condemn him to a moral death, to convoke a General Chapter, and this against the Constitutions which give it the power to proclaim the resignation, for its power is only delegated by the Society to assist the General in his functions whenever he or the Society needs this. What an extraordinary abuse of power! Then by using clandestine consultations, they succeeded in obtaining permissions and dispensations from Their Excellencies the Archbishops! First Father Caillet, the president of the council, obtained from the Archbishop of Bordeaux permission to bring proceedings against his Superior; he transformed this permission into an order so that obedience to his Superior and obedience to the General. . . .

Father Roussel, the Head of Instruction, encouraged by the first decision of the Archbishop of Bordeaux, used the same tactics with the Archbishop of Albi. At Besançon, Brother Clouzet imitated them perfectly. In all his dealings, Father Caillet used the sacred name of conscience. How and why? Because in conscience he was supposed to defend the Constitutions, and those texts, whether taken separately and theoretically or not, are from the Constitutions. The consequences are rather confusing, for in his defense the General usually protested that his conscience did not allow him to yield; he would be guilty and would even be a monster of iniquity if he admitted to the type of resignation which they pretended he had tendered, and he often gave his reasons.

This method of treating the texts of the Constitutions separately and theoretically soon led them into true anarchy and a shameful deception of the Society of Mary for 4 years. Actually, only the directors know of the resignation of the General. Although they are much more numerous, their subordinates have yet to hear of this. How is such anarchy possible? It was easy; they used the same means. Father Caillet, the president of the council, believed he had full powers and easily dispensed his colleagues from being present at the meeting; in fact, he believes he can dispense from the Constitutions which confer on him the authority he exercises! What a novel type of illusion! Can the like of this be found in history?

The problem which has just been resolved could lead to more questions of great interest; for instance, if the three assistants plagued their Superior General so obstinately for four years, they must have been secretly motivated and have found their true interests in the coalition. Such energetic and persevering action on the part of human beings supposes both resourcefulness and a driving motive.

The Superior General, prompted by the evangelical command *Dic ecclesiae*, often tried to enlighten Their Excellencies the Archbishops. He tried to do the same with his incomplete council, but this merely provoked them even more. Today he is ready to answer any member of the Society who would wish to know his reasons; he will do so without compromising anyone, not even his Assistants, and he will produce any proof required by the Church leaders. *Dic ecclesiae* [speak as a church authority].

A great deal has been said of the wonderful and beautiful qualities of the three opposing Assistants and of those who hold similar opinions. The Superior General's answers will be restrained, just as his answer to the general question is. This will be true also of all subsequent answers. There may be many of these, for such an opposition will always seem incredible. The Superior General solves every problem himself, and he believes God has allowed this turmoil in the Society in order to purify it and its Founder, to make it more attractive in the eyes of God and better able to fulfill the purpose of its foundation.

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Further Questions

First Question. The opposition does not consider itself defeated by such clear demonstrations. It would be humiliating to be confounded by the Constitutions. It would be ungracious toward a Superior who has just given them such a great proof of trust. They will explain article 417 by using article 481. Is this not to explain the Constitutions by the Constitutions themselves? By specious reasoning they have made good use of some article in another section. Article 481 says, "If the Superior resigns purely and simply without proposing a successor, the procedure is the same as in the case of his death" (Article 465 *ff.*).¹

The usual meaning of this article. First, let us look at the words.

1. "If the Superior . . ." Who is the Superior here? It must be the Founder. When he wrote the Constitutions, he had not yet been appointed by the king or by the pope. He could speak only of his successor; he was founding but not governing. Moreover, the topic here is resignation, but a Founder cannot resign. His mission comes directly from Jesus Christ. The Sovereign Pontiff confirms this by appointing him. This is the usual meaning. (See "Preliminary Notions on Government").

2. If the Superior "resigns . . ." It was just said that a Founder may not renounce his title any more than Moses could give up his as liberator of the Israelites, however imperfect and fallible he might be. He can abandon his generalship, for this is merely to forsake the very heavy responsibility and the details of government. On the advice of his father-in-law Jethro, Moses yielded his authority to 60 handpicked elders.

3. If the Superior resigns "purely and simply. . ." What is the meaning of these two words, taken together? Canon Law defines a pure and simple resignation as one that is made unconditionally into the hands of the one who bestows the office. What is the meaning according to the Constitutions? Here a distinction must be made. If the Superior General dies without appointing a successor or if because of stubbornness or some other defect he refuses to exercise his prerogatives, the Society bestows the office. On the contrary, if the Superior declares his intention to appoint a successor, he bestows the office. See "Preliminary Notion on Government."

If as article 462 of the Constitutions states, "The General Chapter is the supreme authority in the Society," this is only because this has been given to it by its Founder and by the General, his successor. Strictly speaking, the supreme authority resides in him. The Society could exist for a long time, and even forever, without a convocation of its leaders in a General Chapter. If this is true of the Generals who succeed the Founder, what can be said of the Founder himself?

¹The text quoted above is article 481 of the Constitutions of 1839. Here is article 465, referred to in the final parentheses. "In case of the death of the Superior General, the Head of Zeal, under the authority of the Council, is in charge during the interim, which must be as short as possible. As soon as circumstances permit, a General Chapter is convoked and is presided over by the provisional head under the title of Vicar General until the election of a new Superior General and the approval of the minutes. Then, his authority ended, he gives the Chapter a religious exhortation and the session is adjourned."

The sophists who read the texts of the Constitutions separately and theoretically draw opposite conclusions, and they lull the Society with illusions. True, the General made a “pure and simple resignation”; but was that his intention? Is a pure and simple resignation not a human act? Must a human act not be voluntary? Must it not be free? Given his complete trust in the members of his council, his pliable and affectionate character, could he refuse an act of pure condescension? This act could deceive neither the courts nor the opposing party. Not the courts, for it simply called for another General, that is all. It mattered little to him how the substitution would be made. In fact, he never inquired into the method of substitution. It is possible that his opponents had already caused the moral death of their Superior General, as they were planning. The opposing party, and someone might say parties, knew the Constitutions. They were three members of very long standing in the Society of Mary. No one ever said anything about the method of replacing the General. Comments were made at the beginning of the lawsuit about the callousness and ingratitude of the members of the council who would accept such a resignation. M. Auguste Perrière’s letter complaining of this callousness and ingratitude was read in council. The Superior made no comment because of his trust in the council, whose members were his firstborn sons.

Another insistent complaint of the opposition on this point. We do not dare deny, they say, that the Superior General prefaced his proposal to resign by naming his successor; but did he not change his mind when he wrote that pure and simple resignation, precisely because he is so obliging when his conscience is not involved? How could he have changed? He was so absorbed by the satisfaction of rendering service to the members of the council, *who seemed to have no other interest but that of the Society*. Why would he have changed his mind? He was already certain that this resignation could take place, that it would harm no one, for he really and truly intended to renounce his office of general in the manner prescribed by the Constitutions and by simple justice. The written resignation merely confirmed his intention. Could he not have changed his mind? Such a supposition is insulting to a Superior who has never given any evidence of flightiness of will or of mind up until his 80th year. Yes, but a change is possible, and the facts prove it. This completely false sophism has been used for 4 years and can only be refuted by other facts to the contrary, so striking in their consequences that no denial or oath can contradict them. In order not to interrupt the study being made here, these facts will be reported at the end.

4. If the Superior resigns purely and simply “without proposing a successor. . . .” We have just seen that this pure and simple resignation merely confirmed the resignation which a General, above all a Founder, can make. It was given without any mental reservation and from pure accommodation. By no stretch of the imagination could it be harmful to the Society in that form. If this were not so, then a person could speak of treason; and if his opponents wish to take that road, the aged Superior will follow them, always adoring the profound judgments of God.

5. If the Superior resigns purely and simply without proposing a successor, “the procedure is the same as in the case of his death” (Article 465). This is the punishment reserved for the Superior General who has shown such hardness of heart, such callousness and unconcern as to refuse to be involved with the interests of the Society under any form and in any manner. This is the true meaning of a resignation that is “pure and simple.” What form would this chastisement take if it fell on the head of the Founder and General of the Society? It would be unbearable. To prove to them from the very beginning of their opposition that he had not resigned as they claimed, he told them that he would be a monster of iniquity if he were to act as they alleged. He often explained what he meant by “monster of iniquity.” (1) He would be betraying the confidence of a great number of young people who had embraced religious life on his advice and who are progressing and persevering because of his lessons and exhortations; (2) this absolute withdrawal is contrary to that practical faith which is the mainspring around which

revolves all the religious life of the Society of Mary. If it were countenanced by the General Administration, it would soon be sanctioned by the entire Society, which would be changed imperceptibly.¹

. . . and that during all this time their government or General Administration was truly disordered, and that it is unthinkable that Father Caillet could administer the affairs of the Society by himself, in the absence of his two colleagues. It is in vain to argue that they correspond extensively. The Constitutions, and someone might say ordinary common law, gives the right to administer, to make laws, to give orders to the - - - ,² whatever their affiliation, only inasmuch as they are grouped. Here we are talking about our Administrative Council, a body composed of three members, a true triumvirate. They must be united to govern, to give orders, etc.

Actually, in order to emerge from this nameless mess which the opposition has created for the Superior General, the Archbishop of Besançon has decided the Superior General must govern the Society until a decision comes from the Sovereign Pontiff. The opposition has sought to cloud the issue of the resignation. Father Chevaux consulted the Archbishop of Besançon, and the decision was upheld; our prelate in Bordeaux had received the same answer. The two prelates agree on the action suggested by Father Chevaux's circular. It seems the Archbishop of Besançon agreed because he saw that all the houses of the Society favored their aged Superior, and that no schism was to be feared. He approved the decision. Now it is up to the Superior to see that the schism which began in the Midi will be contained. In the most edifying manner, the community of Moissac has renounced the so-called authority of the General Administration. From my knowledge of the members of the other houses, I believe they will follow this example. If this procedure succeeds, the Society will find itself as it was before all these discussions, but it will have been purified by this general agitation. The intervention of the Sovereign Pontiff will no longer be necessary, and the entire Society will render thanks to its august Patroness and Mother, holy Mary, who has taken in hand the interests of her children.

Note 1. . . .¹

* * *

The consultation made throughout the Society of Mary provided very significant results. Support for Father Chaminade was unanimous throughout the Midi, Franche-Comté, and Alsace, and both the official minutes and the report on the balloting indicative of the support of the Society of Mary for its Superior General and Founder bear this out. This is the concluding sentence of the report. "In short, 32 of the 35 communities of the Society of Mary have given their formal approval, and only three of them have not (Réalmont, Cordes, and the Madeleine). In conclusion, it would seem that only three members of the Administration do not support Father Chaminade and do not wish to acknowledge him as Superior. . . . And yet, Brother Clouzet proclaims his attachment and devotedness to the Good Father and to the Society."

In this striking manner the Society of Mary recognized the rights of Father Chaminade (counting of the votes at Sainte-Anne, January 6, 1845; Positio, 44-45; Agmar 1852-27). Given these results, it is easy to understand how the Superiors of the Society of Mary, Fathers Meyer, Perrodin, and Rothéa, along with Father Chevaux, were led to believe there was no more to be said. "What more can they [members of the Council] ask after the declaration signed by all the members of the Society?" wrote Father Meyer to Father Chevaux on January 13, 1845 (Positio, 108; Agmar 1852.29). They believed it was only necessary now to inform the Holy See—which had been consulted—for the entire matter to be settled once and for all.

¹Pages 5, 6, and 7 are missing from the text.

²A section is missing in the text.

¹The text is incomplete.

“Everything seems to be finished now. In a solemn and authentic affirmation, the members of the Society of Mary have recognized Father Chaminade as their sole Superior and Father, as the only president and convener of the council, as the reformer of his Constitutions in case of need, as the leader, the link, the center of the General Chapter which he alone may convoke and which is nothing without him; finally, as the representative of Saint Joseph, according to the expression of our Holy Rule, who is the patriarch of the lovable family of Jesus and Mary. . . . The Good Father is a saint; he can make mistakes; there is no doubt that the Blessed Virgin sustains him and will do so effectively” (Father Rothéa to Father Caillet, December 27; Positio, 42; Agmar 1852.27).

But a sudden change of attitude took place among the very ones whose response had been so promising. No sooner did Father Caillet hear of the circular and of Father Chevaux’s mission than he protested to the Archbishop of Bordeaux on December 14 and offered his resignation (Agmar 7.3.90). Without bothering to seek more information or to reflect on the situation, the archbishop wrote that same day to the Archbishop of Besançon and accused Father Chevaux of a veritable abuse of confidence (December 14, 1844; Agmar 7.3.90).

To anyone who knew Father Chevaux’s loyalty, honesty, and scrupulosity, such an accusation was evidently without foundation, and a confidential letter from Father Roussel to the Archbishop of Albi, if necessary, would be enough to clear Father Chevaux of this accusation. “I am gratified that Father Chevaux is the one who urges Father Chaminade to submit. His talent, his wisdom do not dazzle, but he has sound judgment, a rare understanding of the situation, an uncommon virtue, and he enjoys the confidence of all” (December 19, 1844; Agmar 7.2.94). So the situation had only worsened. The Archbishop of Besançon suddenly turned against Father Chaminade and was on the point of denouncing him to Rome in a letter, very strong but in which each sentence, as it were, masked an error (January 31, 1845; Positio, 41). However, Father Chaminade continued to struggle for the existence of the Society of Mary.

1364. To Fr. Narcisse Roussel, Réalmont

January 9, 1845, Bordeaux

Copy, Agmar

My dear Son,

In spite of the numerous occupations under which I am almost submerged, I am taking time to answer yours of December 30. You must have considered your letter very important under the circumstances, for you sent a copy to Father Caillet.

Among the mixed sentiments which the reading of your letter provoked in my soul, my dear Son, sorrow at the oath you took dominates all the others. You say, “If as God is my witness, I am innocent of the grave wrongs of which you accuse me before the Society and before several prelates, etc. . . .” May I remark at the outset that I have never accused you before the Society of the serious failings against chastity of which I believe you guilty, but only before several prelates and a small number of priests who had dealings with the prelates. I placed my secretary under sacramental oath. When I blamed your conduct before three very respectable prelates, I merely did my duty, *Dic ecclesiae* [called for a day when the church speaks].

Today I might act differently. At Sainte-Anne, you duped a certain number of trained postulants whom everyone considered unsullied until very recently. They had the opportunity, or rather they were indiscreet enough, to compare notes on the practices to which you subjected them. Some were driven by their conscience to seek advice, and they were sent to me. They are 15 and 16 years old, and one is entering his 17th year; are they guilty? However, their culpability is not the question here, but yours.

How could you swear that you were innocent of the misdeeds with which I reproached you? One of the victims left the novitiate for the sole reason that he could not stay and master his passions, however much he was admonished. A few days after his departure, it was found that he had seduced another, who affirms that he had never been guilty of such things before. On this topic, the utmost discretion reigns in the novitiate; the same cannot be said of the spirit of piety. But let us turn to something else.

I confess, my dear Son, that I have accused you before the Society and before three highly respected prelates, as you say, of very serious crimes. But because all have adopted a policy of silence in the matter, I have never been forced to produce demonstrable proof.

When I say crimes, and serious crimes, I mean these.

1. Having for 4 long years, attacked, persecuted, and condemned me to a moral death and hounding me still with no power or authority under the Constitutions; in fact, the Constitutions impose upon you an entirely opposite obligation;

2. promoting during these 4 years the most monstrous anarchy I have ever seen in history;

3. resorting to secret consultations to obtain from the three respected prelates you mention decisions favorable to your plans, most particularly Father Caillet's interview with the archbishop and posing as the president of the General Administrative Council. The decision of the archbishop, which was intrinsically invalid, was upheld by the same stratagem used by you at Albi and by Brother Clouzet at Besançon. Their Excellencies of Albi and Besançon were shocked, not without cause, at the decision handed down by the Archbishop of Bordeaux, especially at how unflinching he was in its execution and how, I might add, he showed a type of indignation provoked by my refusal to sign the agreement suggested; you are very familiar with all the details.

4. I could evoke the schism you caused at Réalmont and in its two dependent communities, and also the schism you introduced into the houses in the Midi. You know how they recanted the moment they were called upon, except for Réalmont and its dependencies.

My dear Son, do you believe yourself innocent enough of these charges, and of those I reproached you with before the three respected archbishops, to call upon God as your witness?

5. You have attributed too much importance, my dear Son, to the sort of tranquility and union that had existed between us from the beginning of the lawsuit to the end. The first time, before the departure of Brother Clouzet, you had reconsidered your first attack which had been so extraordinary, so unexpected, and so violent. You and your colleagues must have understood that you could never succeed in reducing the two resignations to which I had just consented to the one which I had written only to oblige you. You tendered me your resignation and received the assurance that it would be accepted in due course, for you were in a state of extreme agitation at the time. Later in an atmosphere of serenity and peace, when you and your two colleagues suggested that Father Chevaux should replace me as General and Father Fontaine would be the Head of Instruction, I agreed. Then another dispute arose, not about my right on resigning my generalship to choose those who would constitute the General Administration, but about the transfer of those who would constitute this General Administration to Saint-Remy, myself included. There I was to be the Head of Zeal, and Father Caillet was to remain in charge of the Madeleine. We did not pursue the matter; Brother Clouzet left, and the proceedings continued.

There was nothing to discuss. Are you sincere when you stress our silence on this matter during the lawsuit of more than three years' duration? I know that you deny all these facts, that you interpret them very differently; but as I said in my first letter to the three respected prelates, Providence has seen to it that indelible traces exist against which all denials and oaths are powerless.

The Archbishop of Bordeaux is defending before the Holy See the decision he made against me. I have sent no statement, and I do not believe I should send one. If, as it seems likely, the Holy See gives me reasons for concurring in the archbishop's decision, I will very simply put forward the motives for my constant opposition. I would be a monster of iniquity if I were to act differently.

Do not imagine, my dear Son, that I feel sorry for myself because of the stand taken by the Archbishop of Bordeaux; I look upon it as part of the disturbance allowed by the Lord to purify the Society of Mary. It is like a winnowing fan blowing on members and Founder alike. Woe to those who have no weight and are blown away! I am confident that the Society of Mary will emerge from this more beautiful in the eyes of God and better able to carry out God's good and merciful designs.

I am determined to resign from my office of general, but not from my responsibilities as Founder which I believe come from Jesus Christ himself and have been confirmed by his Vicar on earth. I am convinced that, should His Holiness dispense me from my obligations as Founder by declaring me morally dead, which is what you desire, an enlightened Society of Mary will see to it that the General who replaces me and the three Assistants it will give him will be chosen according to the heart of God, and that this new administration will lead it along the beautiful path of practical faith. This is the desire of the Sovereign Pontiff, as expressed in the short letter he wrote to me after authorizing the Society.

Now, my dear Son, you will say that this is a rather long letter, with many boring details which you did not expect. True, but you are wise enough to understand that I am doing my duty. Your very frank letter called for a reply. If grace accompanies it, you will be enlightened and will cease your opposition. Your two colleagues will do likewise, at least Brother Clouzet, who is so impatient with the necessary slowness of the Roman court because, as the Archbishop of Besançon said to Father Chevaux, the Society of Mary is suspended over an abyss. Then again it will be faced with the enormous difficulty of bring it back to a perfectly regular way of life.

Your colleagues, several other people, and you would certainly be compromised to a point, whatever precaution I took. If you were to put a stop to your opposition the Sovereign Pontiff would have nothing to arbitrate, and the struggle would cease for lack of combatants. The time is ripe; the entire Society has unanimously declared its choice. If you wish sincerely to convert, place yourself in my hands and at my disposal; your Father, your loving Father, is extending this invitation.

I believe, my dear Son, as you say, that the reaction of the Réalmont community is completely spontaneous,¹ that you have not provoked it, and that you did not think you should interfere. You would have participated in order to eliminate every shadow or appearance of a schism. If it seemed spontaneous to you, it is difficult to imagine that it would not have been secretly inspired by some wise person; and, I see this reaction with pleasure. But it does not completely remove the schismatic spot. I truly believe the Réalmont community is not schismatic at heart or in mind, but it is evidently so in fact.

Encourage its leanings toward what is just; it will be easier to erase the effects of the schism. Notice what has just happened in the houses of the Midi. None of them became schismatic, either in spirit or at heart. I was convinced it would be so.

Please accept, my dear Son, my paternal embrace. I would like you to receive it with the dispositions of a true spiritual Son.

* * *

¹It seems the Réalmont community was not visited by Fr. Chevaux, but it still wished to manifest its attachment to Fr. Chaminade in some way.

Father Roussel's letter of December 30, 1844, to Father Chaminade, (1) contained his wishes for the new year, (2) proclaimed his innocence of the charges Father Chaminade had leveled against him to the bishops, and (3) affirmed that the reaction of the Réalmont community had been spontaneous and not at all schismatic. Father Chaminade sends the Archbishop of Albi a copy of this letter along with his reply (letter no. 1364). He again discusses the interpretation of the articles of the Constitutions which deal with the controversy.

1365. To Archbishop de Jerphanion of Albi

January 11, 1845, Bordeaux

Copy, Agmar

Monsignor,

I believe Your Excellency knows of the letter Father Roussel wrote me last December 30. Just to be certain, however, I will take the liberty of sending a copy of it as well as of my reply to it.

The stratagem used by the members of my council—undoubtedly the product of Father Roussel's resourcefulness—is even more dangerous because it is so simple.

Your Excellency will bear with me if I give you a brief explanation. Perhaps I give the culprit too much credit when I attribute the fabrication to him. I should say the application, for this is the pattern generally followed by sophists and enemies of religion. Let me explain.

Are they determined to contest a truth which is clearly revealed in Sacred Scripture? Instead of explaining it by means of all the texts which have a bearing on that truth, they isolate it and examine it abstractly. Then they pretend to explain it by Sacred Scripture, using some other text which they isolate and again use theoretically. This is how, for instance, Father Roussel had successfully deluded the most scholarly people, such as yourself, Your Excellency, and the Archbishops of Bordeaux and Besançon. He took articles 417 and 481 separately and theoretically compared them, etc. . . .

Father Caillet approached the Archbishop of Bordeaux about the possibility of relieving me of my duties and the need of a replacement, as though I were physically dead. He argued from another text of the Rule, again taken separately and theoretically. In the opinion of the archbishop, Father Caillet is a very deserving priest; he is the confessor of M. Faye, the prelate's attorney and adviser. M. Faye in turn is a lawyer who is active in diocesan affairs and who often defends His Excellency in court. Father Caillet had little trouble obtaining a judgment against me, even though I was not questioned and would furnish no rebuttal. Furthermore, a rumor had been started that I was in my dotage; Fathers Caillet and Roussel both tried earnestly to convince me of this, etc.

With the Constitutions before you (Book of Government), Your Excellency can weigh the seriousness of the crimes of which I have accused Father Roussel before the Society, of which he swears he is innocent. In case Father Vergne¹ encounters any difficulty, I wish he would submit the same to me, for the Constitutions which I have written are very clear and have been approved by examiners who are specialists in this area.

Father Chevaux has just received the letter Father Vergne sent him in your name. I thank Your Excellency for the kind reception you have given to his petition. May I express to both of you my sincere gratitude.

I am most respectfully . . .

* * *

¹Vicar general of Albi.

This letter illustrates the typical concerns and responsibilities of the Master of Novices at Sainte-Anne.

1365-2. To M. Lacoste, Layrac

January 20, 1845, Bordeaux

Copy, Agmar

If you can, my dear Lacoste, come soon to the novitiate of Sainte-Anne; it is very near Bordeaux, no. 160, Chemin de Saint Genès. You will be accepted, at least for a short probationary period, under the terms expressed in your last letter. Should you desire to postpone your visit until later, write again and I will give you an answer. In either case, obtain the letter of reference from Father Lalanne which you have promised me.

I embrace you, my dear Lacoste, with tender memories of our first interviews.

* * *

1365-3. To Fr. Jean Lalanne

February 1845, Bordeaux

Copy, Agmar

I was grief-stricken that you should have entertained the thought that I wanted to break with you. Never have I received a letter from you without turning immediately to God and to others for help. To God, that I might provide you with the advice you sought, and to others to seek the means to pay off all your debts. It appears that in this last regard, you would not have received any consolation and that they would have been used against me.¹¹

* * *

When he realized that all his efforts to reconcile Father Roussel had been useless, Father Chaminade decided to strip him by an official act of his title as Head of Instruction. In a tactful gesture, he writes to invite Father Roussel to resign voluntarily. This would forestall and render ineffectual any protest, and Father Chaminade could safeguard Father Roussel's reputation.

It is evident that Father Chaminade knew of the Confidential Memorandum which, "it is said, is fascinating." He takes Father Roussel to task for neglecting to give him a copy and closes with a reference to the Roussel-Stoffel correspondence. In a letter to the papal nuncio on July 31, 1847 (no. 1481-3), Father Chaminade writes that he was keeping Father Roussel informed of the revelations being made about his conduct at Sainte-Anne. We learn, for instance, that André Stoffel had written to Father Chaminade on January 14, 1845, before writing to Father Roussel on January 29. These letters form part of the correspondence with the nuncio. The letter to Father Chaminade contains the avowals of Father Roussel's victims; that of January 29, 1845, makes the same and other admissions. It mentions the schism encouraged by him at Réalmont, his accusations against Father Chaminade—that he was mentally deranged, not to be trusted, a cause of disintegration—his abusive use of the resignation, and his intention to withdraw from the Society of Mary. After these Father Roussel adds, "Happy are they who suffer for justice's sake!" Unless he repents and returns to Father Chaminade, he will have to face the judgment of God!

¹¹This letter is in fact a passage from a letter which has not been preserved. This passage is cited by Fr. Lalanne in a letter to Fr. Chevaux (February 2, 1845).

The same letter to the nuncio contains a copy of Father Roussel's letter to Father Chaminade dated January 22, 1845 (Agmar 7.4.467). First he admits his immoral acts and concludes with a distinction between the private individual and the public person. Father Chaminade also draws the nuncio's attention to the remarkable tactic suggested by Father Caillet to the archbishops—never to reply to him. This suggestion was also made to the nuncio.

1366. To Fr. Narcisse Roussel, Réalmont

February 11, 1845, Bordeaux

Copy, Agmar

A Protest by Father Chaminade
Against Father Roussel, the General Head of Instruction
In the Society of Mary.
My dear Son,

(1) Whereas you are guilty of insubordination by your stealthy departure from Bordeaux and the threats you made never to attend the General Council of the Society as long as I was present, which threat you have carried out by absenting yourself for more than 7 months;

2. whereas the permissions granted to you by Father Caillet for these absences were invalid, for he has no power to grant a dispensation which is so contrary to the spirit of our Constitutions;

(3) whereas you misused your title of Head of Instruction during your lengthy absence from Bordeaux (1) by dissuading the directors of the Midi from the obedience and respect due to the Founder and Superior General of the Society, (2) by using your title to continue exercising the functions of a member of the General Administration in spite of the fact that I had revoked your powers and your title, and (3) by installing yourself, without an order or a legitimate permission, as director of the establishment of Réalmont;

(4) whereas, finally, you are guilty of other serious abuses which I will not mention;

In virtue of the power vested in me as Founder of the Society of Mary to appoint and consequently to dismiss my Assistants, and unable as I am to consult with the other Assistants who keep aloof from me,

I hereby revoke your title of General Head of Instruction which I conferred upon you during the first days of January 1841; I disavow any use you might make of it and hereby reduce you to the status of a simple religious of the Society of Mary, without powers, and I will disavow your signature on any contract which might bind the Society of Mary.

*

With sorrow, my dear Son, with the deepest sorrow, I have decided to revoke your title of General Head of Instruction.

For the revocation to be effective and to gain public acceptance, I see no other way but to announce it to the Society.

I invite you to send me your resignation in due form. It will be more to your advantage if I accept it than if I publish the official protest I have composed today.

Far be it from me, my dear Son, to exclude you from the Society, in spite of the loss of your efficacious, honorable, and advantageous means of action. The strict measure I am using in your case has only one purpose—to cause you to come to your senses and to convert. Do not believe for a moment that Christian charity and paternal devotion bear any similarity to purely human friendship, which in cases like this would degenerate into real hatred. Did David not always love Absalom most truly? May God preserve you, my dear Son, from a fate resembling in any way that of Absalom!

This short letter must serve as a reply to yours of January 22. Because it is highly expedient that the miserable matter of my resignation will be laid to rest, I thought it would be helpful to answer all the reasons you think you have for prolonging the debate. In spite of the limited time I can spend on the matter, I was on page 19¹ when I learned of the confusion in the Society resulting from your secret memorandum written for the bishops alone and which, they tell me, is fascinating. If this is how the prelates find the document, why was it not sent to me in simplicity and good faith? You know the slight penchant I have for authority; I am willing to resume it, as I have said and written, only because I want to resign in a manner sanctioned by my conscience. Why do you wish for me, who have one foot in the grave as they say, to act in a criminal fashion to please you and your two colleagues rather than God?

My dear Son, immediately send me this fine memorandum, and I promise that if it contains nothing but truth and honesty, I will yield immediately. If I am not able to give up the administration abruptly, I will so inform the Society, and I will be the first to ask the Sovereign Pontiff to judge me most severely.

If you have only the original memorandum on hand, my dear Son, and if a copy needs to be made, to avoid further delay I ask you to persuade the Archbishop of Albi to send me his copy with the promise to replace it as soon as possible. Even though this secret memorandum was for his eyes alone, the interests of justice, honesty, and even loyalty demand that I—and you might add my ordinary council—will not be excluded from this communication.

However, my dear Son, I will close as soon as I can this long letter which is an answer to yours. I will have a copy made if you so desire.

I will not forward a letter which M. André Stoffel has written to you, without any prompting on my part, in which he relates and proves some facts which are not among those to which you confess. His letter is in answer to an expression you used concerning yourself, “Blessed are they who suffer persecution for the sake of justice!” I am keeping both the letter and its rough draft for fear of an accident.

Please accept again this proof of my constant paternal devotedness.

* * *

Father Chaminade sent copies of these documents to the Archbishop of Albi in a letter which reveals all his loyalty and simplicity. While in his answer of January 7 Father Chaminade constrains Father Roussel to confess to things which he had always denied, he also caused Archbishop Mathieu to assume a more hostile attitude toward the Society of Mary. Father Roussel waited several weeks; then on March 5 he handed his resignation to the Archbishop of Albi; but he continued to reside at Réalmont and to continue as usual.

1367. To Archbishop de Jerphanion of Albi

February 11, 1845, Bordeaux

Copy, Agmar

Your Excellency,

I have the honor of enclosing in this letter a copy of the official protest which I sent to Father Roussel, the Head of Instruction, with its cover letter and two other documents.

The principal reason for an action which I heartily deplore is the fear that because of his continued presence in Réalmont, Father Roussel might involve you in various debts and

¹See the presentation of letter no. 1367-2.

commitments.¹ What happened in Bordeaux could happen in Réalmont. Even if nothing happens, it is still an act of prudence. I had Father Chevaux draw up a preamble so that my action might not be ascribed to something which was personal to me.

The cover letter, Your Excellency, is a brief answer to Father Roussel's reaction to mine which had been prompted by his of last December 30, and of which you have a copy. My reply provoked two very different but simultaneous reactions, a very good one on the part of Father Roussel and a very regrettable one from the Archbishop of Besançon.

A good one on the part of Father Roussel, because it forced from him the admission to a number of facts which he had always denied and which you yourself, according to Father Chevaux, have looked upon as exaggerations on my part. By his answer Father Roussel also unwittingly confirms what I had the honor of disclosing to you, his knack of arguing both sides of a question convincingly. You will see how he proves that he did not perjure himself when he swore to his innocence before several prelates and before the Society, and by the distinction he makes between the private person and the public person in him.

On the part of the Archbishop of Besançon, this answer which Your Excellency thought proper to communicate to him had the following result. After reading it His Excellency sent for Father Fidon, a priest of the Society of Mary, the director of a very fine establishment we have in Besançon, and told him how pained he was at the conduct of the Good Father. "What unrelenting zeal! No! The Spirit of God is not manifest here! Never has a priest been subjected to such treatment, etc." Father Fidon immediately reported this to Brother Clouzet, who informed Father Chevaux. I had asked Father Chevaux to consult the Archbishop of Besançon for me about an establishment of the Daughters of Mary, whose Founder wanted to assume all the expenses and herself become a religious of the Daughters of Mary. The prelate answered, "Because of the course of the Society of Mary, the disorder in its administration, and the lack of honesty and good faith in its dealings, I cannot approve the new establishment it wishes to found in my diocese, and I will be on my guard against those that already exist. Besançon, January 30, 1845. Please accept, Monsieur, the expression of my consideration. . . . Césaire."

Your Excellency, I could mention other instances, but let me simply state that since the Archbishop of Besançon read that reply, several rather serious disorders have come to my attention. I do not know whether I can put a stop to them before a scandal ensues. I can only say that ever since the election, or reelection if you will, of the former government of the Society of Mary, with the almost unanimous vote not only of the directors but of all the members, the Society has never enjoyed greater peace, tranquility, and religious obedience.

I am, Your Excellency. . . .

* * *

After letter no. 1367, Agmar has document 1367-2; it is not dated and is not addressed to any particular person. This is a first draft, interrupted on page 18, composed and written by Father Chevaux. A note by Father Lebon states, "This must be the memorandum of 18 pages of which Father Chaminade speaks to Father Roussel on February 11, 1845 (letter no. 1366) in reply to his letter of January 22. Therefore, it was written between January 25 and February 11."

Father Chaminade probably did not dictate the letter to Father Chevaux. "Father Chaminade, our Good and Venerable Father (this is how we speak of him) . . . the Administration which is contesting our Venerable Founder's title. . . ." On the other hand, the conversations which are reported, the details, the factual explanations, and the revelation of Father Chaminade's intimate motives seem to have been suggested by him. For this reason, this memorandum, even if it is not signed by Father Chaminade, is given here.

¹This is precisely what happened.

1367-2. Memorandum by Fr. Jean Chevaux

Before February 11, 1845, Bordeaux

Rough Copy by Father Chevaux, Agmar

The Society of Mary is facing a major difficulty with reference to its supreme authority. Its first Superior General and Founder, Father Chaminade, admits that he tendered a verbal resignation to his council and later, in the course of a lawsuit, a conditional resignation according to the Constitutions—that is, one in which he claimed the privilege of appointing his successor. This was followed by a written resignation according to the Civil Statutes, that is, without this reservation, because it was not required by law or demanded by the Statutes. He considers his written resignation as a confirmation of his verbal one, and although it contains no reservation, neither is it opposed to one.

Therefore, he maintains that his resignation is conditional, and because his written abdication has not been published and has not been accepted by the competent authority and no successor has been appointed, he says he has not forfeited his generalship and he lays claim to a Superior's authority.

On the other hand, when Father Chaminade, our Good and Venerable Father (this is how we speak of him) tendered his resignation, in accordance with the Constitutions he conferred upon his council the authority to govern the Society under the presidency of the Head of Zeal and to act in its name.

This council was given the name Administrative Council, or more simply, the General Administration. This is the General Administration which today contests our Venerable Founder's title of Superior General by denying that he resigned conditionally according to the Constitutions and which to this day claims general authority, even though its powers were revoked by the Superior because they were being abused. Its argument is based solely on the formula of the written resignation, which they call "the second resignation," and on the fact that the matter was in litigation for three years. Later we will see how weighty the arguments in favor of their claims are. Let me briefly describe how things now stand.

1. Did Father Chaminade truly tender a verbal, conditional resignation according to the Constitutions before producing the civil act of resignation?

2. Does the written document nullify the condition expressed in the verbal resignation, and is the latter revoked by the former?

3. Is his written resignation nullified because of the absence of an essential condition?

4. Last, does the dispersal of the members of the Administrative Council constitute another reason why Father Chaminade wishes to resume his authority, at least for the time being?

To answer all these questions, I will first report certain facts. To better understand what I am about to say, let us see what the Constitutions contain about Government.

We read that the Society of Mary is both a civil society and a religious society; as a civil society it is governed by its Civil Statutes, and as a religious Order by its Constitutions. The latter are much the same as the Statutes, if considered from the point of view of religion and not in the light of human reason. As a religious Order, its government is more encompassing and its Constitutions are more developed; however, it insists only on the religious application of these. It follows that whatever the Constitutions add to the Statutes cannot be used for civil purposes. Article 389 says, "No member of the Society can be forced or constrained (before the law) to go beyond what is

stipulated by the civil authority.” Where the Constitutions go beyond the Statutes is in matters of conscience, the members are told that they are in conscience bound to observe them, but that they will never be forced to do so by recourse to the courts. To anyone familiar with the religious situation in France, the wisdom of these remarks is evident. Now, to the facts.

In 1833 Father Chaminade, who was residing in Agen because of the persecutions he had suffered in the cause of religion, signed a settlement without consulting his council in favor of M. Auguste Perrière, a former member of the Society of Mary and General Head of Work in the same Society, in which he absolved him of all present and past debts contracted by him in the name of the Society. Unfortunately, he forgot to exclude a debt of 14,000 francs which the Society had advanced him when he became a member. The Superior had often asked him to repay this debt. His promise to pay was followed by postponement, and finally by a declaration that he was absolved of this debt because of his services to the Society.

In 1840, M. Perrière was brought to court for failing to pay a life annuity which he had purchased while treasurer of the Society. Following various transactions, this annuity had become the responsibility of a third person, who refused to pay. The capital of the annuity was a mortgage on M. Perrière’s property. Because of his settlement with Father Chaminade, he believed he could make him responsible for the annuity. Father Chaminade would have been willing, if only M. Perrière had agreed to pay the 14,000 francs he owed the Society. But he refused, and he brought Father Chaminade before the Court of First Instance to make him pay both the annuity and the mortgage.

This was the situation when our venerable Father summoned the council to discuss the matter. After hearing him, the members of the council bitterly criticized Father Chaminade for signing such a costly agreement without advising his council, which is against both the Constitutions and the Statutes. They suspected that it might be illegal and consulted a good lawyer, who agreed with them.

The council then declared to the Good Father that not only would they demand the 14,000 francs, but they would also seek to nullify the agreement, which under many aspects was too burdensome for the Society, and they would base their claim on the abuse which the General had made of his powers.

At this the Good Father interjected a few comments; he protested that he had acted because of the difficult times and his hope that M. Auguste would return to the Society; moreover, the case was not expressly covered either by the Constitutions or by the Statutes; also, it did not seem right to treat a man in this fashion for a sum which could be considered trifling in the light of the difficulties and the effects of its repayment. However, these and other arguments could not deter the council, and although it had been summoned to decide whether M. Perrière should be brought to court, it concluded that a more serious court action must be undertaken against the Founder and General; they sought his deposition.

On the advice of a lawyer, and alleging the impropriety that Father Chaminade would plead against his own signature, and the appropriateness of his resignation as General, the council dared to propose to its good and venerable Founder that he resign from his generalate.

The Founder was astonished by this suggestion, which was highly unexpected and so unseemly. His first reaction was a refusal, accompanied by his reasons; then he said that he would reflect on it.

At the next meeting he said, “It seems to me that by this circumstance Divine Providence is giving me the opportunity of accomplishing my heart’s desire. For several years I have been praying and reflecting on the choice of the one who would replace me at my death. I have reason to believe that God will hear my prayer.”

After explaining his decision at greater length, he declared that he was resigning, as he had been planning to do for some time.

Here it must be mentioned that he had, in fact, spoken to his Assistants of his plan to appoint a successor. He had even revealed the name of this successor to his First Assistant and then to his Second. The latter wrote a long letter to the Good Father in an attempt to dissuade him from his choice. They were aware of the intent and purposes of the Superior in that regard.

Although the council was satisfied in part, it was not completely at ease. Would the resignation to which they were witnesses stand up in court? The court must be informed immediately of the name of the successor. This point was mentioned to the Good Father, and he was asked to provide a written, legal act of resignation. He promised to do so and asked his secretary to draw it up. It was presented to him at the next meeting. He saw nothing in it that could not be reconciled with his conditional resignation of the night before, so he wrote it on legal paper and signed it.

No sooner had he given the document to his council than his Second Assistant turned to him and in a bantering and triumphant tone. "Well, Good Father, what are you going to do now that you have actually signed?" "As it is said in the Constitutions," he answered. "This particular case is not foreseen in the Constitutions!" "It is," said the Good Father, "and to give you an example of how I will act from now on, imagine that I am Head of Zeal, you Head of Instruction, and Brother Clouzet Head of Temporalities, and I appoint Father Caillet as my replacement; how will we proceed?" "Oh," answered the Second Assistant sharply, "the Constitutions do not lend themselves to such an interpretation. I see that you understand nothing about the Constitutions." At this point the council meeting was adjourned.

In a chance encounter some days later, the Founder chided him for his witticism, which was disrespectful to say the least. He reprimanded him especially for intimating that he knew nothing of the Constitutions, and he again tried to explain to him how his conditional resignation was not a contradiction of his written act. His Assistant flared up at this and declared that he himself would prefer to tender his resignation if such things came to pass. "This is not the time or the place, but if you tender your resignation, I will accept it."

The Assistant did not carry out his threat, and his colleagues made no further references to the resignations. The Superior General concluded that he had been understood and said nothing further. A relative peace reigned from then on, except for a few sharp remarks the Good Father felt it was his duty to make.

Let us remark here that after giving his resignation and no longer being obliged to appear in court, the Founder immediately sought to entrust the reins of government to someone else. He chose his council, to whom he gave general authority over the Society. This act was duly noted in the civil formula of jurisdiction reserved for such cases; article 428 of the Constitutions gives some examples.

The resignation was now an accomplished fact, but the Society had to be informed of it. The Assistants remarked to the General that for valid reasons the existence of the lawsuit had not been revealed to the Society, and that for the same reasons, it would be fitting to keep it unaware of the resignation because one could not be revealed without the other; the court action would last at most a few months, and at its conclusion both events could be revealed to the Society. To the Founder these remarks seemed to be dictated by prudence, and he approved.

But when after one year, after two years, he saw that the court action had not been settled, he repeatedly complained of the lack of organization of the administration; the more drawn out the lawsuit, the more bitter his complaints were.

Immediately after his resignation and the organization of the General Administration which was to replace him during the lawsuit, in a circular of January of 1841 the Founder alerted the Society that it had been given into the charge of the three Assistants, that henceforth all business would be channeled through the three offices, that everything would be discussed and decided in council, that all correspondence was to be addressed to the three offices. He also informed it that he would still be part of the Administration, that the three General Heads had accepted their collective government only on the expressed condition that he would continue to guide them, either individually

or in council, in all matters under their jurisdiction; that he did not propose to withdraw from his Children and not be heard from again; that only under these conditions had his Assistants accepted their responsibilities; that he had promised to allow them to profit from his experience; that he would share actively in everything that was done, their decisions would be his decisions, he would speak through them; and that consequently the Society was to accept their actions as though they were his own.

This circular of the Superior General was followed by a second dated January 12, 1841, from the Assistants, in which they repeated the same considerations. They added that the Office of Temporalities had been completely reorganized, but not the other two offices; however, they would tend to the matter under the guidance of the venerable Founder.

But what became of all those beautiful promises? What order did they introduce into the Society which was not already present when they took office? They should accuse the Founder of negligence! For three favorable years they exercised their general authority; where are the reforms they so loudly promised? If there had been any, could they have claimed full responsibility?

When he established his General Administration, the Founder was careful to impress upon his Assistants the duty of residence; they were asked to promise fidelity in this respect, and the fact was duly noted in the minutes. A slight exception was made for the Head of Temporalities; he was granted a delay of several weeks, also consigned in the minutes, during which he could conclude his business at his place of residence. He formally promised to observe this command of the Founder, but was he faithful? On several occasions, both verbally and in writing, the Founder reprimanded him and had him called to order by the Head of Zeal, his representative. Did he comply? Now he is pretending a permission granted by the Head of Zeal, his representative. Was he faithful to the call of duty? Did the latter have the authority to grant that permission, one which violated the expressed intentions of the Constitutions?

The Founder had foreseen and planned everything. He had resigned orally according to the Constitutions, and he had defended his action against one of his Assistants who questioned its validity in view of the written resignation. He had set up a General Administration according to the spirit of the Constitutions. He had taught it its duties and had presented it to the Society. In a word, he had settled and explained everything. Everyone seemed to know his duty, and no one protested any longer. He must have been convinced that he had been understood and that all were of his opinion. Is it surprising then that after three years everything seemed calm and peaceful?

He attended the council meetings and guided the discussions by his advice and his long experience. All parties concerned had agreed to this wise arrangement. What must have convinced the General that his reservation had been understood took place during the lawsuit. At various times the organization of the new General Administration was discussed, and every time the Good Father was urged to name a successor. On one occasion they presented him with a slate of candidates for the office of general and for the Assistants, and he was asked if after making his choice he would consent to move the General Administration to the north and if so, whether he would accompany it. These efforts came to nothing when the Founder agreed to the nominations but refused to relocate the Administration.

Finally, after three years the Administration lost the lawsuit which they had launched for purely human motives. While this loss was highly disconcerting for the Assistants, Father Chaminade adored in silence the just judgments of God. He was openly and repeatedly accused of being the principal cause of their failure. They seized this opportunity to insist that it was time for him to give up the financial administration of the Society, that he was incompetent. They added that they believed him unfit to govern; he should abandon the Administration and give himself totally to a life of prayer.

“This ineptitude of mine in the administration of affairs and in government—is it natural in me, or moral?” the venerable Founder asked calmly and smilingly. “It is natural,” came the blunt answer. “Ah, good, because when it is necessary, by supernatural means God can give me back the aptitude I once had.”

This was only the first skirmish of the war that had been planned against him. At the very next council meeting, the organization of the new Administration was discussed. First, the General was informed that because he had resigned purely and simply, according to the Constitutions, a General Chapter must be convoked to appoint a successor. This was the first time the Good Father had heard of the need to call a General Chapter to choose a successor. He said at the time, "I thought that I would be renominated, that is, according to my reservation that you would still recognize me as General." He immediately added that he would never consent to the convocation of a General Chapter, and that he would abide by his reservation.

Father Chaminade is accused of having changed his mind on this subject. We blame the Administration, and we say that the Founder has not changed but the Administration has. He merely went along with its variations in an attempt to find the means for reconciliation approved by his conscience and in the interests of the Society.

Soon, it was absolutely necessary to convene a General Chapter; then the Founder and General would appoint his successor and the Assistants and make them known to the dispersed members of the Chapter, who would approve the nominations and ratify them; then he would be given the right to name his successor, but not the Assistants; another time, the question was to be submitted to an ecclesiastical court; Rome was to be consulted. All these suggestions were made, without exception, by the Administration. As much as possible, the Founder tried to reconcile them with his reservation which gave him the right to name his successor and the Assistants.

To illustrate the truth of the last statement, let us retrace the history of one of those propositions of the Administration, the one which brought about what they called "the second resignation" of the Founder.

On May 8, the Administration told Father Chaminade that it recognized his right to name his successor because he had reserved to himself that right on resigning. In article 3, to enlighten the electors, he could also suggest the names of the Assistants. However, if the election was to be valid according to the Constitutions (article 479 and article 480), the choice must receive the approval of the superiors of the central houses and of the directors of the smaller communities, with a two-thirds majority of those who would vote at a General Chapter.

The worthy Founder agreed to the proposition except for the last clause, which he declared to be contrary to the Constitutions. He remarked that article 479 and article 480 referred only to a reelection and not to a new election. The phrase "the generalate being vacant" in the proposition was unacceptable because a conditional resignation does not result in a vacancy of the generalate, therefore he rejected it.

The council insisted that the Founder accept this article 3 of the proposition. Another refusal, followed by more entreaties by the council voiced at the demand of one of the councilors by the very confessor of the Founder. At first, he wrote to the Head of Zeal and to his confessor to inform them that he had decided to accept the plan of the council providing article 3 of the proposition would be changed; it should apply to those Assistants who would be renominated, but to give it greater scope would be contrary to the Constitutions and against his conscience.

The confessor returned the letter with the note, "Yield, Good Father, yield; God will take your gesture into account." Imagine the perplexity of the Founder when he received this answer. On the one hand, his conscience prohibited him from knowingly to act against the Constitutions; on the other, he worried about formally disobeying his confessor. He was at a loss. Should he obey his confessor against his own conscience? This would not dispense him from acting according to the Constitutions and in the interests of the Society. Or should he obey his conscience and formally disobey his confessor? This he would have never done, as he says.

He will not act against the Constitutions or disobey his confessor. He will go to an extreme which will expose him to moral death in the eyes of the Society but will give him a final insight into the spirit of the Administration. He will place his moral life into their hands by warning them of the parricide they suggest. On May 26 he writes in the

following terms to Father Caillet. “My dear Son, I believe I have opposed the views of the council only because of a duty of conscience; but because Father Bouet believes duty should not stop there, and he even causes me to hope for a reward, I revoke the letter I wrote to you yesterday and ask the council to proceed in the business of my resignation as if I were physically dead; do not consult me about any of your actions in this matter.”

It is surprising that these last words did not stop the Head of Zeal and make him see the light. This is what the Founder hoped for, but he was mistaken.

On May 28 he wrote to his confessor and said this, among other things. “The next day I was astonished, my dear Son, to have my letter returned to me with a terse postscript, “Yield, Good Father, yield,” etc. I understand then that your intention was not that I do what my conscience forbids, but that I abandon all influence on the council of the Society of Mary, and that I withdraw from it . . . and I immediately wrote this to Father Caillet. This second letter seems to have pleased him. . . . The serious illusion under which he is laboring is deplorable. Nothing can be concluded until I write to Brother Clouzet, for he is an integral part of the council. I will do this immediately.”

The confessor returned this letter also to the author with this postscript: “Jesus, Mary, and Joseph. My answer has been unequivocal—yield.”

This letter tells us of the repeated pleas of the confessor, the gentle complaints of the Superior, his firm trust that his proposal of a moral death would not be accepted by the First Assistant or by the Third Assistant, the Head of Temporalities. But such was the blindness of his Assistants that he was again deceived. However, he argues that the Administrative Council never met to study the intent of his so-called resignation, and therefore it cannot be said that it was regularly accepted by the council. It evidently was not accepted by the Society; it was not even promulgated.

After the Administration by its importunity had extorted this death notice, so to speak, from its Founder and Father, it is almost ashamed to hold it in its hands. It dares not show it to the Society and put it to use. It resorts to other tactics to win him over to its views.

First, they submit to him two plans for a compromise.

(1) A new formulation of article three of the proposals made to him on May 8. Both parties would present in writing, in the form of a discussion, their reasons for and against its adoption.

(2) Another means, already suggested, by which the Superior would inform the capitulants of the candidates he would choose if he were free to do so.

The Founder agreed to the first part, but that proved inconclusive. No agreement could be reached because both sides had their serious reasons. This new draft merely confused the issue and made any compromise more elusive.

Finally, the Founder, tired of all these discussions and of all these tactics of the Administration, made a personal decision.

Considering on the one hand that in case of a resignation the Constitutions oblige the council (1) to announce this immediately to the Society and (2) to observe the rule of residence;

considering on the other hand that (1) the Society had not yet been informed of his resignation 3 years after the event and therefore had not accepted it, and that (2) one of the members had not observed the rule of residence;

he revoked the deposit he had made of his act of resignation into the hands of the council; he annulled the two letters he had written to the Head of Zeal on May 25 and May 26, and he reserved to himself the right to inform the Society.

In reply to this protest, the Head of Zeal declared that he refused to accept the consequences listed by the Founder in his letter of June 23. This is why the General had sent him a second letter on July 12, protesting against any use the Assistant might make of his title of member and president of the Administrative Council.

Not knowing how to react to this, the Head of Zeal went to consult the archbishop, who calmed him and dispensed him from the obligation of obedience to the Founder in this case.

However, to prevent the misuse by the Administration of a power he had withdrawn from the council, he sent a circular informing the heads of establishments that he had withdrawn all authority from the Administration and charged them not to obey the orders they might receive from it to come to a General Chapter, or any order which was in opposition to his own. He also advised them that he had converted the Administrative Council into an ordinary Council of the Superior General.

It was at this time that the bishops and archbishops were informed of the difficulty. The prelate of Bordeaux listened to the arguments of Father Caillet; he did not consult the General but announced himself in favor of the Administration, maintained the authority of the Head of Zeal at the expense of that of the General, and called on the Administration to govern until a decision was handed down by a competent judge. On the contrary, the Archbishop of Besançon decided in favor of the Founder and General, claiming that the presumption was in his favor and that a resignation which is not promulgated is not binding.

Soon both prelates agreed to grant complete freedom to the members of the Society to rally to the one they wished. For the Society, this was a proximate occasion of schism. To prevent this, with the permission of one of the prelates and of the Superior General a member of the Society addressed a circular to all the directors of the Society, asking them and their brothers to support the Good Father. He gave his reasons. Only three of the 35 houses did not sign; two of these are presided over by a member of the Administration, and the third is not recognized by the Superior General and did not receive the circular. However, members of one community wrote to the General as to their legitimate Superior. It can be said that as a moral concept, the entire Society, except for the heads and a very small number of members who did not wish to pronounce themselves or were not advised, chose in favor of the Founder and accepted him as their legitimate Superior. It must be stated that the directors were aware of the arguments and could choose with full knowledge of the facts.

The worthy prelate who had first agreed to the procedure and who had wished the signatures to be sent directly to him refused to admit its authenticity. The General, to whom duplicate signatures had been sent, had three members of the Society draw up a report. These are the facts; now to the proof.

First, Father Chaminade could in conscience and without mental reservation tender a resignation which was authentic with a reservation according to the Constitutions, even though he did sign a civil act according to the Statutes in which no mention is made of a reservation.

The Constitutions of the Society of Mary expressly state that this Society is both a civil and a religious Institute; as a civil society, it is governed by Civil Statutes approved by royal ordinance, and as a religious Society by its religious Constitutions approved by the Holy See. It is true that no member can be constrained to go beyond what is ordered by the civil authority, but everything concerning government in the religious Constitutions is binding in conscience. Although the religious Constitutions are more far-reaching than the Civil Statutes, they are basically the same and in no way contradict each other.

From these remarks it follows that in the case of mixed activities, according to circumstances the Superior may perform an act according to the formalities required by the Statutes or by the Constitutions. This is what he did when he resigned. He is asked if he wants to resign. First he replies that he does—that is, he actually tenders his resignation. Then he adds that he does so according to his original intention, of which the Assistants are aware—that is, with the privileges granted him by the Constitutions (482), with the reservation that he will name his successor; the act now satisfies the formalities required by the Constitutions.

Finally, he is asked to write a civil act of resignation to be used in the lawsuit. He does so according to the Statutes; that is, he makes no condition, but neither does he exclude one. There is no contradiction in all this; he uses his privilege guaranteed by the Constitutions to write a civil and a religious document with the same purpose. This he can do in conscience.

He did what he was allowed to do. The Founder declared that he had always been single-minded, and this is proved by an entire series of testimonials, most of them from members of the Administration. [See Father Chevaux's letter to Father Fontaine, December 8, 1844.] He clearly expressed his intentions before resigning, stating that he was resigning according to his initial intention. On the very day of the signing of the civil act and again one or two days later, he clashes with one of his Assistants over the nature of his resignation, and this in the presence of at least one other Assistant and later with one alone. He himself suggests a successor, and no one denies his right to do so; on the contrary, the members of his council press him to name his successor and the three Assistants, and they even suggest names. During the three years this right was never denied him. Immediately after the lawsuit, he is again urged to appoint those first suggested to him.

Only because he defended his right as Founder did they oppose him. As Founder, it is his right to appoint the Assistants without having to obtain the approval of the dispersed members of the Chapter. Unfortunately, this point was of particular interest to one of the members.

This fact finds admirable confirmation in a letter from Father Roussel to the Superior General of the Daughters of Mary at Agen. He states categorically that the Good Father's resignation is of the temporal order, but that nothing has changed with respect to the spiritual order.

The distinction between the temporal and the spiritual orders announced to the Mother General—does this not reveal rather clearly that it was made in the Administrative Council at the moment of resignation? Did the Founder not truly make a distinction between the civil resignation according to the Statutes and the true resignation according to the religious Constitutions? True, Father Roussel believes that a reelection is necessary to restore the Founder to his functions in the eyes of the civil authorities, but this is his own conviction which unfortunately he had succeeded in sharing with his colleagues and which is the cause of the present troubles. This proves that he was not sufficiently informed about the privileges of the Founder and of the spirit of the Constitutions, and that is not . . . [illegible word]. However, the letter does show that in the council a distinction was made between the spiritual and the civil orders and that it believed that his resignation was consummated in the civil order but not in the religious.

Of course, some will object to the last words of the civil act, where it is said that the Founder offers his resignation to his council, which then becomes responsible before God and before the members for the exercise of general authority and for the spiritual and material interests of the Order until the election of a new Superior General.

Do not the words, "becomes responsible, etc." indicate a pure and simple resignation according to the Constitutions because in this case, the council still exercises the general authority until the election of a new Superior General?

The Constitutions do not necessarily indicate this because this authority could pass to the council from some other source, as it did in the present instance. This general authority which was communicated to the council was merely one of delegation. According to Article 428 of the Constitutions, the Superior General has the right to ask to be replaced on the council in certain difficult and troublesome cases, for example in case of sickness, etc. He then invests it with a general authority to represent him everywhere and in everything except where an authority of jurisdiction is required. In these circumstances, it is evident that he does not divest himself of the authority of jurisdiction because as soon as the emergency has passed, he resumes his usual functions.

Now here is what happened when he resigned. Pressured by his Council, he was forced to find a representative before the civil courts in order not to be obliged to plead against his own signature. Thanks to his resignation with reservation, he did not forfeit his authority but was obliged by circumstances to give it up. Using the right which the Constitutions gave him, he chose a replacement, yielding to his council a delegated general authority as circumstances required; but he kept the authority of jurisdiction which gave him the right to resume his functions when circumstances permitted or demanded.

He truly intended to allow his council to continue in the exercise of this general authority until the nomination and installation of his successor, as he affirmed in his act of resignation. He would have done so if some unfortunate circumstances had not forced him to revoke those powers.

He saw how the members of the Administration abused their power, how for instance the Head of Temporalities was untrue to his formal promise and to the exigencies of the Constitutions in the matter of residence by being habitually absent from the residence of the General Council. The Constitutions are so strict on this point that the Superior General may not take one of his Assistants with him on his visitations unless necessity dictates that he do so, for example during the organization of the Administration. This can be verified in the registers. The Assistant had asked for only a few weeks' leave to settle the matters of the house in which he was residing, but in spite of the protests of the Founder, he spent more than three years away from the Council, appearing only once or twice a year.

Another fault of the Head of Temporalities was that he never did render an account of his administration; moreover, he used the revenues of the Society for arbitrary purposes and not for the goals and the needs of the Society.

The Head of Instruction was guilty of abuses; he used his office and his exceptional talents to plot against the Superior General. Also, he used his authority and his position to place distance between himself and the General Administration; he set himself up as director of one of the novitiates of the Society, and he provoked several houses to separate themselves from the Superior General.

The Head of Zeal abused his office when, without authority and against the tenor of the Constitutions, he dispensed first the Head of Temporalities from attendance at the Council, then also the Head of Instruction; he took it upon himself to assume the direction of the Society, whereas the Administration only had collective power residing in the Council (428).

Finally, the Administration itself misused its authority by not promulgating the resignation and not insisting on the proper functioning of the three offices. Since last June it has been entirely dispersed, yet it organized an opposition to the Superior General who wished to revoke its powers for the reasons given above, and for many others which it would take too long to list.

At this time the Superior General and Founder felt it was time to protest against so many abuses, and he revoked the powers granted by the civil act of resignation. The powers of the Administration were reduced to the ordinary powers granted by the Constitutions. Twice he protested officially, on June 23, 1844, and on July 12 of the same year.

It is clear, therefore, that since last June the Administration no longer has the general authority it had been granted, either because of its dispersion or above all because of the protests of the Superior General and Founder. Let us sum up our remarks and conclude.

- (1) The Founder tendered only a conditional resignation from his generalship.
- (2) The civil act of resignation in no way invalidates the nature of that resignation, and it merely confirms the existence of a true resignation.
- (3) The general authority mentioned in the document does not pass to the council by virtue of the resignation but is a concession on the part of the Founder; it is therefore a delegated authority.
- (4) Last, this extraordinary authority has been withdrawn from the Administration either because of the dispersion of its members or especially by the protest and revocation by the Founder.

It follows, therefore, that the Superior General and Founder has the right to resume the exercise of his office of general until the nomination and acceptance of his successor, for it is admitted in principle that any Society cannot exist without an administration. The only legitimate authority in the present case is that of the Superior General and Founder who had resigned.

These reasons are sufficient to permit the Founder to resume possession of his authority, but there are others. It is a glaring fact that the resignation into the hands of his council upon which they base their case was never officially promulgated. The circulars of the Superior General of January 7 and January 12, 1841, were not written to promulgate the resignation; in fact, the directors of the central houses and others who read them only heard of the resignation from the circular of the month of August. The former merely announced a reorganization of the Administration and a transfer of authority from the Founder to the Administration.

It is a fact that the resignation was not accepted by a competent authority. Because this authority is not designated in the Constitutions, it must be found in common law. Now, common law points to one who bestows authority; but who bestows the generalship in the Society of Mary? Article 17 of the Civil Statutes simply says, the Society itself. The Constitutions also say the Society but gives a variety of representatives depending on the type of election. If it is the General Chapter which elects, then it is the representative (465, 481). If the dispersed capitulants do the electing, then the majority is the representative. Finally, if the abdicator appoints his successor, then the superiors of the central houses represent the Society, along with the General Council. But in no event does the council alone represent the Society as the authority which bestows the generalship. In no case can it receive the resignation of the General unless this is to transmit it to the competent authority, which can accept or refuse. To what dangers would the Society be exposed if it were otherwise!

Finally, it is a fact that the Superior did revoke the resignation which they claim he made, and also the general authority which he had given to the Administration (see the protests of June 23 and July 12, 1844). Therefore, the resignation is of no value. We again conclude that the Superior has the right to continue in office.

However, what about the Founder's letter of May 26 to Father Caillet? Does it not prove his pure and simple resignation, since he requests that he be considered as dead? Can it be taken as a second resignation?

It is neither the one nor the other. It is certainly not a confirmation of a pure and simple resignation. We have proved this resignation never existed, and the Founder has constantly denied its existence. The letter itself was written only because what he was being asked was contrary to the hypothesis of a conditional resignation. Anyone who recalls the facts will readily admit this. Articles 2 and 3 of the minutes of May 8 report the council's proposal that Father Chaminade would appoint the Assistants and have their nomination confirmed by the dispersed members of the Chapter. Father Chaminade refused for two reasons: because these articles deal with the reelection of the members and not with their election, and because they undermine his right as Founder to appoint the Assistants, a right which he keeps and claims only because his resignation is conditional. Therefore because his resignation is conditional, he refused to admit article 3 in the minutes. What prompted the letter of May 26? Was it not the entreaties, the persistent demands of all types addressed to the Founder by the members of his council and, at their instigation, by his confessor? What was the Founder's answer to all these? "Rather than to act against the Constitutions, rather than to suppose that my resignation is not conditional (which I cannot do without lying), I prefer that you look upon me as dead; can you and will you accept such a proposal?"

Therefore, this letter of May 26 was not written to confirm a pure and simple resignation, but rather a conditional resignation.

In the second place, it is not a new resignation. It is the last means of defense for the Founder. Harassed on all sides by his confessor and by his Children, he believes he can silence their cries by proposing a solution he expected to be rejected and which should have been rejected with indignation if they still possessed a spark of filial affection for their aged Father. "I do not believe I ever opposed the council's intentions," he told them, "except when my conscience made it a duty of conscience; but because my confessor believes it is not, have no regard for yesterday's letter, have no concern for the

cries of my conscience, and continue your association with a colleague who will destroy the Society and who will take you from one error to the next until you are completely lost. As of now, I ask you to consider me as one dead and to act in the business of my resignation as if I no longer existed; do not consult me any longer about your actions in this matter. For the rest, I am still at your disposition.”

How could the Head of Zeal not grasp the true meaning of this letter? This is more surprising especially after the spoken and written remarks by the Founder, who complained bitterly of the abuse he was making of that letter.

When he realized that Father Caillet’s interpretation was the opposite of that intended and that he wanted to use the letter as proof that the resignation had been pure and simple, the Founder complained to his confessor and asked him to deter the Head of Zeal from his plan. He hoped his Third Assistant, the Head of Temporalities, would not adopt the ideas of his colleague, and he attempted to dissuade him. Finally, because the latter would not act according to his wishes, he protested solemnly against such an abuse on July 23, 1844. After outlining his motives in his letter of protest, he cries, “How miserably you have abused my resignation!”

It is therefore not a second resignation. I would go so far as to say that, supposing it had been written with the intention of giving a true resignation, it would be without effect because it was not accepted either by the council, which never met to deliberate on such an important topic, or by the competent authority (the one who bestows of the office), and it has never been promulgated.

It is therefore not a second resignation, and it cannot be used as an argument in favor of the council against the Founder. We must therefore conclude that the resignations he is accused of submitting are null and have no value, and because his conditional resignation is not recognized, he has a perfect right to resume the functions he had previously.

To all these reasons we can add that very recently the near totality of the members of the Society have acknowledged their Founder as their legitimate and only Superior General and have asked him to continue exercising his functions. The proof of this is found in the minutes reporting on the adherence of the Founder (refer to the document).

I might add at this point that this spontaneous adherence, in virtue of article 478 of the Constitutions, might well be considered if necessary as a new reelection, for the article says, “The reelection is consummated when the members by right to the General Chapter have been consulted, and when the majority approve it.”

[Unfinished.]

* * *

The Archbishop of Bordeaux had brought the matter before the Holy See (October 31, 1844), but months passed and no answer was forthcoming. At various times Father Chaminade had also thought of having recourse to the Holy See, and he finally decided to do so.

1368. To Pope Gregory XVI

February 26, 1845, Bordeaux

Copy, Agmar

Most Holy Father,

Please allow your unworthy Son in Jesus Christ, the Founder of the Society of Mary, to lay at the feet of your apostolic throne his grief at the very serious accusation leveled against him by his own Children, his three Assistants, and brought to the attention of Your Holiness through the medium of our very worthy Archbishop, His Excellency of Bordeaux.

These three Assistants, so they tell me (for the Founder has received no notice or communication regarding the matter), accuse their Superior, your unworthy Son, of wishing to regain at all costs, because of love of preeminence and against the spirit and letter of our holy Rule, the authority which he freely placed into the hands of his council on two different occasions, first by an authentic act signed by him on January 7, 1841, and a second time by a letter to the Head of Zeal on May 26, 1844.

How can anyone suppose, Most Holy Father, that your unworthy Son, who is at the brink of the grave, who is exhausted after these many years by a burden which he bears with difficulty and in the hope of prompt release, seeks it again from attachment and ambition? How could the person who sought and obtained with such joy from Your Holiness the approbation of the Constitutions of the Society of Mary who has instilled in his Children esteem, obedience, and respect for the Holy See, desire to debase its spirit and letter?

Most Holy Father, these are not the motives which persuade the Founder of the Society of Mary to resume the exercise of his generalship; these motives would be unworthy of a simple Christian. His own motives are more noble and more religious. He wishes to suppress the abuses which have recently crept into the Society of Mary and especially, in spite of his protests, into its Administration. He wishes to revive the spirit which was present at the founding of the Society, a spirit of faith, of disinterest, and of charity which he finds greatly altered, at least in practice, by the members of the Administration. They are not equally to blame; two of them, serious men of recognized uprightness, possess the esteem and consideration of the public and especially of their respective archbishops. Their only fault is to have consistently adopted the shifting opinions of their colleague.

What else does the Founder expect? Above all, he wishes to dismiss from the Administration and for the time being from any position of authority that Assistant, that subtle mind so insinuating and so capable of arguing both sides of a question by a well-disguised sophistry, whose heart is passionate and capable of dishonoring the Society and of corrupting its members if he is left with some influence. It is surprising that the Founder has been unable to make himself understood in this matter, either by the other two Assistants or by the archbishops themselves, who have even reproached him for revealing such an ecclesiastic to Their Excellencies. This can be understood only by someone who knows the captious and insinuating mind of the culprit and the stratagems which caused the mask to fall, but which were labeled exaggerations. Only through necessity and in an interim capacity was this Assistant admitted to the council; unforeseen circumstances prolonged both his office and his authority at a time when he was not well known.

Finally, the Founder wishes to regularize the three general offices of Zeal, Instruction, and Temporalities. This task he had entrusted to the General Administration and had promised it the support of his past experience. After three years, nothing has been done, Most Holy Father, and these are the true reasons urging your unworthy son to return to the exercise of his generalship.

He is convinced that his claim is based on reason. He offers to prove that

(1) his resignation was conditional, according to the Constitutions, and he reserved the right to appoint his successor. He gave it verbally to his council first; then at the latter's request for a written resignation to be used in the courts, he had it drawn up according to the Civil Statutes of the Society which make no mention of a reservation, but which do not exclude one either. He signed the paper, and this is the action for which he is blamed today.

(2) The general authorization to administer which he gave to his Assistants is merely one of delegation and during the time they used this authority, the Founder kept his title and his privileges as General, just as he keeps these when he is replaced in time of illness.

(3) This authority was revoked (1) by their dispersion because it is a collective authority residing in the council, and (2) especially by the protests of the Founder dated June 23 and July 12, 1844.

(4) This resignation was never officially promulgated or accepted by the competent authority, and it was revoked in time by the previously mentioned protests.

(5) The letter of May 26, 1844, cannot be considered either as a new resignation or as a confirmation of the first. Coming from the Founder, who was exasperated by the persistence of his Assistants and of his confessor, it was a simple exaggeration to make them reflect seriously, if they still had any feelings of filial love. This caused the Founder to exclaim to the Head of Zeal, “What a pitiful misuse you have made, my dear Son, of my letter of May 26!” In addition, it has none of the qualities required of a true resignation.

(6) Finally, the near totality of the directors and members of the Society of Mary have recently acknowledged the Founder as their General and have asked him to continue in his functions.

Most Holy Father, these are the propositions which your unworthy Son must prove. If he succeeds, he should be able to ask Your Holiness to declare the resignation null and to allow him to exercise fully the functions of General which he previously fulfilled.

However, Most Holy Father, his claims are very modest. He maintains his first resignation, made with the reservation that he would appoint his successor and the Assistants, and he asks Your Holiness to order, along with the approval, that before the nomination of his successor the Superior General and Founder of the Society of Mary will be given sufficient time to repress the abuses which have crept into the Society and to revitalize the spirit of its original foundation, to introduce order and regularity into the three general offices of Zeal, Instruction, and Temporalities. Once order is established, he will name his successor and the Assistants and will keep only the prerogatives proper to his title of Founder.

In any case, Most Holy Father, whatever Your Holiness orders, you will always find in your respectful and submissive Son the most perfect and entire obedience,¹ and he will never forget the precious favors he has received. Every day he will pray for your health, for the success of your apostolic endeavors, and for your State.

The Founder of the Society of Mary has the most profound veneration for Your Holiness and will always be the most humble and the most obedient of your Children in Jesus and Mary.

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1368-2. To Pope Gregory XVI

February 26, 1845

Rough Copy, Agmar

Memorandum by the Superior General and
Founder of the Society of Mary.¹

Most Holy Father,

The Superior General and Founder of the Society of Mary, your most humble Son in Jesus Christ, has had the honor to expose in a plea to Your Holiness on February 26, 1845, that on January 8, 1841, he had tendered his resignation from his generalship with the reservation that he would name his successor, and while awaiting the nomination of the same he had conferred on his council a general authorization to administer the Society to replace him in the exercise of his functions, but that for serious reasons he had been forced to revoke this general authorization from his council and to resume his functions as General. His Assistants challenged his right to do

¹In a variation of the closing paragraph, there is evidence of the profound attachment of the Servant of God to the Sovereign Pontiff. “Moreover, whatever Your Holiness decides, you will always find the Founder of the Society of Mary entirely submissive and obedient. His conscience, his faith—in a word, the Catholic religion which he professes—do not allow him to yield. He believes he must resist, even to the gallows, unless Your Holiness judges differently, even without giving a reason. He will submit with no hint of murmur or appeal.”

¹The memorandum was never sent.

this and disapproved of his written civil act of resignation, which they said violated the Constitutions. In this petition, your very humble servant offered to prove the 6 propositions which support his rights against the pretensions and the accusations of the members of his council. Today he is placing the proofs at the feet of Your Holiness and asks you to add another favor to those he is already asking. These proofs are based on facts which he will present in all simplicity and as briefly as possible.

Because of the persecution to which he has been subjected on religious grounds, Most Holy Father, your humble servant had retired to Agen (Lot-et-Garonne) in 1833. He received the visit of M. Auguste Perrière, a former member and a former Head of Temporalities of the Society of Mary. For reasons it would take too long to give in detail, he withdrew from the Order. Before leaving he suggested a settlement of accounts; I consented, and we signed an agreement by which I absolved him of all debts, past and present, which he may have contracted while financial manager of the Society. In this document I should have included as a debt a sum of 14,000 francs advanced to him when he entered the Society; unfortunately, I did not do this. Because M. Perrière owed this sum before entering the Society, he is still a debtor to the Society. I have asked him several times to refund this money. First he promised to do so, then he put off payment, and now he claims that his debt is paid by the services he has rendered the Society; but this is contrary to the regulations of our Civil Statutes.

In 1840, M. Perrière brought your humble servant to court for the payments on a life annuity which he had negotiated while in office. Since then, responsibility for the annuity had fallen to a third party, who refused to pay and who returned the obligation to the original purchaser. He in turn charged it to the Society. I did not refuse to pay this, but seized the opportunity to demand of M. Perrière the payment of the 14,000 francs which he owed the Society. He refused and continued with the lawsuit.

I then called a meeting of my council, Most Holy Father, to see if I should absolve M. Perrière of his debt and pay the annuity if discussions with the third party proved fruitless. The council studied M. Perrière's accounts and the transaction I had signed. They claimed to find errors in the first and an abuse of my authority in the second. The council consulted an able lawyer, who agreed with them and who promised a successful lawsuit against M. Perrière if the Superior General would resign. According to him, it was not fitting that the General plead against his own signature.

Most Holy Father, this piece of advice was highly pleasing to my council which, as I learned later, highly desired to remove me from the Administration. What it wanted, evidently, was to have a free hand in the affairs of the Society according to their intentions, which were too human and too earthly. They eagerly seized this chance to accomplish their ends. The council suggested that I resign my generalship and urged me to use as pretext reparation for the harm done to the Society by the misuse of my power. (See the minutes of the council meeting of January 7, 1841.) I was stunned by this unexpected proposal. I told the council that I did not believe I had exceeded my rights in the remission to M. Perrière; that because of certain circumstances of time, place, and persons the omission of certain formalities normally required could be overlooked; that I still hoped M. Perrière would return to the Society, and then the monetary problem would vanish; and finally, that I wanted time to reflect on their proposal. However, after considering the matter more closely, I realized I had to plead against either M. Perrière or my council which, to all appearances, wished me to render an account of the exercise of my powers. I chose the first solution and decided to submit my resignation. This I did orally at the first council meeting (the Constitutions do not require that it be given in writing) in approximately the following terms. "You are aware that I have long had the intention of resigning my generalship and of naming my successor. Every day I pray that God may make him known to me so that I may shift the heavy burden from my old shoulders to his. Because Divine Providence

appears to tell me that the time has come to resign, under the circumstances it must have provided both the motive and the means to carry this out. I can expect to know very soon who is to replace me. Hence, I resign my generalship into the hands, etc.” My resignation was accepted by the council with joy, gratitude, and commendation.

Although on this occasion I did not use the terms “conditional” or “reservation,” I am certain, Most Holy Father, that the council could not have been mistaken as to the meaning of my resignation. I had long since expressed my wish to appoint my successor and had chosen the person I considered most fit to replace me, but without informing him. The council knew my intention and was accustomed to hearing me speak of it, and it could not be mistaken about the meaning of my resignation. It never occurred to me to give more explanations, and the council itself never commented on the nature of my resignation. They simply remarked that it would be good to keep from the Society for the time being the lawsuit of M. Perrière and its consequences, as well as the need of a civil act of resignation to pursue it. Because the lawsuit would probably be short-lived, I agreed to the first remark, and for the second I asked the Secretary General to draw up the act in question according to the Civil Statutes and the requirements of the courts. The act was written by the Head of Instruction, who was also my secretary, and was handed to me at the next council meeting. I read it and found not a single word opposed to the meaning of my conditional resignation. To be obliging, I rewrote the paper and signed it. It also contained the mention that I conceded extraordinary powers to the council so that it might replace me provisionally in the exercise of the general authority. The document had been signed, Most Holy Father, and the council was about to withdraw when the Head of Instruction turned to me and asked in a bantering and triumphant tone, “Well, Good Father, what are you going to do now?” “As the Constitutions say,” I answered. “But this particular case is not foreseen by the Constitutions,” he countered sharply. “Yes, it is,” I went on, “and to give you an example of what they say and of how I will act from now on, just suppose I appoint Father Caillet as my successor, you as his Head of Instruction, Brother Clouzet as his Head of Temporalities, and that I become Head of Zeal; how would that work out? Well, this is an example of what the Constitutions say on the topic, and of what I intend to do.” You understand nothing about the Constitutions,” he said as he walked away. The meeting was adjourned. I wasted no time in expressing to him in private my displeasure at his conduct toward me, and I repeated my interpretation of the resignation. He flared up at this and declared that he himself would prefer to tender his resignation if such things came to pass. This was neither the time nor the place for him to offer and for me to accept his resignation; I told him so and added that nevertheless, if he gave it to me I would accept it. The Assistant did not carry out his threat, and no further mention was made of his resignation. His two colleagues never spoke to me about this, either at the time or during the lawsuit. This is why I considered the utterance of the Head of Instruction as expressing a personal sentiment which he had abandoned after the observations I had made to him.

My conviction was strengthened by what happened afterward. During the three-year duration of the Perrière lawsuit, because of my repeated complaints over its excessive length with the consequent delay in the appointment of my successor, several meetings were devoted to the reorganization of the Administration. Every time the question surfaced, everyone agreed that I was to appoint my successor. Once I even mentioned a name. The suggested candidate was refused, but not my right to appoint him. The Head of Instruction even wrote me a long letter giving the motives for his refusal, but he never hinted that I was using a right which I did not possess. Another time the members of the General Administration themselves suggested a slate of candidates they believed were qualified and asked me to appoint them. They accompanied their suggestion with a condition which was unacceptable, and the appointment fell through. In short, during the three years of the lawsuit, everyone spoke and acted as if I had the right to appoint my successor. I must not forget to add, Most Holy Father, that immediately after the signing of the civil act of resignation, I sent a circular (January 8, 1841) to the Society of Mary in which I alerted the members to the changes which had just been made in the exercise of authority.

I told them I had just entrusted the direction of the Society and its affairs to the three Assistants, that from then on all business would be channeled through the three offices, and that everything would be discussed and decided in council (all this according to the Constitutions). I also assured them that I would still be a part of the Administration, that the three General Heads had agreed to govern collectively only on the expressed condition that I would continue to guide them, either individually or in council, and that I would share actively in everything that was being done. This circular was followed by a second from the Assistants on January 12, 1841, in which almost the same things were said in much the same language. They added that the Office of Temporalities had already been reorganized but not the other two, that they would see to it under the guidance of the venerable Founder, etc. But, alas! What have they done about that?

Also at this time, Most Holy Father, before relinquishing my authority into the hands of my council, I took every possible precaution to ensure the observance of an essential point in our Constitutions, that of having the three Assistants General in residence. Until that time, under various pretexts, some serious, the Head of Temporalities had habitually resided away from the Administration. I reprimanded him and made him formally promise to reside henceforth at the central house. This promise was written into the register and signed by him and by his colleagues. In spite of all these promises, I was pained to see that he appeared only twice or three times a year at the council meetings. I often complained to the Head of Zeal, but this was fruitless. The latter even failed to inform me that he had given the Head of Temporalities an unlawful permission to be absent.

Using these and similar precautions, Most Holy Father, before confiding the exercise of the general authority to the council I saw to it that the Society of Mary functioned as before. Everything went calmly and smoothly during the three years of the lawsuit, except for the numerous objections I had to raise, either in council or in private, to the more worldly decisions the members of the Administration wished to make. I would have made many more if, weary of my observations, they had not taken the path of holding most of their meetings in my absence.

Finally, Most Holy Father, the lawsuit came to an end. This signaled the end of the era of peace so greatly boasted of by my adversaries. For entirely human motives they had launched and drawn out the lawsuit, and the loss to them was particularly disconcerting. They blamed your unworthy Son, who meanwhile adored in silence the just judgments of God. They took advantage of the situation to tell me to my face what they did not dare to spell out before. According to them, I was responsible not only for the loss of the lawsuit but also for all the other setbacks suffered by the Society. I knew nothing of finances and was unfit to administer that aspect of the Society. My incompetence to govern the Society had been clearly demonstrated, and it was time for me to retire and busy myself, as a simple religious, with a life of prayer. It is true, Most Holy Father, that your unworthy son is filled with miseries and natural defects and that, humanly speaking, he is unfit for the great things to which God has called him. While I sincerely admit this, I cannot be silent about the work which God has accomplished in me and what God would have done through my ministry. I pointed out to them that in spite of my very real inaptitude, I had nevertheless governed the Society of Mary almost alone for more than 20 years, and it had taken shape and developed under my administration to the state in which it existed when I entrusted them with the government; that I had founded and directed the Institute of the Daughters of Mary and its Third Order; and that I have done the same for the Miséricorde in Bordeaux, which actually houses more than 400 repentant women and whose Rule I was about to present to Your Holiness for approbation, etc.

This beginning made against me at the end of the lawsuit by the Administration was only the prelude to the campaign which they mounted against your very humble servant, Most Holy Father. At the meetings following our first discussion, the council proposed the reorganization of the Administration. We all agreed that it was high time to do this; but my surprise was great when for the first time I heard my resignation qualified as “pure and simple” and mention was made of the need to convoke a General Chapter for the appointment of my successor and his Assistants.

I did not conceal my surprise and my indignation at this proposal, and I reminded them of my reservation, which had never been contested, and the right it gave me to appoint my successor. I declared to my council that I would never consent to the convocation of a General Chapter under the present circumstances and showed it how irregular, inopportune, and useless this would be. That is when for the first time the Administration revealed its intention of putting forward the written civil act which I had obligingly given them for the lawsuit and of discounting my true resignation according to the Constitutions. I protested that this tactic was unjust, that it veered away from the truth, etc. I repeated that I would oppose any convocation of a General Chapter and would stand by the truth of my conditional resignation. My stubbornness on this point, Most Holy Father, greatly perturbed the members of the Administration. They exhausted themselves in projects and various plans to make me change my mind. First, I would give full liberty to the General Chapter which must be convened to choose my successor. Then again, I would choose my successor, make him known to the Society, and the Chapter would unfailingly elect the candidates of my choice. Or I would freely choose my successor and his Assistants, but their nomination would need to be confirmed by a two-thirds vote of the dispersed members of the Chapter, according to article 479 and article 480 of our Constitutions. This plan was presented on May 8, 1844, as a regular proposition to be debated. Although it is irregular and contradictory, it has become so famous because of its aftermath that I must develop it further.

This plan, Most Holy Father, is entitled “Operation of the Council of the General Administration During the Vacancy of the Generalship.” It divides naturally into two sections. In the first, it assumes that the Founder presents a conciliatory plan with three articles. It states that (1) because of the resignation of the Superior General, tendered according to article 482 of the Constitutions, a reorganization of the general government of the society must be considered; (2) that he intends to take advantage of article 482, which grants the abdicating General the right to appoint his successor if he so desires; and (3) that for the appointment of his Assistants he intends to take advantage of articles 479 and 480 which state that for a valid election, they must receive the approval of two-thirds of the delegates who would have been convoked for a General Chapter. In the second part, the council recognizes the difficulties of convoking a General Chapter and the futility of convoking a Chapter merely to elect the General Heads, in view of the fact that this election can take place regularly according to articles 479 and 480, and it asks the Founder to busy himself as soon as possible with the reorganization.

This plan, Most Holy Father, only appears to be good; it attacks both the spirit and the letter of our Constitutions. (1) It supposes the absence of a General after a conditional resignation whose terms have not been fulfilled. (2) It denies to the Founder the right to choose his Assistants, although his resignation is conditional, whereas it seems to me that the exception granted by article 416 of the Constitutions applies to a concluded abdication. (3) But above all it is article 3 of this plan which contaminates the spirit and the letter of our holy Rule. Articles 479 and 480 which are quoted can only apply to reelection, but article 3 of the plan extends them to the election of the Assistants. More than that, Most Holy Father, by this article they wished to set a trap for me. I have very serious reasons for opposing the reelection of one of the members of the council. Was there not reason to fear that once the plan was accepted, article 3 would be interpreted in the sense of those articles of the Constitutions—that is, of a simple reelection? I had all the more reason to fear this because the plan had been conceived, or at least written, by the very member who was to be excluded. Given all these reasons, could I in conscience accept the proposal? However, this is the plan I was so strongly urged to accept, and because I refused, I was treated as a stubborn and ambitious old man who wished to return to power at all costs. This is the plan my actual confessor, fooled by my adversaries, encouraged me to adopt. Yes, Most Holy Father, this fine ecclesiastic, upright, pious, and simple man that he is although a stranger to controversy, came to me one day to render the accustomed services. After a long interview with the Head of Zeal, he came on the part of the latter to urge me to subscribe to the will of the Administration; without examining my motives, he pressed me to do so. He ended his entreaties

with threats of the most terrible chastisements of God if I did not agree to what was asked of me. To all of this I replied that I could not, that my conscience did not allow it, and if I did, I would be betraying the most precious interests of the Society. When my confessor left me, I took another look at the plan, firmly resolving to concede everything that my conscience would allow. After mature reflection, I wrote to the Head of Zeal—it was May 25, 1844—that I was ready to subscribe to the plan of May 8 providing they were willing to change article 3, and I imposed on him again the requirement to sever relationship with the Head of Instruction, about whom I had learned of the most serious disorders. I also sent a copy of this letter to my confessor. He returned it with this postscript, “Yield, Good Father, yield; I hope God will take your gesture into account.” His recommendation surprised me; however, I reasoned that he did not want me to act against my conscience, which I could not do without sinning, but that I should make a final effort and make the greatest sacrifices in the interest of peace. I then decided to grant the Administration not what it asked but more than it asked, and possibly even more than my capacity as Founder allowed me. In the past, I believed I had detected in the Head of Zeal a certain attachment to my person, and I wished to awaken that filial regard by making him a proposal which I could keep in conscience, but which I hoped they would not grant to me. On May 26, 1844, I wrote to Father Caillet in the following terms.

“I believe, my dear Son, that I have opposed the views of the council only because of a duty of conscience. But because Father Bouet, my confessor, believes my duty should not stop there and he even makes me hope for a reward, I withdraw the letter which I wrote to you yesterday, and I ask the council to proceed in the business of my resignation as if I were physically dead. Do not consult me any longer about any of your actions in this matter.”

I hoped this last gesture would be construed by the Head of Zeal as a threat of a punishment rather than as a favor and that it would awaken sentiments in him which would lead to a happy outcome. I was wrong; it was received gratefully as a blessing. The next day the Head of Zeal cast himself at my feet in gratitude. I received him rather coldly that day and on subsequent days and told him how sorry I was at his ever-deepening state of illusion. I soon noticed that they interpreted my moral death so literally that they began to treat me as physically dead, and they no longer wanted me to speak to my Children, which was not what I meant in my letter. I then realized that I had committed a blunder and that I had given my adversaries another weapon to use against me. However, I did not believe the mistake was without remedy, and on May 28 I alerted my confessor to the serious illusions which, in my opinion, had been entertained by the Head of Zeal. If I convinced him, then we could confront them together. I wrote to the Head of Temporalities asking him to disregard my letter of May 26. I wrote to the director of a central house to inform him of everything that was happening to me and to ask him to join forces with me to prevent the evils which threatened us. All my efforts proved useless. My confessor returned my letter with the remark, “My answer was unequivocal; yield.” I concluded that he had joined the ranks of the Administration. I received no reply from the Second Assistant, and all my letters addressed to the Third were intercepted by the Head of Zeal.

Only one course was left open to me if I wanted to forestall the misuse they wished to make of my letter and to ward off the dangers which threatened the spirit of the Society and the very existence of the Society itself. I must protest against this abuse before my letter is accepted in a council meeting. I did this; at the same time I retracted the act by which I had given my resignation into the hands of my council on January 7, 1841, and I revoked the extraordinary governing powers which I had given them. In two successive letters of protest addressed to the Head of Zeal on June 23 and July 12, 1844, I gave as motivating factor for my actions their misuse of my resignation and of their powers.

In spite of all my opposition, Most Holy Father, the Administrative Council set about convoking a General Chapter. To block this move, I sent two circulars to the Society, on August 19 and September 2, 1844, in which I told my religious of my two protests of June 23 and July 12 and of my revocation of the extraordinary powers of the council.

However, Most Holy Father, the General Administration, which never lacked plans for a compromise, presented one which I readily accepted. We were to choose a counselor from among our worthy prelates to whom each side would present a position paper. The prelate was chosen and invited, and he accepted his role as conciliator; but later, having heard that the three Assistants had revealed our difficulties to Their Excellencies the Archbishops of the dioceses in which they lived, he no longer wished to be sole arbiter and asked the Archbishop of Bordeaux to assume this role. Later this was assumed by the three worthy Archbishops of Bordeaux, Besançon, and Albi; and finally, Most Holy Father, I am happy that the matter has been brought to the attention of Your Holiness.

The members of the council have addressed to Their Excellencies very detailed memorandums in favor of their cause, and one of them, they tell me, is absolutely fascinating. Your very humble servant has not yet presented his. He has merely explained his rights and on what grounds they are based, but without going into the details. He has declared himself willing to produce these details accompanied by proofs whenever they desire, but so far they have asked me for nothing. He has made several inquiries but has received no answer.

However, Most Holy Father, Their Excellencies the Archbishops did not want to address themselves directly to the point of our contention and found that they were obliged to give their opinion indirectly by deciding a practical question. The Archbishop of Bordeaux, who had been consulted by the Head of Zeal to learn whether he should obey your unworthy servant as Superior General upon whom the government of the Society depended while awaiting a decision from Your Holiness, answered without consulting the General that he was not obliged to obey me, and if necessary he would dispense him from his vow of obedience; that because the General Administration had been in authority for three years, it passed to it to continue to govern, and consequently it could command obedience. This decision brought the establishments of the Midi to the side of the Administration. The Head of Instruction was delegated to explain the decision to them and to sever their relationships with the Superior General, for until this time they had always acknowledged him.

On the other hand, when the Archbishop of Besançon was questioned by the priests of the Society ministering in his diocese who wanted to know to whom they owed obedience (to the Administration or to the Founder), he replied that they were to obey the Founder because in case of doubt, the Superior should be favored. Moreover, because the resignation of the Superior General had never been promulgated officially it was not truly known to the Society, which therefore could not refuse him obedience. He confirmed this decision to one of the priests who sought his advice regarding his personal conduct toward the Founder. A little later the two worthy prelates mutually agreed to allow members the freedom to choose and to obey either the Founder or the Administration. This liberty could become tragic for the Society, in that it favored a schism. A priest of the Society pointed this out to the Archbishop of Bordeaux and asked him if, to prevent such a calamity, the Founder himself or someone else could not appeal to the entire Society to rally to his person as to their Superior General. The venerable prelate seemed to approve the plan and requested that if this procedure was used, the signatures would be sent to him directly. This was agreed to, and a circular was sent to all the directors of the Society. It had the success which was expected' almost all the directors and the members opted for their aged Superior. The worthy archbishop who had asked that the lists of signatures be sent to him soon learned of the success of the circular and refused to have the ballots counted. They had been written in duplicate and had been sent both to the archbishop and to the Founder. The archbishop returned the ballots to the senders. I do not believe, Most Holy Father, that the refusal of His Excellency to count the ballots nullifies the results. Those that were sent to me were opened and counted by a priest of the Society in the presence of three perpetually professed religious. They drew up the minutes of the procedure, and I have the honor of sending these to you.

After this display of fidelity to my person as Superior General, the schism which had begun in the houses of the Midi stopped. The Society is living in peace under my direction, but it suffers from continual opposition and harassment by the members of the Administration and by the restrictions they impose upon the exercise of my authority. It must be at their instigation that the Archbishop of Bordeaux thought it was necessary to supplement his permission to govern with accessory injunctions which severely constrain my administration and are harmful to the work with which I am charged. True, His Excellency allows me to govern the Society, but he forbids me to change anything in the present situation until Your Holiness has decided. Therefore, although the members of the Administration refuse to second me as my councilors, I may not ask other priests of the Society to collaborate with me and to give me their advice. Those who would want to are threatened with an interdict. As an exception, the priest who is with me is allowed to say Mass, but he may not hear Confessions. This means that I, who am 85 years old, alone, without counselors and helpers, must see to the direction and the Confessions of the novitiate of Bordeaux, the government of the Society, and all the correspondence which before our pitiful misunderstandings kept three assistants busy. Worse yet, the archbishop has authorized the president of the Administration to refuse me the key to the secretariat containing the archives of the Society. A minor drawback of this situation is that it slows my work. Now how could such a state of things not be harmful to the Society, especially if it is prolonged? Most Holy Father, I am trying to do my duty at the novitiate of Bordeaux, from which I govern the Society, but I am severely hindered. There is the delay in my correspondence, in the execution of my orders, the delay in the inauguration of the reforms I have planned, and in the entire reorganization of the three offices of the Society. Most Holy Father, I wish to draw your attention particularly to this critical state of the Society and of its Superior, and I ask Your Holiness to bring prompt relief.

As I come to the end of my story, Most Holy Father, I must also admit to Your Holiness that I have just sent a letter of dismissal to the General Head of Instruction and have revoked his title of Assistant or Councilor to the Superior General. I felt I had to use my discretionary power in the circumstance because of its urgency and because unsavory rumors about him are beginning to be spread, and the party himself hints that he will withdraw from the Society. I thought it was prudent to revoke his powers, and I have sent a copy of the act of dismissal to the Archbishop of Albi, which is his diocese. I will immediately inform the Society of this dismissal.

This, Most Holy Father, is the account of the principal events that have taken place in the Society of Mary because of my resignation. A few reflections on these events will be enough to establish the soundness of the propositions which I put forward in my petition of February 26. The six reflections I could make can be reduced to three.

(1) First, Most Holy Father, it is certain that the only resignation I made was conditional, with the reservation that I would name my successor. The proof of this proposition is in the history of my resignation found above. I can vouch for the fact that this was my intention upon resigning and that I have never had any other. This intention was abundantly manifested to the members of my council; they understood it, as is shown by their conduct during those three years. All or almost all the facts upon which I base the truth of my conditional resignation according to the Constitutions have been admitted by one or the other of the members of the Administration regarding their content and most of their circumstances. The enclosed letter from a member proves this. (See a copy of this letter among the other documents.)

The civil act of resignation I gave for the lawsuit could not annul my reservation. According to our Constitutions, article 385 and following, the Society of Mary is both a civil and a religious organization. As a civil society it is governed by Civil Statutes approved by royal ordinance, and as a religious society it is governed by its Constitutions. As a religious organization, its government and therefore its Constitutions are more all-encompassing than its Statutes, although both are equivalent and do not ever contradict each other. It is not surprising, therefore, to see the Superior General of the Society of Mary omit in the civil act of a mixed action circumstances that are not required by the Statutes, and to express them in the religious act

because they are required or allowed by the Constitutions. The civil act may make no mention of these circumstances, but this does not prove their nonexistence in the religious act. Now this is precisely what took place in my act of resignation. I first gave it orally according to the Constitutions, with the reservation I was permitted; I then gave the civil act of this resignation without mention of a reservation because the Statutes make no mention of it. The silence of the civil act about my reservation did not change the nature of my conditional resignation.

My concession to the council of the general authority to administer, Most Holy Father, does not nullify my reservation, nor does it change the nature of my resignation. This general authority to govern may very well exist with a conditional resignation. It is true that a conditional resignation does not deprive *hic et nunc* the General of his authority. He retains it until his successor has been accepted and installed. But when the General reserves to himself the authority of jurisdiction, he has the right in certain cases to allow the council to replace him in the exercise of his functions by granting it the necessary authority. The Constitutions give some examples of this case (article 428). Now this is what I did when I resigned. When I gave my conditional resignation, I did not give up my authority as General; however, there were serious reasons why I should not exercise that authority. So I used that right, and I conferred on my council the authority to govern just as I would have done in case of illness or of prolonged absence. I reserved to myself only the authority of jurisdiction. Therefore, the council possesses only a delegated authority which may be revoked in case of absence or for any other serious reason. In my civil act of resignation I mentioned this concession of powers to the council because it was to replace me in court, and I added that it would possess this authority until the nomination of my successor because it had been agreed that I would appoint my successor at the latest at the end of the lawsuit, which I was told would not last more than six months. Because this general authorization to administer which was granted to the council is not incompatible with a conditional resignation, it does not nullify my reservation. Let me remark in passing that this general authority of the council is collective; it resides in the council, taken collectively (article 428) and not in the Head of Zeal as an individual. Although council meetings must be held every two weeks (Constitutions, articles 417 and 450), yet, Most Holy Father, for more than 10 months now no meeting has been called. During the three-year duration of the lawsuit, one of the members of the council attended at most two or three times a year, and since June of last year the members of the General Administration have been dispersed and there is no more council. It follows, therefore, according to the previous remarks, that the members of the council no longer have general governing authority, for it resides only in the council, taken collectively. Furthermore, Most Holy Father, in my two protests of June 23 and July 12, 1844, I revoked that authority. Both my conditional resignation and my title as Founder gave me the power and the right. Serious abuses in the administration authorized my action and made this a duty for me. I say abuses on the part of the Head of Temporalities, who for more than three years did not observe the requirement of residence, very rarely attended the council meetings, and gave no detailed report on his administration. I say abuses by the Head of Instruction, who used his superior talents to lead his two colleagues astray and to corrupt the novices of Bordeaux. I say abuses by the Head of Zeal, who illegally gave the Head of Temporalities and later also the Head of Instruction permission to absent themselves from the council. I say abuses by the council itself, which claimed the right to accept my resignation and to act upon it without bothering to announce it to the Society, which did not meet regularly, and whose spirit was deviating from the original spirit of the Institute. Because of these and other abuses, I revoked the general governing powers I had given it. By what authority does it now govern and persecute me?

Finally, my letter of May 26, 1844, to the Head of Zeal in no way invalidates my reservation, for it neither confirms a pure and simple resignation nor is a new resignation. First, it is not a confirmation of a pure and simple resignation, for I have proved that such a resignation does not exist and that I have never intended to resign in this fashion. Second, it cannot be interpreted as a second resignation, for that was not my intention when I wrote it. On the contrary,

I intended to withdraw it if it did not produce the intended result. I merely wanted to stimulate the filial devotion of my Children, especially that of the Head of Zeal. Therefore, when I noticed how the latter misused it, I immediately revoked it in my two protests of June 23 and July 12. This revocation took place before any acceptance of the resignation, whether by the General Administration, which did not meet in council and did not debate the question, or by the Society at large, which did not know of it before my circulars of August 19 and September 2, 1844. This therefore cannot be a letter of resignation; it is null in this respect and cannot invalidate my reservation.

(2) My first resignation is also null and void. It has not been announced and has not been accepted by the competent authority; it was revoked before either of those formalities could take place.

(1) It is certain that it was never announced officially. Neither my circular of January 4, 1841, nor that of the Administrative Council of January 12 or any other such document can be called a promulgation, as anyone can see by simply reading them (they were sent to the Holy See by the council). This is so true that although all these documents were sent to the directors of our houses, they were not aware of my resignation until I announced it in the circulars mentioned above.

(2) It is certain that the resignation was never accepted by the competent authority, for since the Constitutions do not specify this authority, it must be derived from common law. Now the competent bestowing authority in the Society of Mary is the Society itself, according to the Civil Statutes; and according to the Constitutions, it is the Society represented either by the assembled General Chapter or by two-thirds of the dispersed members of the Chapter, in the case of a reelection, or by the heads of the central houses united to the members of the council in the case of a conditional resignation. The one who bestows the office is never the council alone. It is manifest that not a single one of these bodies has accepted the resignation; they did not even know about it. It is also a fact that the resignation was revoked before both promulgation and acceptance; my protests of June 23 and July 12, 1844, are the proof.

(3) Finally, Most Holy Father, the almost unanimous support given to me in the recent referendum abundantly proves that the Society has not yet accepted my resignation, for it formally shows that it acknowledges me as its Superior General and Founder. If necessary, this show of support could be considered a reelection of the Superior General according to articles 478 and 480. In fact, these articles say that his reelection is consummated when a majority of the members by right to the Chapter, after consultation, uphold him; a two-thirds majority is required. Now the members of the Chapter heard of my resignation from my circular of August 19, and they have been invited to take a position with respect to my person as Superior General. They have done so, and so did most of the members; this is tantamount to a reelection.

From all the above, Most Holy Father, your very humble servant believes he has proved his point—that is, his conditional resignation was not altered by his civil act of abdication or by his concession to the council of special powers of administration, or by his letter of May 26 to the Head of Zeal. Because the condition he placed on his resignation has not been fulfilled, he has not been despoiled of his powers because of that resignation. He gave to his council as a group the general authority to administer until the election of a new General, but this is a mere delegated authority which, far from nullifying that of the General, presupposes it. He had serious reasons for revoking that authority, and since then the dispersed council no longer has the power to govern the Society or to pursue the General unless he has been negligent in matters of faith or morals (Constitutions, article 484). Furthermore, he believes he has shown that his resignation is null and void and that the show of support for his person as Superior proves that the Society has not accepted his abdication and can serve as a reelection.

If as I hope, Most Holy Father, Your Holiness is convinced of the truth in these assertions of your most humble servant, allow him to cast himself at your feet and to implore you again to ordain that before the appointment of his successor he will be given the time he needs to abolish the abuses that have crept into the Society, especially in its Administration, and to complete the reorganization of the three Offices of Zeal, Instruction, and Temporalities. He dares ask for a second favor, that of bringing an end to the anarchy now devastating the beautiful Society of Mary by a prompt decision.

Therefore, Most Holy Father, always prostrate at the feet of Your Holiness, in case you must postpone your judgment he asks you to ordain a provisional lifting of the current situation so your unworthy son may be free to govern the Society of Mary until Your Holiness announces a decision; that he might be allowed to appoint a provisional council, surround himself with necessary personnel, make changes in the communities, regain possession of the key to the secretariat, etc. These temporary measures would prevent the Society from failing in its task and would enable your humble servant to correct the abuses, revive the original spirit of the Society in its Administration, and fulfill his only desire before he appoints his successor. Most Holy Father, whatever the decision of Your Holiness may be, you will find entirely submissive and obedient the Founder of the Society of Mary, who is and always will be with the most profound veneration, Most Holy Father, of Your Holiness the most humble and most submissive of your children in Jesus and Mary.

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**1368-3. A Protest by Father Chaminade
Addressed Pope Gregory XVI**

February 1845

Rough Copy, Agmar

The Archbishop of Bordeaux had the extraordinary kindness to notify the Founder and the General of the Society of Mary already some time ago that he had written to Your Holiness about the matter we have so much at heart. I mean the matter of the resignation from his generalship. His Excellency did not think it was proper to inform him of the attitude he was taking, or if he was including a memorandum or other document in support of his decision. The Superior General sees in this series of events a confirmation of an opinion which he has had for some time now, that Our Lord Jesus Christ is allowing this great disturbance in the Society to purify it and its Founder, to render it more able to fulfill the designs which his goodness and mercy had in the institution which he inspired.

Today the Superior General knows that His Excellency of Bordeaux has sent to Your Holiness two circulars, one from him and one from his council, under the name of the General Administration of the Society of Mary, and he has thought it wise to submit the following considerations very humbly at the feet of Your Holiness.

(1) The very general powers which he gave his administration are merely delegated powers, and not an acknowledgement of powers they possess intrinsically because of their titles of General Assistants, which is evident and can easily be demonstrated. This is why the Superior, convinced of his rights and his authority, sent two protests to the council in the person of its president on June 23 and July 12, 1844, in which he revoked those powers because of the scandalous abuse which they were making of them.

(2) The Society of Mary is governed by a double authority, one civil and one religious, without an interference of one by the other. The written resignation tendered by the General is pure and simple, but is in no way contradictory to the resignation he gave in the order of religion conformably to the Constitutions approved by Your Holiness.

(3) The Superior General cannot acknowledge the authentic resignation which he gave in the civil order just to be obliging and with peace and edification in mind. His conscience, his faith—in short, the Catholic religion which he professes— do not allow him to do this. He is convinced that he must resist to the very scaffold unless Your Holiness judges differently and without even giving him your reasons. He will submit with no thought of appeal or complaint.

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1368-4. To the Apostolic Nuncio in Paris

February 1845, Agen

Copy, Agmar

A Petition from the Daughters of Mary
To Our Holy Father the Pope.¹

Mother Saint-Vincent de la Bastide, the undersigned, Superior General of the Institute of the Daughters of Mary and of its Third Order Regular, along with her Daughters of both Orders, prostrate themselves at the feet of Your Holiness and implore you to save them.

They profess the vows prescribed by their Constitutions with all the earnestness of which they are capable and according to both the letter and the spirit. For instance, the spirit of our vow of poverty demands a stripping of every earthly and temporal good, and without being a mendicant order they offer to God everything they have and will ever possess. Our vow of poverty is not only individual, it is collective. They may use the goods which are theirs according to civil law only according to the Rule which Your Holiness has deigned to approve and even to praise. Every nonessential must be used according to the designs of God, made known to us by faith. In our institution and foundation the Superior General of the Society of Mary must reveal to us the designs of God. Every action of the Daughters of Mary is guided by faith, and for the consolation of Your Holiness, I can assure you that this is the doctrine which prevails in all our convents.

We have learned, Most Holy Father, that the members of the council of the Society of Mary, which is actually the council of the Superior General, no longer subscribe to this doctrine or have weakened it greatly. Their nonconformity has to do with goods and money, and they want the General Administration of the Society of Mary to determine the use of the revenues and resources of the Society according to reason alone and not to the discernment of faith, and they censure their Superior General.

They desire his resignation, one that would be equivalent to his physical death so that he may no longer speak. They quote article 481 of their Constitutions and give it a distorted interpretation which was never in the Founder's thought.

In our judgment, Most Holy Father, this doctrine has caused a deterioration of the Society, which is no longer the one you have approved. For this reason, we feel that the Institute of the Daughters of Mary under the same administration would also deteriorate; both Orders would lose their original fervor, and soon new scandals would be added to the older ones which Christians recall with sorrow.

Fortunately, this sad case is now before the tribunal of Your Holiness. Prostrate at your feet, we repeat with confidence, "Save us, we implore you!"

In the most humble submission and docility to Your Holiness, we are, Most Holy Father, your very humble and very obedient servants.

¹First draft of the petition from the Daughters of Mary to the pope; the author is Fr. Chaminade.

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1368-5. The Daughters of Mary

To Pope Gregory XVI¹

February 10, 1845, Agen

Rough Copy, Agmar

Most Holy Father,

The undersigned, your very humble servant the Superior General of the Institute of the Daughters of Mary and of their Third Order Regular, along with her Daughters of both Orders, prostrate themselves at the feet of Your Holiness and implore you to save them from the danger to which they are exposed.

They profess the vows prescribed by their Constitutions with all the earnestness of which they are capable and according to both the letter and the spirit. The spirit of their vow of poverty demands a stripping of every earthly and temporal good, and without being a mendicant order they offer to God everything they have and will ever possess. Their vow of poverty is not only individual, it is collective. They may use the goods which are theirs in the civil order only according to the Rule which Your Holiness has deigned to approve and even to praise. Every nonessential must be used according to the designs of God, made known to us by faith. In our institution and foundation, the Superior General of the Society of Mary must reveal to us the designs of God. Every action of the Daughters of Mary is guided by faith, and for the consolation of Your Holiness, I can assure you that this is the doctrine which exists in all our convents.

Most Holy Father, we have learned that the members of the council of the Society of Mary, which is actually the council of the Superior General, no longer subscribe to this doctrine or have weakened it greatly. Their nonconformity has to do with goods and money, and they want the General Administration of the Society of Mary to determine the use of the revenues and resources of the Society by reason alone and not by the discernments of faith, and they censure our common Superior General, who judges all things in the light of faith.

In our judgment, Most Holy Father, this doctrine has caused a deterioration of the Society, which is no longer the one you have approved. For the same reason the Institute of the Daughters of Mary, which constitutionally is under the same administration, would also deteriorate, and if this doctrine prevailed both Orders would soon lose their original fervor, and to the older scandals which Christians recall with sorrow new ones would be added.

What is of the greatest concern, Most Holy Father, in this divergence of doctrine between our worthy Founder and the General Administration of the Society of Mary is the report of the tactics used by the members of that administration to strip our venerable Founder and Father of all power. They desire to reduce him to a state of moral death. On January 14, 1841, one of the members of the General Administration wrote to me, "The Good Father has resigned his generalship as far as his temporal functions are concerned . . . nothing has changed on the spiritual plane." On January 19, I replied, "What a blow your letter was to my heart! Can it be that our Good Father is no longer our Superior? I readily admit that this thought would distress me very much if I could no longer receive from this Good Father the orders and the counsels as I have done until this day. Please enlighten me as to the true state of things, that I may be reassured." He answered, "The Good Father has resigned, in truth, purely and simply into the hands of his council; but the council grants him primacy of action and direction, as is only just.

¹Second text, edited and completed by Fr. Chevaux. See the letters of Mother Saint-Vincent of March 6, 1845 (Agmar 7.4.517) and of March 11 (Agmar 7.4.520).

The Good Father will continue to be for us what he has always been, and this until his death, even given the case where in his lifetime and of his own free will a new Superior General would be elected. Please, Reverend Mother, I ask you, do not say more on the matter than is contained in these lines.”

On learning this, Most Holy Father, I called my Daughters together, and having only presumptive knowledge of the bad disposition of the administration, we protested against this resignation and entered the protest into the register of our council. Today we have confirmation that the administration intends not only to change the spirit of our Constitutions, but also to guarantee the success of their plans by the moral death of our protector and Father. We have protested again and protest against its teaching and the abdication of our venerable Founder as explained by the administration, for our venerable Father has always said that the only resignation he had given was a conditional one, giving him the right to resume his functions. We hope he will be able to prove this and that he will be given sufficient time to suppress the abuses and to revive in all its purity the spirit of our holy Rule. We know, Most Holy Father, that this case has been brought to your tribunal. Prostrate at your feet, we repeat with confidence, “Save us!”

In the most humble submission and docility to Your Holiness we are, Most Holy Father, your very humble and very obedient servants.

Most Holy Father, we have also learned that for this reason and for other purely human motives, they have summoned our venerable Founder to resign his generalship. They wish to remove totally, or at least as much as possible, his influence on the General Administration of the Society of Mary. To this end they have insidiously made him sign an act of resignation composed by them, and according to its terms they would hope to remove him completely from the government of the Society. Happily, we are told, our worthy Founder never intended to give such a resignation, and the civil act he wrote in no way nullifies the effect of his true resignation.¹

* * *

1368-6. To the Apostolic Nuncio in Paris

February 26, 1845, Bordeaux
Arch. Of the Sacred Congregation of Religious

Your Excellency,

I am taking the liberty of sending to your address a petition destined for His Holiness, with a letter from the Head of Instruction in the Society of Mary, Father Roussel, a young priest.

I ask Your Excellency to forward these documents to the venerable Congregation of Bishops and Regulars. These papers all deal with the same matter for which the Archbishop of Bordeaux has already asked you to transmit various documents and position papers. This is a matter of the highest importance, and it is imperative that it will not give rise to rumors and that it will be decided as soon as possible. I would have admitted my error a long time ago had not my conscience as Founder of the Society of Mary imperiously commanded me to resist claims which it considers criminal. I am convinced that two of my three Assistants would not have given their support to the attack if they had not been encouraged by Father Roussel. They gave undeniable proof of this in early January 1841, after a lively outburst by Father Roussel about the written resignation I had just given. His colleagues on the council forced him to acknowledge that authority was still vested in me as resigning General according to the spirit of our Constitutions approved by the Holy See. We then agreed on the reorganization of the General Administration, to which we adhered for three years, but this did not gain the approval of Father Roussel.

¹This last paragraph has been crossed out in Fr. Chevaux's first draft.

This state of affairs, Your Excellency, places me in a very difficult position. I would like to consult someone, but this is very risky right now in Bordeaux. If you are agreeable, Your Excellency, I should like to share with you in confidence and simplicity the problems which concern my conscience.

The Superior General of the Institute of the Daughters of Mary and of the Third Order, of which I am the lowly and unworthy originator and Founder, both approved by the Holy See, has asked me several times to intervene in the attacks to which I am subjected. She is poorly acquainted with the entire matter, but she would intervene because the reasons behind our quarrels are well known. I believe I will give her freedom to act. If she petitions Our Holy Father the Pope, I ask Your Excellency to accept her plea with your customary kindness and to forward it to the venerable Congregation.

I am with the most profound respect Your Excellency's most humble and most obedient servant.

P.S. Your Excellency may think it will be appropriate to include this letter also as a third document.

* * *

While the petition of the Daughters of Mary was on its way to Rome, where it arrived in May, Father Chaminade began to dictate another petition at the end of March; however, this was not sent.

1369. To Pope Gregory XVI

March 26, 1845, Bordeaux

Rough Copy, Agmar

Most Holy Father,

Guillaume-Joseph Chaminade, Founder and General of the Society of Mary, comes a second time to cast himself at the foot of the throne of Your Holiness, not to change the intent and purpose of his first petition but to suggest new means for arriving at a more prompt decision in view of the grave hardships which a long delay could create for the Society of Mary, in itself or in its government.

I have great fears that the Archbishop of Bordeaux and also the Archbishops of Besançon and Albi may compromise themselves, the latter because of the trust they have in His Excellency of Bordeaux. Not that I blame their trust; I would have been the first to submit if, by law and in fact, his decision had not been null and entirely opposed to the principles upheld in my conscience.

I have never attacked, but I have always resisted because my conscience as Founder of the Society of Mary, Founder also of the Institute of the Daughters of Mary and of their Third Order—all united under the direction of their Founder or of a replacement chosen by him—had forbidden me to abandon them; this on my part would have been a manifest betrayal. I would be betraying especially the wonderful young men of the Society of Mary. No member would have joined the Order if he had believed for a moment that I would be coldly indifferent to a change in the spirit of the Society, I above all, to whom Your Holiness graciously wrote personally that I was to inculcate the principles of faith contained in the Constitutions into the spirits and the hearts of all the members of the Society of Mary.

Can my conscience stand silent, as if I were physically dead, while grave abuses exist and which will become customs after my death, etc. . . .

I sincerely wish to resign from my generalship, but not from my title of Founder unless Your Holiness decides otherwise.

While I am continuing to govern the Society according to Canon Law as interpreted by the Archbishops of Bordeaux, Besançon, and Albi, I believed it was my duty to revoke the title of Head of Instruction of my Second Assistant, Father Roussel, and this because of his serious abuse of this office during the past year (these abuses have come to the attention of his two colleagues, thus the need for my action), and also because he is a serious menace to the novitiate of Réalmont where he has withdrawn, this wonderful novitiate, the consolation of the Archbishop of Albi and of the clergy of his diocese. I am taking the liberty of appending this document to the petition.

Most Holy Father, I have with me Father Chevaux, the Provincial of Alsace where the Society of Mary has a large number of establishments. In an interview he had with the Archbishop of Bordeaux—who seemed upset to see me still at the helm of the Society until the decision which he elicited from Your Holiness—His Excellency suggested, in his name and in that of the Archbishop of Besançon, that a circular would be sent to the Society asking it to elect a new General, and to choose either the candidate proposed by the General Administration or the aging Founder and General. Father Chevaux pointed out to His Excellency that such an action could result in a distressing schism (in fact, a schism already existed in the Midi among 8 or 9 establishments). His Excellency replied that no schism could be expected, and that he himself would count the ballots. Father Chevaux wrote the circular and showed it to me; I approved its contents. (I did not fear a schism because I knew too well the filial attachment to my person of most of the members of the Society.) Father Chevaux sent two circulars to two priests of the Society of Mary, one to the superior of the novitiate of Ebersmunster and the other to the Jura, destined for the Jura, the Doubs, and Haute-Saône. He himself left for the Midi to acquaint the members with the circular. These establishments not only shunned the schism by professing their obedience, but they also supported the election of their aged General and Founder. Father Chevaux immediately returned and gave a report to the Archbishop of Bordeaux, who had already heard of his success. His Excellency expressed his sorrow and said that he would not count the returning ballots. (The ballots had been sent in duplicate, one set to the archbishop and the other to the central house of the Society.)

It never occurred to anyone, Most Holy Father, that His Excellency's refusal to count the ballots and the letters which concerned the undertaking could invalidate the results. At the central house, Father Chevaux and three professors from the novitiate of Sainte-Anne, all mature, perpetual professed religious, counted the ballots and wrote the minutes; I have the honor of sending a copy to Your Holiness.

Since these events, Most Holy Father, the Society has been happy and at peace. I have been assured of this both by private letter and by collective ones received from the houses on the occasion of my patron, Saint Joseph, or for New Year's.

Everything would soon have been reorganized, Most Holy Father, if the Archbishop of Bordeaux had not decided that I must govern the Society without any change in the present situation until a decision comes from Your Holiness. This general order is accompanied by several particular directives which are very harmful to the organization for which I am responsible.

In my administration I may not take as assistant any of the priests of the Society to help and advise me, under penalty of interdict, forbidding even the celebration of holy Mass. Only after a strict investigation on the date of his departure did Father Chevaux obtain permission to celebrate Mass; the archbishop approved because of Father Chevaux's obligation to obey me, his legitimate Superior. Father Chevaux had no knowledge of the archbishop's interdict when he left. However, the archbishop would not grant him permission to hear Confessions at the novitiate of Sainte-Anne, to which I have retired in my advanced age (I am beginning my 85th year). No argument could move His Excellency. Most Holy Father, I try to do my duty and to direct the novitiate of Sainte-Anne where I reside and to govern the Society. But it is highly inconvenient. One drawback is the delay in my correspondence; another is the inability to change what should be corrected because of the current situation.

I suppress every suspicion of personal animosity when I see how evident is the action of the Lord in permitting the devil to winnow the Society, its Founder along with its members, in order to purify it through persecution and to render it more capable of fulfilling the designs which God had in its institution.

How shocking was the hidden conduct of the leader of the opposition while he was at the novitiate of Sainte-Anne! I believed in his guilt after a very limited number of crimes came to my knowledge, and after the findings of a commission of inquiry formed by three priests of the Society of Mary at Saint-Hippolyte (Haut-Rhin), from which house I immediately withdrew him. I do not know where he will peddle his immorality and his infamy. I cannot understand why our three archbishops still support him. How many prayers are being said in the Institute of the Daughters of Mary and in its Third Order and also in that of the Miséricorde, for which I would have asked Your Holiness for approbation if I could have put the finishing touches to their Constitutions. So many prayers cannot go unanswered!

The truth is being spread far and wide, and I have been given evidence of this from the avowals Father Roussel was obliged to make to me. I say “obliged.” Oh! If they had been the fruit of repentance, I could still have found a way to correct everything, for my confidence in the protection of Mary would have given me that hope. I have shared this only with the Archbishop of Albi and with Your Holiness.

His Excellency of Albi tells me that some person in Montauban is spreading rumors throughout the diocese, where the prelate wanted Father Roussel. I sent Father Chevaux to try to free the archbishop from deception. The answer he was given was that I was exaggerating when I revealed Father Roussel’s immoral conduct to the archbishops, and that he had a secret memorandum in hand, addressed to the bishops alone, which was irrefutable. I insisted that I should be given a copy of this paper . . . no reply. . . . Is this not unbelievable? Has that old serpent, the enemy of the august Mary, anything to do with this matter, which concerns the interests of the woman who crushed his head under her heel?

I suspect, Most Holy Father, that the Archbishop of Bordeaux will have sent this fascinating memorandum to the Sacred Congregation of Bishops and Regulars. If the Congregation has not detected all the sophist’s ruses, I would ask it to send me a copy along with its remarks, through the intermediary of the Apostolic Nuncio in Paris.

I beg your pardon, Most Holy Father, for taking so much of your time. I believed it was my duty to do so.

Always prostrate at the feet of Your Holiness, I will wait in humble submission for whatever decision Your Holiness will make. I am and will always be, with the most entire and humble submissiveness and with deepest respect, etc. . . .

* * *

On his birthday, April 23, Father Caillet sent another compromise proposal to Father Chaminade through Father Chevaux. If he called a General Chapter and informed it of his wishes regarding his successor and his council, then Father Caillet and Brother Clouzet, in writing, would place themselves at the disposal of the Chapter. Father Chaminade replied that Father Caillet should put his new proposal in writing. He refused, fearing Father Chaminade would reap certain advantages which he himself could not foresee (note from Father Chevaux to Father Chaminade, April 24, 1845; Agmar 7.5.377). Father Caillet then sent his lawyer, M. Faye, to Father Chaminade with the same proposal.

1370. To Fr. Georges Caillet, Bordeaux

May 8, 1845, Bordeaux

Original, Agmar

My dear Son,

Last April 23 you sent me through Father Chevaux a proposition which would bring an end to the scandalous and disastrous discussions of the past years.

The next day you sent M. Faye to make the same proposal to me.

While the reports given by the two emissaries may differ somewhat, the essential points of the compromise are identical, just as are the pressing motives we have to bring an end to this.

First, your conditions: that I convoke a General Chapter, that I preside over it, that I have a successor appointed—it looks like we might easily forget to add the three Assistants. Now the motives: the delay of recourse to Rome, and the hardships and disorders imposed upon the government of the Society by the current situation.

I answered M. Faye that I agreed with the motives for a compromise and that I was seriously considering the proposals you were making. I asked him if the Archbishop of Bordeaux had agreed to the proposals of Father Caillet. He told me this was not necessary. I listened to his proofs and then to the motives. I told M. Faye that the scandal was spreading in Bordeaux; he replied, “If you mean the discussions, I know what is being said; but the scandal is not being attributed to Father Caillet, but to you; Father Caillet is held in high esteem.” I merely answered that therefore the scandal was even greater, and returning to the proposals I said I would consider them carefully, that it was my habit when faced with important suggestions to examine the consequences and then to decide what my conscience permitted; that at first glance I detected difficulties in the convocation of a Chapter at the present time or in its convocation during the holidays; and that all these difficulties would vanish if you accepted, with the rest of the Society, the circular which Father Chevaux had written at the end of last year by order and with the permission of the archbishop.

You must not fear, my dear Son. I will resign my generalship, but I will do so *positis ponendis* [after stating my position]. I explained these words, which you pretended not to understand, at one of our council meetings sometime before the outburst of Father Roussel, when he mentally resolved to press his attacks against me more diligently. I understood this from the results which followed.

I have written only once to the Sovereign Pontiff, but in closing I will say the same things I told him in all simplicity and uprightness. A second petition had been written and copied when you sent your compromise proposal. My purpose was mainly the suppression of the current situation, the return of the documents of the Society, and with permission to form a temporary council without having my priests placed under interdict, unless they deserved it for other reasons than that of being members of the Society of Mary.

I did not fail to enlighten M. Faye on the burden imposed by the current situation. I told him I was using every honest means to have it lifted; I believe this is quicker than a petition to the Sovereign Pontiff. I have halted everything since your proposal.

M. Faye left me. I promised to proceed immediately to an examination of your proposals. I believe I have done so as best I can. Only today, the Octave of the Ascension of Our Lord Jesus Christ, the thought of that letter came to me. In the presence of my crucifix, I asked my secretary to take up his pen; I dictated without interruption.

If you have other proposals for a settlement which my conscience and basic propriety can accept, send them as soon as possible.

Allow me, my dear Son, to end this letter with the salutation of Saint Peter, “Grow rather in grace and in the knowledge of Our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ” [2 Peter 3:18].

G.-Joseph Chaminade

* * *

Father Caillet sends his answer on May 9, written by M. Faye (Agmar 7.5.380). He categorically rejects the suggestion that along with the Society of Mary, he would conform to Father Chevaux's circular and to the conclusions drawn from his consultation (December 1844). Finally Father Chaminade accepts the compromise and clarifies the conditions.

1371. To Fr. Georges Caillet, Bordeaux

May 13, 1845, Bordeaux

Original, Agmar

My dear Son,

On the holy Feast of Pentecost, the Lord has kindly let me know that I could accept your proposal for a compromise; because I could, then I must. I hasten therefore to tell you of my acceptance. Now we must spell out the terms very clearly. This is how I understand your proposal.

(1) That I would convoke a General Chapter, regularly and canonically of course, and that I would preside in the same way.

(2) That I would submit the name of my replacement to the Chapter and urge it to give me a successor.

I do not understand why neither Father Chevaux nor M. Faye, your unpaid messengers, made any mention of the presentation of the three Assistants to the General. I thought in your last letter you said this was your intention; however, I have reason to doubt this, so we will need to come to a decision. On the one hand, the religious Constitutions and the Civil Statutes allow the Superior General to appoint his Assistants; on the other hand, in the form of Father Roussel, you fought against this right for three solid months. From there you passed to a more general accusation, that my resignation had robbed me of all authority. It is maintained that this dispute can be decided only by a decision from a General Chapter or from the Sovereign Pontiff. I was supposed to be stopped by the very strict and very impractical current situation; I say "impractical" because of the time it takes to obtain a papal decision. In case of doubt, I believe our compromise agreement must state clearly that I will name and propose the three Assistants.

I need say no more on this topic because you and your supporters are intelligent enough to realize how practical my suggestion is. Moreover, whether this condition is included or not is indifferent to me, and I wholeheartedly endorse the project for reconciliation which I believe you wish to present to me.

(3) So that there may be no great disruption of the Society because of the convocation of a General Chapter, I suppose that those who for a valid reason cannot answer the call would not lose their right to be part of the two-thirds of the members present, if it were necessary.

(4.) It is understood that the dismissal of Father Roussel is valid and admitted.

(5) I accept purely and simply the proposals for an agreement because (1) as of now the current situation will be lifted; (2) as of now I will be able to call on members of the Society, priests or lay, to form a provisional council. Those priests who are approved in their dioceses will have the approval of the Archbishop of Bordeaux with no other formality than the presentation of their titles; and (3) the key to the secretariat will be in my hands.

Now that our respective conditions have been accepted, I take it upon myself to convoke a General Chapter within a month and a half from the date of the signature of the present compromise, unless some reason for delay presents itself, accepted by both parties on the assumption that both are reasonable.

I am, my dear Son, your very devoted

G.-Joseph Chaminade

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Through a communication from M. Faye on May 24, 1845, Father Caillet replies in the negative. “You are obsessed with the thought that your right is unchanging and that your reservation to appoint a successor, which we cannot accept, must go unchallenged. . . . Your proposals are faulty in principle because they do not admit the possibility that you might be under an illusion with respect to your reservation” (Agmar 7.5.381).

The same day Father Caillet sends Father Chaminade a memorandum in 11 points on the plan in question (Agmar 7.5.383). He is distrustful and meticulous. We can examine his new attitude if we compare the verbal plan of April 28, 1845, given by Father Chevaux with the text of May 14.

In the new plan, you yourself would convoke a General Chapter and reveal the one whom you would want as your successor. . . . Father Caillet and Brother Clouzet intend to give you a declaration placing themselves entirely at the disposal of the Chapter to do with them as it will (Father Chevaux to Father Chaminade, Agmar 7.5.377).

The question to be submitted to the supreme tribunal of the Holy See would not be decided by us, and we would not try to influence the Chapter in one way or another. In his capacity as Founder of the Society of Mary, the Good Father would convoke the Chapter, with the consent of the council and in concert with it. His signed circular would witness to the support of the council (Agmar 7.5.383).

On December 5, 1845, Father Chaminade wrote to Father Meyer. “Father Caillet presented me with a compromise plan, which I readily accepted. It now seems almost indisputable that the gesture was hypocritical, for I had hardly accepted it when Father Caillet tried his utmost to reject it, alleging as usual that he could do nothing without the approval of the Archbishop of Bordeaux, who was away on a three-month leave” (letter no. 1425).

Father Caillet informed Father Chaminade that he could not comply with his wishes (letter of May 20, 1845, Agmar 7.5.384). The plan failed, as Father Chaminade announces to the archbishop in the following letter responding to an invitation to attend the solemnities of Corpus Christi.

1372. To Archbishop Donnet of Bordeaux

May 24, 1845, Bordeaux

Original, Agmar

I have just received the invitation which Your Excellency so graciously sent on May 21. I look upon it as a formal order. For more than 40 years I have obeyed these orders to the letter, except when I have been absent visiting the various establishments of the Society of Mary or when I have been prevented by the infirmities of advanced age or more pressing duties. Tomorrow evening, properly vested, I will chant Vespers in the choir of the cathedral. I am too weak to take part in the procession; I will interpret most favorably your silence on my abstention.

I understand, Monsignor, that you are offering me a compromise, drawn up by Father Caillet, to bring an end to the scandalous discussions we have been having. I have heartily agreed to all the propositions. I am only asking that the General Chapter take place in a regular and canonical manner, without any commotion which might stir up public opinion and without any disturbing aftermath.

However, Father Caillet and M. Faye are not of this opinion, and our relationships are strained. Nevertheless, because of the plan for reconciliation I have suspended all the peaceful means I had been using to bring a halt to the evils brought about by the situation.

I find it difficult to believe, Your Excellency, that Father Caillet and M. Faye have been reporting to you with the proper candor the answers I gave to the demands which my conscience rejected, and which are not essential to the goals which Your Excellency and the Archbishops of Besançon and Albi have proposed.

I am, with the most profound respect, Monsignor, your most humble and most obedient servant.

G.-Joseph Chaminade

* * *

In the meantime, Father Chaminade asks Father Chevaux, his intermediary, for clarification in order to understand the contradictions Father Chevaux seems to find in the cause of Father Chaminade.

1372-2. To Fr. Jean Chevaux, Bordeaux

June 3, 1845, Bordeaux

Original, Agmar

My dear Son,

Only just now and by accident have I come across your report written some days ago on the tactless letter to Brother Bidon which I had dictated. You add the advice suggested by your reason and by that of Father Caillet.

This report, written by you, discusses matters which are too serious for me to accept, such vague accusations as “I found many passage which, at first sight, seemed very extraordinary! I believe I have even found a contradiction. I would not like His Excellency to notice this, for it would give him a still dimmer view of your case. I can hardly quote all the passages that struck me, but I can give you the substance of one or two of them.”

It is useless, my dear Son, to ask you to rewrite your report, although you probably intend to do just that. You go so far as to find indications of bad faith. I am sending you the letter, just as you read it, without rereading it myself. You may quote the passages you wish and then prove your general allegation.

I must stop. It is Tuesday morning.

G.-Joseph Chaminade

* * *

The archbishop left Bordeaux without giving an answer, so Father Chaminade tried another approach. On June 6 he asked M. Ravez, the arbiter of 1841, to act again as intermediary in an effort to have the plan accepted. He advised Father Caillet of this. To this proposal, Father Caillet replied on June 9 that in the absence of the archbishop, his hands were tied. M. Ravez waited in vain for an interview with Father Caillet, and he finally returned the papers to Father Chaminade, thanking him for his trust (Agmar 7.6.318).

1373. To Fr. Georges Caillet, Bordeaux

June 7, 1845, Bordeaux

Original, Agmar

My dear Son,

I have just written to M. Ravez the elder, asking him to exert every effort toward the approval of the project which I accepted. Can M. Ravez, who is much more intelligent, succeed where Father Chevaux has failed? Here is the last paragraph of my letter to M. Ravez. "I am ready to agree to any compromise, however painful and humiliating it may be, providing it will be at least rational and contain no seed of discord, complaint, and regret after the conclusion of the General Chapter, regularly and canonically convoked and held."¹

I think you should see him and let him know how well disposed you are.

Receive, my dear Son, this constant testimony of my sincere devotedness.

* * *

With infinite patience Father Chaminade has his tireless scribe, Brother Michaud, write a series of long letters to Father Caillet in which he tried to convince him and win him over. "You are wrong" he says, "when you take as pretext the absence of the archbishop, for it is in the interests of His Excellency that a compromise will be reached."

1374. To Fr. Georges Caillet, Bordeaux

June 11, 1845, Bordeaux

Original, Agmar

My dear Son,

This is in reply to your letter of June 9.

I wrote to M. Ravez, as I informed you. I was not asking for advice; I asked him to persuade you to reach an agreement which will be definitive. He would have been merely the interpreter of the feelings of the Archbishop of Bordeaux and the other French prelates, especially of the Archbishops of Besançon and Albi. Since I told you about my letter to M. Ravez, I have been informed of the opinion of the Archbishop of Besançon, and separately but by the same post of the opinion of the vicar general in charge of our affairs. I answered them yesterday afternoon.

You say you can do nothing in the absence of the archbishop. I believe you are wrong, because the outcome of this matter does not depend necessarily on His Excellency or on the other two respectable prelates. I do not intend to compromise them in any way.

Nor will M. Faye be compromised, for I believe he is sincerely virtuous and that he has been deluded by the sophisms of Father Roussel, which you and Brother Clouzet have adopted. M. Faye truly has talent, and I believe he is experienced in civil matters. But I think he is mistaken when he tries to give advice in a mixed situation—that is, in matters which are partly civil and partly religious, such as the very serious matter we are discussing. I will try to keep his brother out of it too, the one who is exercising the honorable functions of a lawyer. In short, I truly have only three opponents, and of those three, I could have protected you and Brother Clouzet if you had not clung stubbornly to Father Roussel. You still support him; you do this when you claim that his dismissal is doubtful because I do not have the authority. In truth, my dear Son, you appear to want to admit the fact of his dismissal because you have very good reasons for not denying it. But do not worry on that score; I will never attack Father Roussel for such reasons. I will never mention this again, if no one else will. For fear that I might allow

¹This quotation is all that remains of this letter to M. Ravez.

something to slip which might awaken some suspicions, with a sorrowful heart I have asked Father Chevaux to list my reasons in the preamble. I skip many details which you may know or suppose, but which are of no use to you today.

Among some of the conditions you reject in the plan, and which I accept, I attribute special importance to the one where there is question of the validity of the dismissal of Father Roussel. This short item, expressed so briefly, would have passed unnoticed, especially since the document would remain in your hands. For me it is a guarantee for the future, and it freed me from the obligation of calling a General Chapter. For you it is a guarantee that all the decisions from the General Chapter would be fulfilled. Without this precaution, would I not be worthy of blame if in the case of a doubtful dismissal, I did not rely on the General Chapter? That is, you would seek an agreement which would settle nothing.

I will not insist. In my letter to M. Ravez, I did not insist so much on some other conditions which you want and which I would not like to see included in the project. Let there be no misunderstanding; we both accept and want this plan. I even have reason to believe that the proposals were inspired by Their Excellencies the Archbishops, and perhaps by the Sovereign Pontiff.¹ You must think it is really tactful on my part, my dear Son, to insist so much on the draft of the compromise so that it conforms perfectly to the views of our First Superiors.

What is it, my dear Son, that you can reasonably and naturally want? That we put an end to our scandalous discussions, and that we do so without giving the impression that you or Their Excellencies have been in error.

Well, my dear Son, (1) thanks to this compromise, Their Excellencies the Archbishops are extricated from this struggle into which you have culpably drawn them; (2) I have never stopped to think, especially during the conflict, about whether a decision by the Sovereign Pontiff was called for. You three alone attacked me when everything was peaceful. You are my only aggressors, and this must be the will of Their Excellencies because I have been gently protesting to them for almost a year without ever receiving one word in return. Just recently I sent an important communication to the Archbishop of Albi, who is a special case; my devotedness to him is in proportion to the almost limitless confidence he had always shown me. Father Chevaux, to whom I showed the letter, told me coldly, “You will receive no reply; the three respectable prelates have agreed never to answer you.”

But, my dear Son, would I attack Their Excellencies? I who have never attacked you, but who have defended myself only because you were making an attempt on my spiritual life? I who have wanted nothing but to do you good and who believes I have never done you any harm other than the resistance which my conscience forced me to offer? No, certainly not! Our good and respectable prelates will not be involved in this struggle, which has been brought before the Holy See and which at some time or other may be taken before the civil courts. It would be different if by some remote chance they wanted to defend your cause; then they would attack me directly. My conscience tells me that I should have to defend myself. But why discuss such an absurdity?

My dear Son, I have just pointed out to you who my true aggressors are. Now I would like to point out the root of this matter of ours—which essentially is within the competence of the Holy See—from a host of accessory facts which, at most, are accidental and simply confound the issue. What is the main problem which makes this a reserved case? It is to be decided whether, as Superior General appointed by His Holiness in the order of religion just as I was in the civil order by His Majesty the King of France, I had to make a very legal resignation before the law to prove the validity of my resignation according to the Constitutions; and whether my opponents could avail themselves of this legal resignation before the completion of my resignation according to

¹His imagination is at work.

the Constitutions, before its acceptance by the proper authority, before there was another Superior in my place; whether, if the civil Government hesitated to acknowledge this new Superior General, the pure and simple resignation could be produced as confirmation of the true resignation I intended to make according to the Constitutions.

I have said and I cannot help repeating that the use my opponents have made of my civil resignation, denying the validity of my resignation according to the Constitutions, is treason in the order of religion and of morality. This is the case that is reserved to the Holy See.

I do not maintain, my dear Son, that revealing those additional facts on the one side or on the other cannot be of some use. But they would merely be aggravating or attenuating circumstances. Let me tell you frankly what I intend to do. . . .

Let me turn now, my dear Son, to the other questions you raised. You are in need of funds to pay the Bié claim and the Dardy loan. Do you not realize that you will be simply worsening your situation? If I read the letters of M. Dardy and Father Lalanne correctly, nothing will be gained by it; Father Lalanne insists on this.

With respect to the Toussaint claim, I am doing what prudence dictates, and if Divine Providence had not helped us, we would have waited 12 years for the mortgage to run out on that small property called La Crèche. At last they have discovered the refuge of M. Toussaint; this comes in a letter from the pastor who is so devoted to us.

I must have told you at some time the reasons I decided to sell the Canton de la Rode.

I have no doubt that Brother Clouzet's place is in Bordeaux, now more than ever. That may be, but I cannot understand why Father Chevaux left for Saint-Remy. The current state of affairs for which you are responsible and the interdict you have caused to afflict all the priests of the Society do not allow this. Father Chevaux cannot explain that situation. He and I must drink the bitter chalice to the dregs, until the very end, with patience and forbearance.

My point of view is still the same as I described to you in that very long letter I sent you before the great uproar, which anyone could easily predict would engulf the Society of Mary, almost a year ago.¹

You add that funds will be running out. Brother Clouzet goes even further and threatens to bankrupt the society. My dear Son, what do you want me to do? Brother Clouzet uses the resources of the Society according to his whims—or if you prefer, as you permit him—either to pay for your lawsuits against me or especially to build or repair the mill he bought near the château of Saint-Remy. When Father Chevaux arrived in Bordeaux, he had already spent 39,000 francs on the project, although people said 80,000 because of the many loads of dirt and rocks which Brother Clouzet had hauled away with the help of horses and the religious of Saint-Remy. I have only a vague idea of what is happening, for I refuse to pry; but Providence has seen to it that I am informed, sometimes of one thing, sometimes of another, enough that I am aware of the great evils which are the fruit of anarchy and which are perpetuated by the current situation.

You close your letter with this. “If you completely left temporal matters alone, we would survive; but it is not necessary to place spokes into the wheels!” I would like to know what spokes I have placed into the wheels of your government, and what you want and understand by “completely leaving temporal matters alone.” Please explain yourself clearly. Do not hesitate to give me the details, and be convinced of the sincere devotedness I have for you.

G.-Joseph Chaminade

* * *

¹Letter no. 1313, “false witnesses” of August 17, 1844.

This letter quickly follows. Father Caillet argues that Father Chaminade's authority is invalid or doubtful. Nevertheless, he asks Father Chaminade to convoke the Chapter. "What type of Chapter," Father Chaminade asks, "is convoked and directed by a doubtful authority? True, I find great strength at the sight of my crucifix, and at its feet, and in this strength I find a small consolation. . . ."

1375. To Fr. Georges Caillet, Bordeaux

June 13, 1845, Bordeaux

Original, Agmar

My dear Son,

The purpose of the letter I wrote to you the evening before last, and which you received only yesterday afternoon, was to have you come to your senses. I feel I must make a few more remarks, perhaps the last if divine grace does not enlighten and touch your heart. If they are shrewd enough, they may even cause you to lay down your arms.

You have suggested how this could be ended without compromising anyone; may I suggest the archbishop in the first place, for he proposed the plan which we both accepted.¹ Then there are those who deeply desire that our scandalous discussions will cease. May their desires and the basis of their hope not be reduced to smoke! Already almost a month has been spent in new and useless discussions on the drafting of the compromise agreement.

I would have the wording be simple, expressing a guarantee that everything would end with a General Chapter which is very canonical and very regular so that after the Chapter, the Society could continue on its vigorous, and we might say majestic, course under the protection of our good and devoted bishops and archbishops. In that document I would like to see no seed of discord or anxiety, no expressions of regret and complaint. On the contrary, you want the document to demonstrate that because of my resignation, my power and my authority had been doubtful, and a General Chapter was necessary to appoint a Superior General whose power was no longer doubtful.

But my dear Son, into what a new labyrinth you would lead us! What type of Chapter would be convoked and directed by an authority which was doubtful? And shortly thereafter, if there was a need, it would be easy to prove that my authority was more than doubtful, that this was merely to show leniency and that in the interests of peace the only means with any chance of success was allowed to be used.

I would not like to see any of the faults of the opposition party revealed to those outside, unless there was an urgent need. Take care; my conscience cannot admit that I have been wrong in my consistent opposition, or that I was not sure of the validity of the motives which made me resist.

My dear Son, you use my own words when you wish to offset something I have said which was much stronger. You say, "My conscience insistently obliges me to support the Constitutions because of my title of General Head of Zeal," and each of you can say the same thing. And now we have Brother Clouzet, who is always talking about his conscience because you are Head of Zeal and also President of the council called the General Administrative Council. . . . But if they are read in good faith, my dear Son, do the Constitutions give you the right to oppose the will of the Superior when that will favors the observance of the Constitutions? When pointing out their duties, the Constitutions only give them the right to assist the Superior; this is why they are called Assistants, and the three of them form a council in order to assist him more effectively.

¹Carried along by this train of thought, Fr. Chaminade comes to believe that the plan for a settlement proposed by Fr. Caillet had been suggested to him by the archbishop.

I do not believe Father Roussel ever used the weapon of conscience in his attacks. He would have been too ashamed at the exposure, which actually happened, that only the cleverness of his mind and his seductive sophisms had sustained the stance he had adopted, but for motives other than those of Brother Clouzet, although they coincided with yours. How many times have I not tried to make you see this, my dear Son, but it has been all in vain.

Earlier I used the word “shrewdness.” Is it truly being shrewd of you and of Brother Clouzet to present my authority after my resignation as doubtful? Is this not forcing me and my supporters always to talk about it, and in spite of all the precautions we could take, encourage others to speak of it imprudently? My authority is intrinsic, for it is recognized by Church canons and even by civil law. The bishops have acknowledged it; by its silence, the Holy See seems to acknowledge it also; and you have the audacity to contest it!

If we are pursuing this course, you say, it is not for ourselves but for those who have adopted our ideas and who have supported us. Well, my dear Son, there will never be a question in the scandalous struggle ahead. To continue it with some measure of success, all we need is your cooperation. It would seem the Archbishop of Bordeaux has not passed on to you the letter I wrote to him two days before his departure.

I must stop here, for I have no time to continue, either this evening or tomorrow or the day after, as you know. What a multitude of other business I must attend to! And your conscience tells you that I must not have the assistance required for my correspondence and to suppress the abuses which are slipping into some principal houses, as I was told recently. Some claim that the Society is abandoned and in ruins a second time. . . .

I must stop; but to what an unhappy existence you have condemned me! True, at the sight and at the feed of my crucifix I find great strength, and in this strength a little consolation. Not the least of my sorrows is my devotion to you and to Brother Clouzet.

G.-Joseph Chaminade

* * *

On June 16 Father Caillet answers with a very strong letter, composed by M. Faye. Without any show of irritation, Father Chaminade sends a compromise plan.

1376. To Fr. Georges Caillet, Bordeaux

June 19, 1845, Bordeaux

Original, Agmar

My dear Son,

My last letter contained two ideas to which you should have responded with more composure, it seems to me. The question we are debating is truly serious; you have judged it so yourself. Let us get down to facts.

The plan for conciliation you suggest is so fine, so simple, that in itself it would bring to a halt all discussion on the authority which governs or should govern the Society of Mary. The plan would have the enormous advantage of leaving in doubt which of us had been right or wrong in the course of our long struggle. After several days of reflection, I would accept the plan with a good heart except for some terms which would made no reference to the doubt existing between the right and the wrong. After all, the plan we want is a plan which says nothing about what we do not wish to decide, the uncertainty of who is right.

Well, my dear Son, it is easy to write such a plan, and once written it will resemble a court decision and will be just as binding. When I finish this letter, I will write the plan; you may accept or reject it. Anything you may wish to change as to form and style will find me agreeable.

Most of the conditions required for the execution of the plan do not need even to be stated, providing they are fulfilled before I sign; for instance, the lifting of the current situation and of the interdict on the priests of the Society, the return of the key to the secretariat, and the preparations necessary and fitting to lodge all the personnel needed for the General Administration of the Society. Also, no mention needs to be made of the dismissal of Father Roussel or of the appointment of several priests or lay religious to a provisional council—in short, any expression which would displease you.

Here I interrupted the dictation of this letter in order to write the plan. I wrote without interruption, always in the sight of my crucifix. As soon as you receive it, have it approved by the Archbishop of Bordeaux, as you suggested; his signature is required because of the four conditions.

In the present instance, the absence of the archbishop cannot be a legitimate excuse to delay the implementation of the plan. Father Martial, the vicar general, could very well substitute for the archbishop, who might take the plan too personally.

But nothing prevents you from sending the plan immediately to Their Excellencies of Albi and Besançon; I know they will appreciate the gesture. Whether you accept or reject it, I will send it to the Apostolic Nuncio and to the Bishop of Saint-Claude. M. Faye said outright that there was no other way of bringing this entire business to an end. Given the state of mind of the persons involved, I think he is right.

We have not exhausted the ways and means of enlightening the authorities. Just think of the position of the Archbishop of Albi, who felt he had to confide his novitiate of Réalmont to Father Roussel, especially after his dismissal! Your solidarity with the cause of Father Roussel, which as he told me himself he went to Réalmont to defend, may be very harmful to him in spite of the distinction he makes in the same letter between the two persons in him, the private and the public individual.

With your interests at heart, my dear Son, and in the interests of my paternal affection for you, I am your very devoted

G.-Joseph Chaminade

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A Plan for Conciliation

Under the protection of His Excellency of Bordeaux and also of Their Excellencies the Archbishops of Besançon and Albi,

I, the undersigned, the party of the first part, Guillaume-Joseph Chaminade, Founder of the Society of Mary, exercising the functions of Superior General, accept the plan for conciliation offered to him by Georges Caillet, priest, in agreement with his colleague Dominique Clouzet and answering for him;

Georges Caillet, the party of the second part, Head of Zeal, and Brother Clouzet, the Head of Temporalities, both exercising administrative functions in the Society of Mary, accept the plan for conciliation which follows.

(1) Father Chaminade will convoke a General Chapter; he will preside at this Chapter and will make known the religious he has selected to be his successor and the names of the three Assistants.

Father Chaminade lets it be known that all the members of the Society who absent themselves from the Chapter without sufficient reason will be deprived of all their rights as members of the chapter. Those directors who cannot answer the call because their absence might cause hardship at their places of work are considered to have a legitimate excuse. In a word, the Chapter, irrespective of the attendance, will be considered as general if the convocation is regular.

(2) He stipulates that as an essential condition, the Chapter will be not only regular but also canonical—that is, as is required by the Constitutions of the Society of Mary; that elections will not be the only topic on the agenda, but also the reform of abuses which have done it so much harm.

N.B. Here mention may or may not be made of the four conditions contained in the letter to Father Caillet which accompanies this plan for conciliation.

It is understood that this compromise is not retroactive. However, the Founder of the Society promises in his name and in that of his successor that he will approve all dealings with strangers to the Society where there is manifest good faith.

* * *

In the midst of all these cares, Father Chaminade writes to his family. This is a letter to Mme Lavergne, Rose Chaminade, Father Chaminade's niece, the daughter of his brother François. Madame Lavergne was from Château Lannet.

1376-2. To Mme Lavergne

June 19, 1845, Bordeaux¹
Archives of Hospices of Bordeaux

My dear Daughter,

I may call you this, even though you are a grandmother. If I have not written and if I have not even answered your letters, I have thought of you and of your children much more than if I had written. You will easily understand this little riddle.

I think especially of the vexations of your doctor of medicine (M. Lavergne the younger), robbed, damaged by hail, although he is the Mayor of Lannet.

Why, you will ask, do you not explain your thoughts? My only answer to this is that I have not been able to.

* * *

On June 23, 1845, Father Caillet brusquely refused to accept the proposal of June 19 (Agmar 7.5.398). But Father Chaminade is not discouraged.

1377. To Fr. Georges Caillet, Bordeaux

June 26 and 27, 1845, Bordeaux
Original, Agmar

My dear Son,

You cannot prove a truth by denying it. Here is how you begin your letter of June 23. “You have just sent me a plan which is fundamentally weak and which you seem to attribute to me. Nothing can be done until you are ready to have every question discussed on the neutral ground of a General Chapter.”

To me the question today seems to be how to find the true authority which is to govern the Society. I will not say how we have come to seek an answer to this question, or why the pope, to whom the problem has been referred, has not yet given an answer. In more lofty realms than ours,² they say that the question must be solved by a General Chapter of the Society. The former

¹Excerpt from a projected memorandum by the heirs of Fr. Chaminade, 1850-51.

²At the chancery (letter no. 1375) and perhaps even in Rome, as the end of the letter seems to suggest.

General and Founder will convoke it, will preside, and will give the name of his successor; he will also indicate his choice for the three Assistants. The General Chapter must be free.

The former General and Founder is not chosen to convoke the General Chapter because of an acknowledged intrinsic right which he has never renounced and which he may not renounce, but because of a superior authority. His conscience can only command him to obey, but obey in the spirit in which the order was given, that the convocation and the entire process of the General Chapter will be regular and canonical.

This conciliatory means (the General Chapter) must take place, so you tell me, my dear Son, on neutral ground; I believe this, and am convinced of it, if I interpret the expression correctly. By “neutral ground,” in the case of the General Chapter, I understand that it will be completely free in its operation, that the members who compose it will not be exposed to any outside influence—for example, if the wording of the plan itself would give evidence of some constraint, if the General newly designated to convoke and preside at the Chapter were hampered, as he is now by the current situation, by the interdict on the priests of the Society who would have come to help in the administration; if he had to govern satisfactorily without having at hand the documents and titles of the Society, and all this under the stigma—to use a term from civil law—of previous convictions, etc. The Chapter cannot be free if its director and president is not. This is what the superior authority, which need not manifest itself exteriorly, had in mind, my dear Son, when it ordered you to propose the present plan for conciliation.

When you presented me with your proposal for conciliation through Father Chevaux and M. Faye, who came to me separately and on different days, the lifting of the current situation, which sums up all the constraints, was always the primary question. M. Faye was very eloquent on the need to end this present situation, and the means was the plan for conciliation. Why are you trying to find reasons to make this plan unacceptable, my dear Son, when it is our only prospect for peace?

Well, I heartily endorse it just as it stands with no conditions except those that are offered or presumed, which can be summed up in one—that the General Chapter will be truly free in all its appointed actions. And that it cannot be if its director and president is not free from all coercion, from the moment of convocation to its conclusion.

I have sent you draft of a plan for conciliation as I think it should read. You send me back to the Archbishop of Bordeaux, and His Excellency tells us this, “Come to an agreement, and I will withdraw every obstacle.” I say “tells us” and not simply “tells you” because there has already been a case similar in all things to this one. The only difference was that he told *me* to come to an understanding with Father Caillet and M. Faye. I have the dates and proofs of this pitiful story.

You would have the glory of proposing all types of plans and having me seem to be stubborn, stiff-necked, etc. Today, we have a plan which my conscience can and must accept. But you complicate it with so many incidentals that I can no longer accept it. “Well,” you say, “let us wait for the pope’s decision.” But where will that get us if the pope says the present plan must be proposed? As a last recourse you may have. . . . I am stopping here.

Whatever criticisms I may have leveled at you up to this time about the duplicity of your dealings and teaching, you find reassurance in the shelter of Their Excellencies of Bordeaux, Besançon, and Albi, and you think this protection extends all the way to Rome. I believe you know very little of the Apostolic See. From there came that voice, at once soft and strong, wise and holy, “Let them come to an agreement, and let it be decided by a General Chapter of the Society of Mary.”¹

¹Notice how Fr. Chaminade comes to believe that the plan had no longer been proposed by the archbishop, but by the pope himself!

Their Excellencies no longer need to fear being compromised if you continue the struggle. I will be able to defend them with much more strength and zeal than I have defended myself. I feared that I would not drink enough of the chalice of bitterness which is to purify the Society of Mary along with its Founder and Father. I no longer have that fear.

I have wanted to write you this letter, my dear Son, because of my sorrow at seeing you follow such a false road on the way to salvation and at exposing Father Roussel to the eternal loss of his body and his soul.

G.-Joseph Chaminade

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1377-2. To Sister Saint-Léon

July 15, 1845, Bordeaux

Copy, Agmar

My dear Daughter,

I wrote to you yesterday that you did not need to send me anything, either a bill or a receipt. A lovable Providence always comes to my assistance.

The Reverend Mother has received 4,975 francs in my name and has given a receipt. I would like to have a copy of that receipt so I can also send a receipt for the same amount. As soon as possible, send me the sum of 4,957 francs in the following manner: go to the receiver general at Agen and buy a treasury note for that sum, addressed to M. Carrayon Latour, the receiver general in Bordeaux. The transaction is extremely simple; all you need is a clerk with some intelligence.

I do not need to urge you to give Reverend Mother the care required by her poor health. Please accept my paternal salutation.

Send the draft by post. Make sure that everything is in order. Of course, that draft will need to be in my name.

* * *

On June 30, 1845, Father Caillet replied to Father Chaminade's last attempt in a blunt letter (Agmar 7.5.403). The same day he wrote to Father Chevaux asking him to return to Saint-Remy, for by leaving Saint-Remy he was defying the current situation set up by the archbishop. In fact, Father Chevaux left Saint-Remy before the archbishop gave his order. Father Caillet wrote, "In addition, it will compensate for the moral influence your stay in Bordeaux and your letters have had on the Society. You must realize that you have gone too far, although with a good intention" (Agmar 7.5.403).

After a long exposure to the affirmations of Father Caillet and the reasoning of M. Faye, the temperament of Father Chevaux had undergone a change. With a precision and logic which overlooked no weakness, he began a systematic critique of the arguments in favor of Father Chaminade. For the moment, however, Father Chevaux still is the defender of Father Chaminade, and he has not had a change of heart on the authority of the Society of Mary; he refuses to return to Saint-Remy (Chevaux to Caillet; Agmar 7.5.408). However, Father Chaminade sees that he must defend his rights in the eyes of Father Chevaux.

1378. To Fr. Jean Chevaux, Bordeaux

August 7, 1845, Bordeaux

Copy, Agmar

My dear Son,

Everything you tell me about the dispositions of Brother Clouzet is very edifying.

I have never heard that the resignation which I truly gave was considered null and void. Should this be the case, then you are correct when you say that my claim would dishonor me, and you might add that it would offend God very seriously. But thanks be to God, this is not the case, for without God's grace, I am capable of every foolishness.

My complete resignation required two different acts because I am the Superior General of the Society of Mary in the civil order as well as in the religious order. I am French and I am a Catholic Christian. As a Frenchman I hold my authority from the King of the French, and as a Christian Catholic I hold it from the pope. In practice, these two authorities do not clash. Our Civil Statutes do not clash with our religious Constitutions, and vice versa. You know the principle; I even explained it to you in the presence of Father Caillet and Brother Clouzet. Why do you not adhere to it? Why for the sake of a so-called charity and for love of peace do you always adopt the first sophism invented by hell, that of proclaiming that my resignation is the result of a single act? These sophisms I attribute neither to Father Caillet nor to Brother Clouzet, but to Father Roussel, a young priest with a very sharp and ingenious mind, but very wicked. I do blame Father Caillet and Brother Clouzet, and I will denounce them if necessary for following Father Roussel because he advocated a system that was favorable to their material interests. Why do they still support him and doubt the legitimacy of his dismissal? Why, at his example, do Father Caillet and Brother Clouzet continually call on the sacred name of their consciences to win their case, which is criminal in the light of the knowledge they have of Father Roussel? Let them not say that they must in conscience—as Father Caillet did in a letter—maintain the authority which they have from the Constitutions! The Constitutions say the opposite.

Let them not tell me that the bishops, their superiors, make it a duty for them to persist in their enterprise! Must they obey orders which they have only obtained furtively and with deception?

My first letter to the Archbishop of Bordeaux, last September 10, informed him that Father Roussel was the instigator of the operation mounted against me by the General Administration. I then commented on the reports His Excellency must have received, and I even offered to explain any obscure expressions due to the haste in which I wrote. I went so far as to offer him proofs of my affirmations. Did His Excellency deem it fitting to send me a single word in reply? He responded nevertheless by warning me of the great disorders of which the religious might be guilty. He had been convinced, I am certain, by the secret and erroneous reports.

The same thing happened to the Archbishop of Albi when he received the famous memorandum for bishops alone. Did he not say that the document was fascinating and defied all rebuttal? Is this not the reason the archbishop and Father Roussel would not give me a copy, in spite of my repeated requests? His Excellency may have thought that the memorandum might not fascinate me, and that I would give a rebuttal which would merely prolong the discussions. It is not important what motive led him to deny this to me.

I will not insist, my dear Son, for you are now sufficiently informed to free Father Caillet and Brother Clouzet from deception. If for reasons of charity, concern for peace, or because I am exposing myself to dishonor you still do not believe you should do this, then I pity you, as I have said several times; I pity you. I adore the designs of God, and I still trust that this great disturbance will serve to purify me and the Society and will make it more capable of fulfilling the designs of God in its foundation.

* * *

This was followed by a break with Father Chevaux. Father Chaminade sent copies of his correspondence with Father Chevaux to Father Meyer. Father Chevaux then wrote a very critical letter about Father Chaminade.

1379. To Fr. Léon Meyer, Ebersmunster

August 8, 1845, Bordeaux

Original, Agmar

My dear Son,

I will make this as short as possible, although I would have many things to say to you.

Brother Clouzet returned to Saint-Remy after spending a week in Bordeaux on a mission of peace, but he left more turmoil than ever behind him. Fathers Chevaux and Caillet defend him; in fact, they almost support Father Roussel, who has been dismissed from his office as Head of Instruction, and it was Father Chevaux who wrote the preamble to the act of dismissal. I think he is staying with me from obedience to the Archbishop of Besançon, but also to support Brother Clouzet, who is himself supported by Father Caillet. So the discussion, perhaps more lively than ever, will continue thanks to Father Chevaux.

With this mailing I am including (1) the first letter he sent me at the beginning of our exchange, (2) my answer, (3) his reply, and (4) my reply to that.

I do not know if he will continue to answer. To these four items I add (1) a copy of my first letter to the Archbishop of Bordeaux, September 10, 1844, explaining to His Excellency that Father Caillet's report on my resignation was clandestine, which makes his decision null and void. I sent a copy of this letter to Their Excellencies of Besançon and Albi. (2) An exact copy of what has been labeled my second resignation. You will see something unique: Father Bouet blaming me for including in my second letter to Father Caillet a semblance of a resignation which was interpreted as a pure and simple resignation without conditions, not even the one which my conscience most insistently called for. There is no malice in Father Bouet. His confusion stems from his great simplicity and his great confidence in Father Caillet. Father Bouet is a saintly man, but his decisions sometimes lead to great scandals.

I believe it will be necessary for you to come to Bordeaux, my dear Son, after you have given your brother all the information he needs to replace you.

I am not recalling Father Perrodin yet because the holidays are almost here and he will be needed for the retreats in the north, at least for Courtefontaine and Ebersmunster if they have the same retreat master. Courtefontaine will need supervision, especially during the holidays. I will write to him immediately.

You will inform him as clearly as possible about the business of my resignations; then he himself can do the same for the various directors of our establishments so they may be aware of the reasons for the great disturbance, already announced by Father Caillet from its beginning. The Lord has allowed the Society and its Founder to be purified and to be made more able to accomplish the designs he has in its foundation.

I do not recall if I sent you my long letter to Father Caillet at the beginning of the seditious movement; it was entitled "False witnesses have risen up against me."

Receive my paternal embrace, my dear Son. I deeply wish I could give you this embrace in person.

P.S. Please, my dear Son, use the four points in my letter to Father Chevaux only to be informed of what our adversaries claim and the reasons for my resistance. After my long interview with Father Chevaux I believe he is well disposed, but so far he has given no evidence

of this. The letter Father Chevaux may write to you about the changes in the personnel must not delay your departure for Bordeaux. We can do this more easily here. Your brother can supply any information you might need about the brothers in Franche-Comté. Father Chevaux has suppressed numbers 1 and 3, both in the original and in the copies.

* * *

Meanwhile, Rome had pronounced itself, and Father Chaminade professes his faith in the Vicar of Jesus Christ. The Sacred Congregation of Bishops and Regulars published its decree on July 30, 1845; it was based on the study by a consultant, Corboli-Bussi (see Lebon, Les dernières années du P. Chaminade, chap. 6, pp.193 ff.). Father Lebon's work is based on a study of the documents made by the procurator, Father Subiger (Positio, pp. 128-60 for the consultation, the documents, the verdict of the consultant, the decree, and critical commentary on the work of the consultant).

1380. To Fr. Jean Chevaux, Bordeaux

August 6, 1845, Bordeaux

Copy, Agmar

My dear Son,

I have told you ever so often, and I have said this to Father Caillet, that denials are not proofs. True, the one who presents arguments must be ready to prove them. This is what I did when I wrote to the Archbishop of Bordeaux on September 10 of last year. This is how I began my letter.

“After several moments of reflection, Your Excellency, following the proposition by the council that I resign my generalate, I very clearly and explicitly made the proposal to name my successor and then considered whether I should consent to their demand that my resignation would be put in writing. This form of resignation, of which the Constitutions do not speak, is not at all a dissimulation before the parties or the civil tribunal before which the case was conducted; the adversaries knew the Constitutions, and the civil court had no other interest in the case except to see a successor, however he might be chosen.

“Does the council state that it has not heard or understood this form of resignation? The only reply I have to make is that it has lied, and if it has done so under oath; it has perjured itself, and I can prove this. Providence is admirable in all of the actions and circumstances which God permits to mortals.

“Therefore, Your Excellency, I ask (1) how could the true and sincere act of resignation, made according to the Constitutions, be made ineffective and altered by a subsequent act of accommodation and which does not have an intimate relationship to the first?”

I will copy a few more lines from it in answer to a remark which you have just made. “I must tell you, Your Excellency, that Father Roussel, whether as Head of Instruction or as superior of an establishment, is the I must tell you, Your Excellency, that Father Roussel, whether as Head of Instruction or as superior of an establishment, is the primary reason for my resistance to all of the proposals for compromise which have been made to me, in which my active authority over him would cease. . . .”

Because Brother Clouzet and also Father Caillet are so well disposed, I still cling to the plan for reconciliation which I have accepted. In a few days it will be impossible because of the holidays. The Sovereign Pontiff will not order its adoption, I presume, for he would endanger his relationship with the Government. In any case, I will blindly obey the Sovereign Pontiff because for me he is the Vicar of Christ on this earth of exile on which we live, and because my entire purpose is to do as best I can whatever Our Lord Jesus Christ commands or even counsels.

* * *

The Decree from Rome. The General Chapter of Saint-Remy

July 30, 1845 to October 10, 1845

The decree was forwarded by the Apostolic Nuncio to the Archbishop of Bordeaux, who had it delivered to Father Chaminade on August 19 (Agmar 7.5.421). It reads as follows.

In the General Assembly of the Cardinals in charge of the affairs and deliberations of the Bishops and Regulars, held at Quirinal on July 18, 1845, on the question entitled "Society of Mary of Bordeaux."

Concerning the resignation from the Generalate by Father Chaminade, the Founder, January 8, 1841, the following doubt was raised.

Whether in consequence of the resignation submitted by Father Chaminade on January 8, 1841, one should consider as vacant the office of Superior General of the Society of Mary of which he is the Founder, and in consequence convoke a General Chapter for the election of a new Superior General according to the Constitutions; or whether in spite of the aforesaid resignation, Father Chaminade is still entitled to resume, on his own initiative, the office of Superior General of the Society of Mary?

The Most Eminent Prelates, after hearing the report of His Eminence Polidori and having thoroughly weighed the matter, replied, Affirmative in toto to the first part; negative, to the second.

Done in Rome, at the Secretariat of the Sacred Congregation of Bishops and Regulars, this 30th day of July, 1845.

P. Cardinal Orsini, Prefect

*Father Chaminade found the decree difficult to understand, for it provided no answer to the question he had asked of Rome. Also, in the abstract presented to the Sacred Congregation, only the documents provided by his adversaries were used as evidence. Nevertheless, his initial reaction was an act of faith and obedience (see *Inquisitio Historica*, p. 300 ff.). But he began to search for the meaning and relevance of Rome's answer, and he saw it as a conditional decree granted with the supposition that he had resigned without reserving to himself the right to name his successor.*

On the other hand, the decree did not dispense him from his duty at the impending General Chapter, that of safeguarding the primary interests of the Society of Mary which were continually threatened by the interference of Father Roussel. Soon the facts would confirm Father Chaminade's fears.

His mind was absorbed by the plan for a settlement which he had worked at since midsummer, and he saw in this a very simple means of carrying out the directives of the Holy See. This explains the following letters in which Father Chaminade pours out his soul and involuntarily reveals a bewildered conscience; their wordiness and repetition are evidence of his exhausted state.

* * *

1381. To Archbishop Donnet of Bordeaux

August 21, 1845, Bordeaux

Original, Agmar

I have received the papers which Your Excellency has been kind enough to send me, and I have read them with the utmost care and respect. They are (1) the letter from Your Excellency, (2) a copy of the letter His Excellency the Apostolic Nuncio in Paris sent to Your Excellency, and finally (3) the Decree from the Sacred Congregation of Bishops and Regulars, Rome, July 30, 1845.

I accept this decree from the sacred and most venerable Congregation with the same docility with which I would receive an order from Jesus Christ himself. I am of the opinion, Your Excellency, that this decree, which is replete with the highest wisdom, is only conditional. “Whether in consequence of the resignation handed in by Father Chaminade on January 8, 1841, one should consider as vacant the office of Superior General of the Society of Mary, of which he is the Founder, and convoke a Chapter for the election of a new Superior General according to the Constitutions.”

I say, Your Excellency, that the office of Superior General cannot be considered vacant because this act of resignation was merely on deposit, and an untimely disclosure rendered it worthless. I have many reliable proofs.

Furthermore, the Sovereign Pontiff speaks infallibly only in the religious and Catholic Order, over which he is truly supreme. The office of Superior General being supposedly vacant, a General Chapter is necessary to find a successor; the Constitutions suggest no other way. His Holiness does not wish to use his supremacy to name my successor officially, but he ordains the convocation of a General Chapter to elect a new Superior General “according to the Constitutions.”

It would be very dangerous, Your Excellency, to ask the civil Government to consider the office of the Superior General vacant on the basis of a resignation dated January 8, 1841. What a number of things would need to be disclosed!¹ The Government might very well prefer the dissolution of the Society.² It follows that I should write another act of resignation for the Government and give it the natural appearance it should have. I certainly would profit by every opportunity to point out to the Minister of Public Instruction that at my age, my firm intention is to cast off such a heavy responsibility.

Your Excellency, I truly wish to relinquish my generalate; and if this is what I wanted four and a half years ago, how could I not desire it today, when the weight of my years, which is driving me toward my grave, is much more perceptible? However, my conscience imperiously shows me the preventative measures I must take. I have taken them once before, and I must take similar ones today. But I must be free, and I have no doubt that this is the intention of the Holy Father, for he wishes to preserve the Society just as it was when he gave it his approval.

If a person attributed an exaggerated importance to the papal decision, and if the office of Superior General is vacant both in the eyes of His Holiness and of the King’s Government, would the Holy Father not be passing judgment on a matter which is not within his jurisdiction and which is contested? Would he wish to discredit himself in the eyes of the French Government?³

It seems evident to me, Your Excellency, that the Holy Father has issued a conditional decree for reasons which he does not care to explain and which wisdom has dictated that he keep to himself. His Holiness certainly wishes to suppress any legal discussion, and I hereby freely promise never to raise any such discussion and to forbid all my religious ever to use any of my writings on this matter which may have come into their hands.

Is it not possible, Your Excellency, that in the not too distant future some people could look upon the decision of the Holy Father as the product of surreptitious advice and therefore inoperative?

¹For instance, that the Society of Mary had been without a Superior General for 4 years, unknown to the Government, which continued to deal with the Superior General as if he had never abdicated.

² Recall the distrustful attitude of the Government of July toward religious Orders as described in the history of the foundations of that period. At that time, for instance, Minister Martin of the department of the Nord thundered against the intervention of Rome and threatened to dissolve Mother Barat’s Order of the Sacred Heart if the least change were made to the Civil Statutes of the order.

³Fr. Chaminade had always scrupulously avoided a conflict between civil and religious authorities. In the letter of July 31, 1832, what he writes about the “precautions he has always taken, in every type of foundation, never to compromise any bishop or the pope.”

The plan for reconciliation presented separately by Father Chevaux and M. Faye at the instigation of Father Caillet is the same as the one presented today, if we attribute the conditional meaning to the decree which it seems to have. Only yesterday morning in an interview I had with Father Chevaux, when I informed him of the decree and asked him to explain its true meaning to me, he gave it the interpretation which he thought was that of Your Excellency. I answered that I did not think this was possible. He left, and I began to dictate this letter.

However, Your Excellency, should Father Chevaux be a true and faithful interpreter not of the sentiments of your heart but of the sophisms of Father Caillet, who speaks for his two colleagues—who were dispersed by his orders and by his express permission, although our religious Constitutions formally require that they be habitually together—if, as I say, Your Excellency has been influenced by Father Caillet, I do not intend by my remarks to prevent or delay the effects which you believe a pontifical decision should have. It now appears that the breach of any possible compromise and the order to convoke the General Chapter which was issued last year without authorization are solemnly ordained by a decree from the Sovereign Pontiff.

For me, a single difficulty remains to be resolved, that of knowing if I have the power, and therefore the duty, to forbid this General Chapter. I am certain that I had them last year; then, I still possessed the double title of Superior General given by both the king and the pope. Things are not the same today; according to the supposed interpretation given by Your Excellency, my office is vacant and must be filled by someone appointed by the Chapter.

I am well aware, Your Excellency, of what someone could answer in this difficult situation, but I also know what the members of my council are saying. They claim (1) that I, the author of the religious Constitutions, do not have the slightest understanding of the situation (Father Roussel's first statement); (2) that as proof they can quote article 481 of the Constitutions, where mention is made of a pure and simple resignation which a Superior General can make; they also mention article 465; and the members of my Council, denying that I had abdicated according to article 482, present only my written resignation of January 8, 1841. But, they say, that is the only written resignation. It is true that the Superior did not write another; but written in the register of the council must be the original proposition. In Article 481 the Constitutions say, "Should the Superior resign purely and simply without proposing a successor, the procedure is the same as at the demise of the Superior" (Article 465 *ff.*). Article 482 of the Constitutions says, "If the successor he proposes is accepted by the Council, etc." In the council, the Superior holds the pen only to write what is necessary and to sign his name. Therefore, he had to write and sign the resignation which was destined for the king and place it as a deposit into the hands of his members until his resignation according to the Constitutions was a fact. The Constitutions ask that the Superior will only propose his resignation and that the secretary will do the writing; this is more honorable and certain.

I repeat, Your Excellency, to my mind the Sacred Congregation intended to render a conditional decree. If Your Excellency also understands it in this manner, I will cooperate with you to put it quietly into practice.

If the opposite is true, I will always be submissive, always obedient. In fact, if the members of my council were right in opposing me in the work I so cordially shared with them, then I am guilty for failing to recognize it. There still would have been time to correct what they claimed was defective, for we had not yet left the council chamber when the crisis began. In truth, the crisis was postponed on the advice of Father Caillet and Brother Clouzet. The appointment of my successor and of his three Assistants was proposed, and I accepted. For three years I foolishly believed the crisis had passed, but it was merely lying dormant during a lengthy court action. It awoke under another form after the judgment of the court of arbitration, and it raged in its original form, Your Excellency, the moment my adversaries could avail themselves of your decision.

Forgive me, Your Excellency, if I did not humbly believe in the two decisions you handed to Father Caillet a few days apart.¹ I ask a thousand pardons for believing that these two decisions were invalid in the light of Canon Law. Please excuse the letters I have presumed to write to Your Excellency with the sole intention of enlightening you on such an important matter.

Those letters, especially the first, were in truth somewhat harsh and perhaps somewhat too passionate; but they were the cries of alarm, and in addition, I wrote them in great haste. I wrote especially about Father Roussel as the sole ringleader of the matter in order to put you on your guard, but at the same time I offered you authentic proof. I believed I could find excuses for my apparent rebellion in the cries of my conscience.

I believed, and I confess to Your Excellency that I still believe that I cannot trust my adversaries with the task and the authority to organize a new General Administration. What choice could a General Chapter make which would be presided over by Father Caillet with on his right Father Roussel, the mouthpiece of Father Caillet, and Brother Clouzet seated to the left of Father Caillet?

I will stop now. In your wisdom you have judged differently. You chastise my audacity, and I admit that the chastisement is less severe than that of being deprived of the documents of the Society; being obliged to govern and to have access to no assistance in the mess into which anarchy has plunged the Society; and to have an assignment which is beyond my strength. Meanwhile, the present situation harbors anarchy. Even though this state is highly distressing in itself, it is not too much for me, and I deserve much more if I have followed my conscience in error, especially when Father Caillet assures you that his conscience forces him to oppose me. It is a mystery to me to see two consciences so diametrically opposed on the same question. But if your wisdom and insight have allowed you to conclude that I have a false conscience, I deserve every punishment, and even those chastisements which are visited on the Society, whose members share their Superior's sentiments, with the exception of my adversaries.

However, as I have had the honor of pointing out to Your Excellency, my rebellion has been only apparent. I do not believe that during the 9 months that you have punished me you have been able to point to a significant transgression.

If my doubt concerning the Holy Father's decision still irritates Your Excellency, I beg your pardon. However, I cannot alter my conscience; it is from God, and I sincerely hope that it will be all for God.

As soon as I can, I will thank His Eminence Cardinal Orsini, the Prefect of the Sacred Congregation. At the same time, I will thank the Apostolic Nuncio for recommending me to your paternal care, a gesture which earned me the honorable letter which Your Excellency has sent me, along with the papal decision.

I am, with the most profound respect. . . .

G.-Joseph Chaminade

* * *

Father Chaminade brings the letter of August 21, 1845, to the archbishop, who demanded "a more explicit answer." Father Chaminade provides it immediately. This answer is clear and unwavering its purpose is conciliatory, and it conforms to the text of the decree which asked simply that a General Chapter would be held, without specifying how it was to be convoked or what procedure it would adopt. This letter is accompanied by the text of the suggested compromise (see letter no. 1373). The archbishop gives Father Caillet the letter of August 21 and asks for a summary of its contents. From then on this will be his way of acting, a logical consequence of the attitude he had adopted on July 30, 1844, when he condemned Father Chaminade, unheard, on the word of Father Caillet. He will forward all the letters from Father

¹Regarding the return of the keys to the secretariat and the convocation of the General Chapter (July 30, 1844).

Chaminade to Father Caillet, who never allowed himself to be possessed of the spirit they exude. On August 23, 1845, Father Caillet expresses his feeling about the letter of August 21. "In a language expressive of his respectful and humble submission to the decree from Rome, Father Chaminade tries to call everything into question, to evade the consequences, and he makes it a duty of conscience to completely oppose the implementation of this supreme decision" (Agmar 7.5.438). On August 23 Archbishop Donnet writes to Monsignor Mathieu, "I have the honor of sending you the pitiful answer Father Chaminade sent me [August 21]; please tell me what you think. We cannot let this distressed old man carry out the destruction of a work which is destined to render such great service to the Church"(Agmar 7.5.439). The Archbishop of Besançon replied on August 29 that Father Caillet should write to the nuncio to obtain his support; Archbishop Donnet was not to support Father Caillet with his authority, lest he compromise himself(Agmar 7.5.442).

1382. To Archbishop Donnet of Bordeaux

August 22, 1845, Bordeaux

Original, Agmar

Monsignor,

I am certain Father Chevaux has faithfully reported to me everything Your Excellency suggested to him, and even his reply to you, and at the end he added that you desired a more explicit answer than the one I had given you. Here it is.

I believe Your Excellency will conform faithfully to the wishes of the Sovereign Pontiff as expressed in the decree which you have just received, if I adhere faithfully to the plan for a settlement proposed by Father Caillet and which I accepted in writing on Monday after Pentecost; but I had intended to do so already on the holy feast itself.

I have since agreed to some slight modifications, such as to make no reference to the dismissal of Father Roussel, to the raising of the interdict, to the abandonment of the status quo, or to the key to the secretariat, and to allow the necessary repairs to be made at the Madeleine in order to house the General Administration.

If only Your Excellency had given me the freedom of speech I had before this wretched matter! Father Caillet is forever rewriting the plan for compromise, so I gave him a model which to me is simplicity itself, and that is all I mean by acceptance and execution of the plan for agreement which will comply fully with the wishes of the Sovereign Pontiff as expressed in his decree; of this I have the highest degree of moral certainty.

I will add, Your Excellency, that I bind myself not to seek or allow my reelection, and by the most effective means to prevent Your Excellency or your respectable colleagues in the episcopacy from ever being compromised in any way because of this matter.

Your Excellency will grant that my resignation from the generalate, true and sincere as it is, will not imply abandoning my title of Founder, which I may not and cannot renounce and whose attributions can in no way conflict with those of Superior General. On the contrary, they can only complement the action of the General. I believe I have sufficiently reflected on the matter and have yielded everything that my conscience has commanded me.

I will always be paternally concerned for the honor and salvation of my three former associates; thank God, this concern has never left my heart, and I hope to inspire it in my successor.

With profound respect. . . .

G.-Joseph Chaminade

P.S. I thought you might like to see a copy of the conciliatory plan which I sent to Father Caillet on June 19, and I enclose the same.

* * *

A new 16-page letter, compactly written, is sent to Archbishop Donnet. For the first time the influence of Father Chaminade's new secretary, Paul Bonnefous, can be seen. The quality of the letter is unbalanced. Note the importance Father Chaminade gave to the relationships with the civil authorities, and also his deference to the demands of his conscience while submitting that conscience to authority.

1383. To Archbishop Donnet of Bordeaux

August 31, 1845, Bordeaux

Original, Agmar

Monsignor,

The decree which Your Excellency in your kindness sent me on August 19 does not deal with my resignation, but it does solve the matter of my resignation which you had brought before the tribunal of His Holiness for discussion last November—that is, 9 months ago. The present decree has all the earmarks of a complimentary decree which Your Excellency solicited from the Sacred Congregation of Bishops and Regulars.

As a means of reconciliation, it follows on the heels of the plan for a settlement proposed by Father Caillet which I had heartily endorsed, although it was most humiliating for me. I have never rejected it; I only declined the conditions with which Father Caillet wanted to burden it, and I do not believe I ever turned them down without giving the reasons. I have always believed and do maintain that this plan came from a higher source, and even that person may have been influenced by the Holy See; I had good reasons and solid evidence to believe this.

The wording of the decree which Your Excellency has received merely confirms my opinion. I took the liberty of giving to Your Excellency the twofold interpretation which can be given to this wise decree, one which would agree with the intent and wishes of the Sovereign Pontiff and the other so ardently desired by my three adversaries. I say “three” because Father Roussel, the victim of a moral death, would come alive again if the decree as they interpret it were strictly enforced. I say my three adversaries, and not Your Excellency, because I am convinced of what you said to Father Chevaux about the matter; you are absolutely impartial; you seek only truth and justice, and your discretion, Your Excellency, forbids you even to reveal the contents of the first and only letter which Your Excellency wrote to me.

You have been compellingly persuaded by the secret and surreptitious reports of my adversaries. This is why the letter I had the honor to write to you had no effect on the Archbishops of Besançon and Albi, other than to put them on their guard against anything I might write to them. It must be that Their Excellencies acted in this fashion because you could verify everything I would say, and your stand can only be explained by the falsehood or the exaggeration of the proofs which I had been able to give you.

What could I do, Your Excellency, in this painful situation? Nothing but what my conscience demanded, (1) to practice patience and adore the designs of Providence in the great commotion involving the Society of Mary and its Superior and Founder. Oh! How many times have I not recalled that ancient prophecy, “I will put enmity between you and the woman!” and (2) to obey my conscience in spite of criticism, for after all, I cannot refuse to listen to it; for me it is a witness to the designs of God.

I am told, “Your superiors are the interpreters of the divine will, and they tell me that you are wrong. You are . . . you are . . . you are criminally obstinate before an illustrious prelate” (Father Caillet's letter). In fact, my best friends tell me, “Yield, give up your generalship; you

seem to lack obedience to the episcopacy.” When my friends say to me, “Resign,” they mean that “I should resign purely and simply from my generalship and never again concern myself with the Society of Mary, not even to give it my advice. I am supposed to be like one who is physically dead, and the dead neither speak nor act.”

I say that this is what my friends mean, but they give this advice with great reluctance. They bewail the situation, but they counsel me to yield, to give up everything. I thought I would move my adversaries if I gave in to what they asked, reserving to myself only the right to inform the dispersed Society before the convocation of the General Chapter. I believed, and I still do, that it is my duty to expose to you the disastrous system they wished to install, which led them to seek my dismissal with such insistence and to turn you against me. Father Roussel even left Bordeaux in secret and went to Réalmont under your orders in spite of the false position which would be his, as he admitted, in order to resist more effectively everything I could do or say (Father Roussel’s letter of January 23, 1845); Father Roussel’s mission was completely successful. At Réalmont he composed a memorandum about the situation, but for the bishops only, I was told. This secret memorandum was a marvelous success. With his usual frankness, the Archbishop of Albi said, “This memorandum is fascinating; no rebuttal is possible unless some unexpected event occurs.” I asked His Excellency for a copy but received no answer for my pains. It is very possible that the memorandum would not have enchanted me so completely as to prevent me from answering it.

You may rebuke me, Your Excellency, if I say here that it was under your orders that Father Roussel left Bordeaux for Réalmont. You are not named specifically in Father Roussel’s letter of January 23; I believe you are referred to as “that wise director.” Before his departure Father Roussel had no known confessor or director, and this for many years. We had discussed the possibility of a chair at the faculty of theology, so I thought the dean of that faculty in Bordeaux, with whom I was intimate, might be that “wise director,” but he assured me to the contrary. Should I be mistaken, in spite of my precautions and inquiries, Your Excellency, I offer you my humble apologies. But this mistake in no way invalidates the proof supported by my quote from the letter of January 23. This is the first time I had given this citation.

You see now, Your Excellency, how I value my conscience. I have often said to Father Caillet, and even to M. Faye that someone would try in vain to make me yield, that even if the persistent resistance to their allegations were to lead me to the gallows I would not weaken, with divine grace always hopefully present.

I have been asked sometimes for the motives behind my resistance. Twice in particular, even in council, Father Caillet asked me for my motives. I began to list them. They were so indifferent about the first that I went no further.

Father Roussel spoke up during another council meeting when he thought the General Administration was definitively organized and suggested a substitution for one of the newly-appointed Assistants. “As for myself, I no longer belong to the General Administration; I am to be appointed superior of the establishment of Saint-Remy. “No,” I answered, “your place is at the Madeleine (the central house of the Society in Bordeaux); that is the right place for you, and you will have the opportunity to use your talents.” This answer, Your Excellency, came as a terrible blow to Father Roussel. He concealed somewhat his displeasure at not being the head of any establishment, especially not of Saint-Remy, which is considered to be the finest and largest establishment of the Society of Mary. After very few council sessions, the mask was definitely dropped and his displeasure knew no bounds. He reverted to his original attitude, an attitude adopted immediately after the so-called “written resignation” had been signed by me. We had just closed the council meeting. I have often repeated this incident, Your Excellency, but to no avail; however, it would be a deciding factor in the present deplorable matter.

A few days later, my three Assistants laid down their arms and seemed completely changed and in complete agreement we selected the four who were to make up the General Administration: Father Chevaux would be Superior General, Father Caillet the Head of Zeal,

Father Fontaine the Head of Instruction, and Brother Clouzet the Head of Temporalities. For the three years that the court action dragged on, we lived in peace except when the compromise needed to be renegotiated and at the sessions of the court arbitration. I protested the lack of action on the decision made in the council concerning the elections. My frequent protests were not voiced in the language I am using here, because the councilors cut short any attempt at explanation. But I did explain myself completely through my two protests which I gave to Father Caillet, and I rescinded the powers which I had conferred on them in my circular and which were acknowledged in their circular of acceptance.

Your Excellency, these are the circulars you sent to Rome to prove that my act of resignation was voluntary.

Do not think, Your Excellency, that these digressions have for their purpose to skirt the explanation of the motives I gave my conscience for constantly thwarting the desires of my adversaries, who wanted my resignation to be to their advantage, either to supplant me or to have me replaced according to their wishes.

My first and primary reason was the false and erroneous position of my three Assistants, very clearly expressed at one of the council meetings following the judgment of the court of arbitration, a position to which they adhered throughout and which sustains and establishes the abuses which are destructive of the spirit prevailing in the Constitutions which have been approved by the Holy See. Your Excellency, I can explain my motives in more detail to any person worthy of confidence whom you wish to designate.

I will be forced to allude to what we call “personalities.” I have every confidence that Your Excellency will recognize that the cries of my conscience have no origin other than the truth. If this were not so, I would give up defending myself. I must no longer be looked upon as the Founder or the Superior General of the Society of Mary, or of the other Orders or Sodalities which the grace of God has urged me to institute. I will be grateful if Mother Church allows me to weep in obscurity until my death.

Your Excellency, please allow me a final reflection which to me seems fundamental. According to the new decree which Your Excellency has obtained from the Sacred Congregation of Bishops and Regulars, it would seem that there is a question now only of a single act of abdication, the one intended for the Government,¹ and which was given for safekeeping to the members of my council. They claim that I wrote no act of resignation for the pope, who is my religious sovereign; thereby they tacitly admit that he is always my sovereign master and father and that I must recognize him as such. I trust that he will always see in me his son and most devoted subject. I have confidence that I have not changed since the approbation in a manner to draw his displeasure.

If a person accepts the principle that my pure and simple resignation was for the Government, then how is it that the Government was never informed? If it was registered by the clerk of the civil courts its date may be authenticated, but this date is not disputed, and the courts, civil or arbitration, are not obliged to convey it to the king. It could gather dust for a century. My Assistants were to forward it at the proper time; however, they have wished to violate that trust almost from the beginning.²

¹The written resignation, civil, without reservation.

²Here is the meaning of that “deposit.” Fr. Chaminade entrusted his written civil resignation, made according to the terms of the Statutes, to the members of his council. This resignation was written because it was necessary for the case and therefore was registered with the clerk of the court; but it was to be consummated by forwarding it to the Government after the oral, religious resignation, according to the Constitutions, took place by the election or nomination of a new General Superior. The council violated this deposit and made abusive use of the written resignation when it claimed it was the only one, thus depriving Fr. Chaminade of any influence on the Society of Mary and of any right to appoint his successor.

At the urging of my conscience I resisted, and even gave what is called my second resignation¹; I proved this conclusively. This is probably why today my first resignation is under attack.²

The first resignation has the appearance and reality of a pure and simple resignation, but its condition, or reservation, is written into the register of the council.³ In my protests, the inclusion in the register of the council is presumed to be much earlier than the communication I requested of them and which Your Excellency knows has been obstinately refused, and was even accompanied by an oath. What grief, Monsignor, for my paternal heart to see one of my children, with Father Caillet's age, a religious of the Society of Mary, take such an oath! Could it be that Father Caillet who would have taught Father Roussel to take such a terrible oath, the one that proved to be the main cause of my dismissal,⁴ although it is not found in the preamble of the act? What is a resignation which is persistently contested? Did M. Faye, the lawyer for my Assistants, not state as a principle in our correspondence that a resignation must be free and voluntary? Is it voluntary if it is contested from its very first hour? It is voluntary only if someone accepts the reservation implied by the deposit.

Your Excellency, I say that I must obey my king, who appointed me Superior General of the Society of Mary with the understanding that I would control and govern all the houses of the Society of Mary, founded or to be founded, according to the Civil Statutes he had just approved. I presented the royal ordinance to the principal authorities of the city, especially to the prefect of the department and to the rector of the Academy.

Before your appointment as Archbishop of Bordeaux, Your Excellency, the same case presented itself. Bro. David Monier, a former lawyer and religious of the Society of Mary, was named by me as Secretary General of the Society of Mary. He suffered from an illusion; he thought he had the absolute right to keep all the documents of the Society. I consulted three vicars general of the chapter and asked (1) if Bro. David Monier was failing against justice by keeping all the papers which I should have had at hand and (2) if I should have recourse to the civil court.⁵ I did not even think of bringing this before an ecclesiastical court. Had I done so, Brother Monier would most certainly not have obeyed, not in disobedience to the Church—he is otherwise very pious and edifying—but maintaining that the matter was outside ecclesiastical jurisdiction.

Father Caillet, whom I had asked to supervise the seizure of the documents, took another path. Last year I ordered him under obedience to give me the key to the secretariat. He consults Your Excellency, and during this furtive consultation he received an oral opinion that he should keep the key. He comes to tell me so; I reprimand him and he leaves, perfectly serene. For over a year now I, who am answerable to the Government, possess none of the documents or agreements pertaining to each of our houses. And yet I must deal with matters as they arise according to our agreements. I can give you examples. Every contract made with the Archbishop of Albi concerning Réalmont is in the secretariat. And so it is with the agreements made with the mayor of Orgelet concerning primary or secondary schools. . . . I could give you many such examples.

Take the case of Barsac.¹ Your Excellency was consulted by the pastor of Barsac on a most delicate matter, for he was the confessor to the community. You answered him, and Brother Bonnefoi was ordered by the pastor to convey your answer to me. Brother Bonnefoi wrote on August 9, 1845, "The episcopal authority replied that in his capacity as First Superior, it is his

¹Letter no. 1296 (May 26, 1844).

²The oral, religious resignation with reservation, January 8, 1841.

³Fr. Chaminade's error on this point has been pointed out.

⁴See the letter no. 1366 (February 11, 1845).

⁵Fr. Chaminade's memory is in error; he did submit the question to the ecclesiastical tribunal before going to the civil tribunal (see letter no. 970).

¹Fr. Chaminade had given directions to Bro. Bonnefoi, director of Barsac near Bordeaux, about the transfer of one of his religious, Bro. André Stoffel. Bro. Bonnefoi was opposed to this change and asked the archbishop to intervene. The latter did so in a letter; in his reply, he still refers to Fr. Chaminade as "the Superior General."

wish that the religious in question remain in the community of Barsac until all the questions of the Society of Mary still pending in the Roman court are settled; that the director of the community must convey this answer to the Superior General so that everyone may live in peace and harmony.” Your Excellency, what do you want me to do or to think? You are the First Superior in the spiritual order; I admitted this publicly, and I confess this in our Civil Statutes. But on the contrary, I see nothing wrong in my complaints and threats to Brother Bonnefoi, which he then encouraged the pastor of Barsac to write to you. Here is a true and literal copy of article 11 of our Civil Statutes: “All the establishments of our Society recognize Their Excellencies the Archbishops and Bishops in the dioceses in which they are situated as their First Superiors in the spiritual order, and the Superior General keeps direct control over all his members, who will everywhere observe their rules and customs.” This 11th article was examined and discussed in a special way by a venerable archbishop, then the Minister of Public Instruction.² Monsignor, I have always observed the strict distinction between the two sovereign powers, the temporal and the spiritual, and I have been very careful to see that our Civil Statutes would in no way offend our religious Constitutions. Had it been otherwise, the Minister of Public Instruction would most certainly not have written to me recently that “because the Society of Mary has been duly approved, it may enjoy exemption from military service.”³

I truly believe, Your Excellency, that your reply to the pastor was inspired by religious and spiritual motivations for the good of the religious, but your procedure is not simple and smacks above all of the temporal power. Here is why. In article 7, “The member who would withdraw of his own free will could do so after informing the Superior of the Society 6 months in advance, and only if his departure in no way disrupts the school year.” I will permit myself to remark, Your Excellency, that the religious (André Stoffel) was a professor at the novitiate of Sainte-Anne; moreover, he was the only music teacher. On August 7 he told me that the benefit he received from his wise director was that he now receives Communion twice a week, whereas at Sainte-Anne he could go to Communion only rarely. What a metamorphosis in such a short time!

I conclude, from the account I have given you in this letter, Monsignor, I conclude (1) that it would be very risky to look upon the decree from the Sacred Congregation as a papal decision affecting all aspects of the Society, for this would be passing definitive judgments on matters which are the area of the civil authorities, and I cannot see how the sovereignty of the Holy Father could avoid being compromised by the temporal authority. I understand that because the decree is doubtful in tone, it would appear that the Holy Father answered a simple consultation; someone could no longer speak of a decision. But then your authority would be called into question, and that of your respectable colleagues whose decisions are patterned after yours. For instance, Father Caillet receives an order from me to return the key to the secretariat within two days, and to return to his old room, which is still unoccupied. Father Caillet, who had taken over the secretariat by a ruse, visits Your Excellency in secret and tells you that I have truly resigned and possibly proves his point. Your Excellency decides Father Caillet does not need to return that key to me, however much I might need it. Supposing I go to court to regain possession of that key, which I need—what defense will Father Caillet have? He has one argument, Your Excellency’s decision. But is this decision yours to make? If so, then there is no difference between the temporal and the spiritual powers. I am afraid your authority would suffer before the civil tribunal, and this has stopped me until now from going to court.

Now is it right always to exercise patience? Am I not obliged to conscientiously fulfill my temporal duties in my capacity as Superior General, granted to me by the sovereign authority in the temporal order? Father Caillet, it is said, is merely keeping a key which is legitimately his.

²Bishop Frayssinous.

³Fr. Chaminade’s quotation sums up the letter from the Minister.

I am requesting the regulation that gives him that right. M. Faye, a veteran lawyer, replies, “the Constitutions.” But the Constitutions say just the opposite; it is enough to read with a minimum of attention the third section entitled “On Government” to be convinced. But Father Caillet has only those privileges I gave him by delegation, and within the prescribed limits; I revoked them when I saw that he was misusing them.

Because Father Caillet claims fervently that I am mistaken to believe that a civil tribunal will listen to my complaints and that I will be responsible for the dissolution of the Society of Mary and cause great scandal, I will make no move, as I assured him, without first consulting competent lawyers. Your Excellency must then not be surprised if I no longer keep the secret of our long discussions, unless you can prove that I am obliged to do so by my conscience.

I am extremely reluctant to break my silence, first because of the reasons behind my constant resistance to abdicate from my generalship according to the wishes of my three Assistants, and then because of the details of their persecution to make me resign according to their wishes. For instance, Brother Clouzet, Head of Temporalities, threatens to bankrupt the Society. He has the means to make very great expenses, secretly, according to his schemes and those of his colleagues on the council. While he says his duty is to help me, he does not have the means to pay the current debts of the Society. Am I in conscience obliged to react against such a disorder? Also against the unjust and illegal retention of the key to the secretariat?

Father Caillet has been reproaching me constantly for not consulting anyone about what I call my “conscience.” I answered that I did not believe I could and therefore that I should, and that if I were to do so, I would deserve the bitter rebuke of Our Lord Jesus Christ to the Scribes and Pharisees, “For the sake of your tradition you have nullified God’s word” [Matthew 15:6]. I immediately added that “do not rely on your own intelligence” [Proverbs 3:5] did not apply in this case. Father Caillet has never returned any but inconsequential answers, and yet he has not ceased to blame me for not consulting him. I never did believe, Your Excellency, that I was obliged to consult concerning divine mandates inscribed very legibly on my conscience. However, if I am in error, and invincibly so, I ask you to make me see clearly, after which I will condemn myself to silence and penance for the remainder of my life.

The plan for a settlement which I thought I could accept on the holy day of Pentecost and which I did accept in writing on Pentecost Monday is based on a General Chapter which is presumed to be the only way of bringing an end to all discussion.

The Civil Statutes and the Constitutions provide a second way. Here is what the Civil Statutes have to say when referring to the suspension or resignation of a Superior General. Article 17 reads, “The Society recognizes as its Founder and actual Superior General for life or until his voluntary abdication Father Guillaume-Joseph Chaminade, Honorary Canon of the metropolitan church of Bordeaux. He will appoint his Assistants. The Superior who succeeds him and the Assistants will be elected by the Society by a majority vote. The term of office of the Superior will be 10 consecutive years from the date of his installation. He will be eligible for reelection.”

The government of the Society of Mary has been adapted, as much as we knew and have been able, to the government of the Church. What a most perfect government! It is the government of Jesus Christ, who is its supreme leader. For this reason, whenever the advice of the entire Society is required it can be obtained in two ways—either by convoking all the members or, if the Society is widespread, all its directors (in the Church this is called an ecumenical council and in the Society a General Chapter); or from the directors in their establishments, just as the Sovereign Pontiff by his decrees receives the advice of the entire Church when the bishops dispersed in their dioceses receive these decrees with respect and without protest. The majority in the Society lies in the two-thirds of the votes of its members. Based on these principles, article 17 of the Statutes expresses itself in a general way: “The Superiors who will succeed him, and also his Assistants, will be elected by the Society by a majority vote.”

The religious Constitutions can choose between these two means to obtain a majority, and they can decide what the plurality should be. The manner of obtaining the plurality of votes for the successor to a Superior General who resigns can take two forms, both giving the same results.

The first is taken from article 482 of the Constitutions, which says, “If the successor he proposes is accepted by the council and the superiors of the principal houses, by this very fact he is vested with the full authority of the Superior General until the convocation of the Chapter which will take place after the 10th year of the generalate of his predecessor.”

Is it not evident that the council and the heads of the central houses constitute approximately the majority of votes? This method is more serene, more honest, and more rapid.

The second method is indicated in the following articles. Article 481 reads, “If the Superior General resigns purely and simply (why instead of all this discussion, do my Assistants not consult the Society on the meaning of the expressions “purely and simply”? They were told; they fear the majority of the votes) without proposing a successor, the procedure is the same as in the case of death.” [Article 465 and following.]

If the Superior General resigns on his own initiative, either the first or the second procedure may be used, as is indicated in the following articles. Article 478 reads, “The Superior General is considered reelected when the majority of the members by right of the General Chapter, after consultation, are in favor.” Article 479 reads, “The Assistants General are considered reelected if the majority of the members of the Chapter, after consultation, are in favor.” Article 480 reads, “In both cases, there must be a two-thirds majority of the members who have been convoked in a Chapter.”

Allow me to remark, Your Excellency, that if the General Chapter which was convoked last year by Father Caillet on the strength of the second decision had taken place, it would have been of doubtful validity, even if I had not launched a protest in the middle of this type of Chapter, and the reason is simple. The directors represent the Society inasmuch as the Society is informed of the purpose and the reasons for the convocation. Now it is a fact that they had been imperiously told to keep this an inviolable secret from their subordinates.

These two methods of election and reelection, which are now canonical because of the approval of the Holy See, have always seemed to me to be very advantageous in this sixth age of the Church into which we entered a long while ago.

As for our Civil Statutes, most of them come from the Civil Code, especially from the section on the universal society.

Father Caillet often accused me of using stratagems; he went so far as to call me cunning. But Your Excellency may have noticed that I have never attacked him, but have only offered resistance in the present struggle. A person must know somewhat the spirit of the law, whether civil or religious, and have a right conscience. I have never felt the need to consult, and I am not aware of any contradictions in my writings. I do not even have time to reread them. I would not have enough shrewdness to be cunning, and I have some difficulty in finding the key to Father Roussel’s sophisms.

It seems, Monsignor, that Your Excellency would very much like to see the whole matter conclude with a General Chapter. True, a General Chapter is the supreme authority in the Society of Mary; it is the very authority of the Society. But even a dispersed Chapter has not lost its authority, and according to its religious Constitutions and even its Civil Statutes, it intends to use that authority in spite of the dispersion if assembling as a Chapter presents too many drawbacks. You can see the proof yourself, Your Excellency, in the prompt action following the last circular. That election, or that reelection if you will, is truly canonical. You wanted to preside at the counting of the ballots, and it was a great honor for the Society that you wished to do so; but through an act of Providence, Father Chevaux and I received more than twice the number sent to you, except for the two houses we have in Switzerland, Fribourg and Lausanne, whose ballots we

were asked to forward to you. We also received from a majority of the directors marks of respect, submission, obedience, etc. The counting of the ballots followed the prescribed norms, and the minutes were kept.

I believe, Your Excellency, that similar elections or reelections have rarely been seen. Not only did all the directors representing the houses of the Society submit their vote, as has just been stated, but these directors and their subordinates signed special lists. This precaution was taken because no director had spoken to his subordinates, or the vote might have been invalidated, as I mentioned above.

General Chapters in our type of Society, which is active in primary schools, can only be held at great inconvenience.¹ If the Government read our Constitutions, they would note with pleasure, I believe, the manner in which article 17 of the Civil Statutes has been understood and interpreted. Last year I was opposed to the convocation of a General Chapter not only because it was irregular and illegal, but also for the serious disadvantages which could ensue. I do not see how there could be less this year. On the contrary, there would be the extremely difficult circumstances in which Brother Clouzet, our Head of Temporalities, finds himself, to pay for the return trips. He told me so himself recently, in Bordeaux. I promised him to do everything in my power, and I had already foreseen this in my plan for an agreement, without in any way lessening the greater commotion the convocation of a General Chapter could cause.

I do not wish to revoke my agreement with you, Your Excellency, with respect to the compromise plan outlined in my last letter; on the contrary, I want to assure you of the validity of the General Chapter held under the conditions I have described. It will not be as expeditious as if it had been held at the suggested time. During the holidays I cannot call on those directors who are preaching retreats in the central houses, or leave those houses without proper direction, etc. But I will heartily endorse the desires of Your Excellency!

All I need, I believe, is freedom. Oh! Monsignor, if only I could make you understand my sincere and respectful devotedness to the French hierarchy, but especially to your sacred person! If Your Excellency knew the sacrifices I have made to prevent a rift among the prelates, Monsignor, for among them I have personal friends who are ready to take up my defense.¹ . . . But . . . if I could tell you everything, Your Excellency would soon become enlightened on the profound illusions with which you have been, as it were, infected by unsuspected stratagems. An old man of 85 years, only one step from the grave, has the honor of speaking to you so frankly.

I am. . . .

G.-Joseph Chaminade

[Archbishop Donnet immediately sent this letter to Father Caillet, who replied on September 3. "This letter is in the same vein as that of August 31 (letter no. 1381), which the Archbishop of Besançon called unthinkable. It presents the same arguments, but in extenso, with just a few solid reasons." He concludes, "I will stop for fear of tiring you" (two pages). "Let me say to Your Excellency that I quote from memory and after a single reading, and this has been enough to pierce my heart with a sword of sorrow."]

* * *

¹When all the directors, even of the smallest schools, were members by right according to the Constitutions of 1839.

¹For instance, the Bishops of Saint-Claude and Strasbourg.

This letter shows Father Chaminade's confidence in the Society of Mary, the work of God, and his courage and efforts to promote the apostolate of the Society of Mary.

1384. To Fr. Léon Meyer, Ebersmunster

September 9, 1845, Bordeaux

Original, Agmar

My dear Son,

I will answer your last letter with some haste, although I do not have it in front of me.

Two things surprised me above all: first, that to have you come here even a well-founded invitation does not suffice, but a regular obedience is needed; secondly, that you have allowed yourself to be influenced by the insinuations of Father Chevaux and have relayed them to me. It seems also that either you or Father Chevaux had also tried to share the same with Father Perrodin. How can you reconcile this with your conscience?

Do not believe, my dear Son, that I am worried and alone in the storm. The Society of Mary is without a doubt the work of God and for the glory of Mary. The work will survive without human support, after a period of purification by trials. In the last few days I have received some letters from the Archbishop of Bordeaux. They contained a decree from the Sacred Congregation of Bishops and Regulars and a letter to the archbishop from the Apostolic Nuncio in Paris with a cover letter. I answered both immediately, and I am enclosing copies for you. I am sending you also a copy of the documents from the archbishop—the venerable decree, the letter from the Apostolic Nuncio, and that of the archbishop.

In a few days, my dear Son, if things do not change, I will send you my reflections on the venerable decree. God has allowed the devil to winnow the entire Society and to spread darkness in all minds. I pray often, for prayer is an excellent means to drive off the devil. We will see what the outcome will be.

Because you are staying in the north during the holidays, you could perhaps preach all or some of the retreats which I had wanted to entrust to Father Perrodin. He could then come to Bordeaux sooner, for it seems fitting that if I should die, there would be someone at my side who is familiar with the many thoughts God has put into my heart.

According to the letters you sent him, Father Chevaux must have asked you to arrange the personnel for all our houses in the north and in Switzerland and to send this to me as soon as possible, reserving for me two or three qualified people and some who can teach fairly well, full of zeal and devotion. You say nothing about this in your letter, and Father Chevaux does not speak of it. True, he is habitually pessimistic and always suffering. See very seriously and as quickly as possible in order to do good work. You also know the former Comté and Alsace, perhaps also Switzerland. Let us get through this matter the best we can. Train your brother well so that Ebersmunster may flourish under him. I will send you an explicit obedience as soon as I think the time is ripe.

I am. . . .

G.-Joseph Chaminade

* * *

Because of the silence of the nuncio, Father Caillet asked Archbishop Donnet to take the direction and the responsibility for the General Chapter. "Your Excellency could write two letters, one to Father Chaminade expressing the consolations he might need and asking him to do nothing further as Superior and not to oppose the convocation of the General Chapter, to submit to the full and complete execution of the decision of the Roman court. In the other, which you will address to me, Your Excellency will authorize me to convoke and hold a General Chapter without further delay" (Agmar 7.6.299).

On September 15, Archbishop Donnet informed Father Chaminade that the Chapter was going to meet “conformably to the statutes of the Society of Mary and blessed with the twofold approbation of the Church and the State.” The same day he wrote to Father Caillet. “It is up to you, Father, and to the other members of the council to proceed now. . . .” He also informed the Minister of Public Instruction of the impending convocation of the General Chapter. Finally, on the same day, Father Caillet signed the proclamation of the Chapter. The text was that of July 26, 1844, prepared by Fr. Narcisse Roussel, with a few changes regarding the intervention of the archbishops and of Rome.

Why did the council choose Saint-Remy as the site for the Chapter? In his account of the summer of 1847, when he was on the side of Father Caillet, Father Chevaux admits frankly that Saint-Remy was chosen so Father Chaminade could not interfere. The Archbishop of Albi wrote to Archbishop Donnet, “It would seem natural for the Chapter would meet in Bordeaux. Yet I was told that a more central spot seems preferable, one further removed from the residence of Father Chaminade.”

Here is Father Chaminade’s reply to the archbishop’s letter; it asks him “not to poison the last days of a life devoted entirely to the service of religion.” He refuses to accept the explanations of his adversaries in order “not to bastardize the Society of Mary”; he wishes to avoid abuses and a schism. He hopes to succeed, with the protection of Mary.

1385. To Archbishop Donnet of Bordeaux

September 18, 1845, Bordeaux

Original, Agmar

Monsignor,

Yesterday evening between 4 and 5 o’clock, I received your letter dated September 15.

I thank Your Excellency for informing me that you consider the venerable decree of the Sacred Congregation as a definitive decision of the Holy See in the matters in litigation between me and my Assistants, who have become the adversaries of their Superior, about a certain resignation from my generalship which has been in their hands ever since January 8, 1841. Instead of looking upon this decree as a complimentary one, I find that in its formulation it implies a doubt.

Your Excellency has the great kindness to ask me not to poison the last days of a life devoted totally to the service of religion by an obstinacy which nothing could justify. Assuredly, Your Excellency, I would not wish to poison my last days; but can my obstinacy in resisting what my conscience imperiously forbids poison my last days? Is my conscience upright if it heeds only the commandments of God in his service?

For instance, in the present case the venerable decree states, “Whether according to the act of resignation given by Father Chaminade on January 8, 1841, someone must consider as vacant the office of Superior General of the Society of Mary of which he is the Founder and Superior General according to the Constitutions.” I would be lying if I said purely and simply that I consider the office of Superior General vacant. Now, may I lie? Oh! Yes, Monsignor, I would have considered it vacant if the depositaries of that act of resignation had complied with the condition imposed upon them by another act of resignation according to the religious Constitutions, which are in no way contrary to the Civil Statutes, as I have pointed out to Your Excellency.

Would I not be lying, Your Excellency, if after such an act of resignation I said that it was necessary to convoke a General Chapter? That lie would poison my last days, all the more so because it would have been deliberate on my part. On the contrary, if I resist, it will not be my resistance that will poison them; I will even have an antidote in the word of Jesus Christ, the happiness of those who suffer persecution “for the sake of justice.”

I will conclude this letter, Your Excellency, as I usually do. I sincerely wish to lay down the burden of the generalate according to the spirit of the Constitutions. If I did so according to the wishes of my adversaries, I would expose the Society of Mary to becoming bastardized, to a perpetuation of very great abuses, and to the possibility of a schism. I must prevent this, and I hope to succeed with the grace of God and the protection of our august Mother.

I am far from opposed to the convocation of a General Chapter, providing it is regular and canonical as foreseen in the plan for agreement presented by Father Caillet. But today, it is Father Caillet, Father Roussel, and Brother Clouzet who do the convoking and the presiding at a General Chapter, in virtue of the venerable decree from the Sacred Congregation; this system is unthinkable!

Before Your Excellency's decision, by two successive well-motivated protests I had revoked from the General Administration, in the person of Father Caillet, president of the council, all the delegated power to administer in my stead. M. Faye was consulted in person, so there would be no error in the formulation.¹

As for Father Roussel, you know very well that he is a astute, a sophist, and a hypocrite. I warned you about him at the time you rendered the decision after the surreptitious consultation by Father Caillet.² In my first letter I wished to prove to you the invalidity of your decision. When I thought I was obliged to present my petition to the Holy Father, the main topic was Father Roussel, his sophisms, and his conduct. How could His Holiness wish to see him again preside at a General Chapter, after he had been dismissed legally from the Office of Instruction? I dare not think of it. . . . I have never been surprised that the Sovereign Pontiff did not wish to make a decision.

Everything indicates that this is a complimentary decree. By its nature it is invalid.³ But the Sacred Congregation thought it could and should ask me to yield as much as possible, in order to bring an end to this hateful matter. In my petition to the Holy Father, I had asked His Holiness to allow me to resign, and I requested this as a true solution. I merely asked for a delay of a few days in order to reform the grave abuses which had been introduced into the Society of Mary. Most of these, the more dangerous ones, were introduced by the very members of my council who have become my adversaries. For this reason, my adversaries so hotly maintain that my resignation is pure and simple and that a General Chapter must be convoked. Only under these circumstances do the Constitutions speak of such a convocation.¹

This method of convoking a General Chapter to choose a replacement for a Superior General who would have been so careless—to say the least—as to resign “purely and simply” is a more severe punishment than it would seem. He is not even called to the Chapter over which he should preside, according to the Constitutions; he is not called, and a brother, one in charge of poor children, is equal to him in rank. I dared to make this remark in one of our humble council meetings. Father Roussel broke into laughter, in which indignation and mockery were evident; I do not have sufficient vocabulary to qualify that kind of laughter. Father Roussel went on to insinuate to any willing ear that a pure and simple resignation /can be/ given by a Superior General because according to the Constitutions which speak /somewhere/ of the case of physical death, a General Chapter must be convoked /when such a resignation has taken place./ Who could have studied the Constitutions enough to draw all these parallels?²

¹See letter no. 1302.

²See letter no. 1320.

³Note the sequence in Fr. Chaminade's thought on the meaning and importance of the decree: conditional—complimentary—surreptitious—null.

¹By the Head of Zeal (article 465).

²The words between the slashes were added by the secretary Bonnefous, who notes at the bottom of the page, “The words in a different hand at the top of this page were added with the idea that they would perhaps clarify this passage without changing the true meaning.” A strange addition to an original letter, which shows the secretary beginning to intrude; this will occur more and more often.

Many people could think that I detest the man. No, they would be wrong. I have truly warm and Christian affection for him, and I do not suppose he harbors any contrary feeling, for I have always been kind to him. But he would need to impose absolute silence on me with respect to the numberless sophisms he used to win the war he was waging against me.

Could he find a better weapon for his crusade than article 481?³ And could he persist in it without glancing at article 482? The dead cannot speak; everyone knows and admits this. I know what it cost me to have dared to answer one of our principal directors who wrote more than three months ago that he had heard of my resignation. The letter bearing my answer never left this house, another proof of the persecution waged by those who are called my Assistants in the Society's business, and Father Caillet is their actual head and Father Roussel the ringleader or commander of the other two.

How gleeful must Fathers Roussel and Caillet be since they have been officially informed by the proper authorities! In fact, as I write, I find out from more letters that the Archbishop of Besançon has received the venerable decree, that he immediately sent a copy to Brother Clouzet at Saint-Remy, and that Saint-Remy is sending copies in all directions. This explains why the community of Brusque did not go to Bordeaux⁴ but to Réalmont with 8 postulants, in spite of the express orders I had given to Bro. Philippe Roussel, brother to Father Roussel.

Only four communities are here at Sainte-Anne—Villeneuve, Moissac, Castelsarrasin, and Clairac.

What will be the effect of the respectable decree if it is taken literally? It will encourage my persecutors, who are downcast at the prolonged silence of His Holiness: Father Caillet, who caused so much scandal in Bordeaux by having Your Excellency impose such hardships on me. . . . What a triumph at Réalmont for Father Roussel, dismissed from his office as Head of Instruction for very grave reasons, etc. Anarchy and scandal will become the order of the day. The schism that was healed in the south is justified, and the effects are noticed here at Sainte-Anne, etc.

I read nothing of the kind in the decree. This is what I read. "Whether someone is to consider as vacant the office of the Superior General of the Society of Mary, whose Founder he is, and convoke a General Chapter for the election of a new Superior General according to the Constitutions."

Who else, a person could object, could call a Chapter and preside but the three Assistants? The difficulty is more serious than anyone realizes. True, in every case of the natural death of a Superior General, a General Chapter can be convoked to find a successor. A person can and must do so when he commits moral suicide by freely and voluntarily resigning purely and simply from his generalate. But the present case has not been foreseen by the Constitutions, for the one who supposedly resigns has said and still claims that I would have been criminally guilty if I had purely and simply handed in my resignation on January 8, 1841. But I add, "I gave it into the hands of the members of my council to be turned over to the Government after the other resignation, made according to the letter and spirit of the Constitutions, would have come into force. The members of my council have never dared to show the Government such a contested resignation. It is still in their hands. I have been in constant communication with His Excellency the Minister of Public Instruction, and the letter he recently sent me¹ confirms the authorization given to the Society, and consequently he grants exemption from military service under the usual conditions."

³"We proceed as in the case of a death."

⁴For the holidays and the annual retreat.

¹July 9, 1845.

Nota bene. Your Excellency, I have just received a letter from the directors telling me that they have officially received the decree from the Roman court; that they find it clear, precise, and formal; and that they accept it as obedient children of the Church. I will go on, Your Excellency, not as a rebellious child of the Church, but as a protector of a precious trust which the Church has placed in my hands.

If His Excellency the Minister of Public Instruction wishes to receive and accept that old resignation in the name of the king, even though I have always contested it—not in itself, for I never believed it was legal—because I saw that the members of my council were betraying me and wanted to appoint a successor who would agree with their irregular notions, and if they did not succeed, at least to be reappointed in order to satisfy their ambition and to circumvent their Superior and to force him to make the decisions they wanted. If Your Excellency accepts subjects appointed in the name of the king and of the Government, which is very possible thanks to the high regard in which you are held by the Government, every difficulty will disappear except the one I pointed out in my last two letters—that is, that whether the venerable decree published by the Sacred Congregation (today you call it the decree of His Holiness) must be considered either complimentary or a decision of the Holy Father concerning the affairs of the Society which Your Excellency placed before the tribunal of His Holiness. I refused to believe, from respect for His Holiness, that he thought the decree would bring an end to the matter. I do not believe that “a General Chapter must be convoked, etc.” means that Fathers Caillet and Roussel and Brother Clouzet will convoke it. They would have that authority only if I were dead physically; but the Holy Father knows I am still alive. Does he think that the thoughts and desires of my Assistants have been able to inflict a moral death upon me which perfectly simulated physical death? I do not believe this! If I am alive, it is my duty to convoke it and to tender it my resignation as I wish to. On its orders, my resignation will be handed to the Government.

I believed it was my duty in conscience, Your Excellency, to make these last remarks in reply to your letter. I expected to close this letter yesterday; I can do so only today.

It may be of some interest to Your Excellency to know, among other things, that I have received word that it is the intention of the General Council of the department of Jura, expressed to the Minister, to suppress all teaching Orders.

I am. . . .

G.-Joseph Chaminade

* * *

Father Chaminade reacts to the proclamation of the chapter by ordering the heads of establishments not to attend. Neither Father Roussel nor Brother Clouzet, both absent from Bordeaux, had any knowledge of the fact upon which Father Caillet based himself to call the Chapter—that is, lacking the authorization of the nuncio, he obtained the intervention of the Archbishop of Bordeaux on the very day of the signing of the circular. Also, according to both common and special law and in virtue of the order issued by the General Administration the day following the resignation of Father Chaminade, the council could act only in unison, and the proclamation of the Chapter ordered by a single Assistant was essentially null and void.

1386. To the Directors of the Society of Mary

September 21, 1845, Bordeaux

Original, Agmar

The Superior General of the Society of Mary,
Appointed for life by ordinance of the king on November 16, 1825,
To all the Directors of the Society of Mary.

Having been informed that his three former Assistants, Caillet, Roussel, and Clouzet after abusing his trust and encouraged by the respectable advice which they obtained surreptitiously, wish to convoke a General Chapter to choose a successor who would conform to their sacrilegious designs,

orders you, in his aforementioned capacity, not to go to any designated establishment, even without speaking of a General Chapter.

They have in their possession an old formula of resignation (of January 8, 1841) which they would like to use with the Government; but they cannot succeed unless they present a successor to the present undersigned Superior, which successor is to have been appointed by the majority of the heads of our establishments representing the entire Society.

You will be surprised at this prohibition, you who have such great confidence in your General Heads, and above all in Father Caillet and Brother Clouzet. Wherever they are known, in fact, the general public recognizes their virtue and their merit, and their Superior and yours can take exception to nothing except their continuing association with their colleague Father Roussel, Head of Instruction, especially since his dismissal from his office on February 11, 1845. Father Roussel, whose native ingenuity has infinite resources to extricate himself from any situation, accepted his dismissal but did not relinquish his title into the hands of the Superior who had appointed him but to a third party who was highly interested in his continuing.¹ This was a delegation of sorts; that is probably why Father Caillet and Brother Clouzet resurrect him on this decisive occasion.

But be at peace; your old Superior and Father truly intends to resign from the generalate, but only when he is morally certain that his successor and the three heads will support the Society in the spirit in which it was founded and approved by the Government.

The Superior General
G.-Joseph Chaminade

* * *

Father Chaminade opposes the convocation of the Chapter on civil grounds. He is careful not to compromise the religious authority by submitting it to the civil; on the contrary, he hastens to submit his procedure to the Holy See, sending through the nuncio all the documents of the legal action. He protests against an exaggerated interpretation of the decree. He calls on the nuncio to stop the convocation.

¹To the Archbishop of Albi, who needed him to direct the establishment of Réalmont after the departure of Fr. Prost.

1387. To the Apostolic Nuncio, Paris

September 22, 1845, Bordeaux

Copy, Agmar

Monsignor,

The venerable decree from the Sacred Congregation of Bishops and Regulars, which most certainly benevolently intended to put an end to all discussion by relieving me of my generalship according to the true spirit of faith which permeates our religious Constitutions, which have been approved by the Holy See, has provoked a new persecution which is more fiery and scandalous than before!

The Archbishop of Bordeaux has notified me in a very honorable yet sinister manner. I learned that he intended to read into the document a final decision on all the matters of the Society of Mary which His Excellency had brought to the pope's attention. I wanted to make certain, so I immediately answered the archbishop in two consecutive letters to draw His Excellency's attention that the venerable decree was to be considered a complimentary decree and not a decision on the discussions and protests on the meaning of my abdication. I described to His Excellency the very grave dangers of trying to force the meaning of the decree and to look upon it as absolute while it is actually doubtful in tone.

The Archbishop of Bordeaux has so strongly espoused the cause of my adversaries that before answering me, he sent copies of the venerable decree to all Their Excellencies the Archbishops and Bishops where he knew we had establishments, implying that I did not submit even to the decisions of Rome and reinstating my three Assistants in their functions as Assistants General to act as if I had died on January 8, 1841.

What will the Minister of Public Instruction say, this Minister with whom I have had contacts while in the administration of the Society?¹ Above all, what will the Ministers think as they discuss the decision of the pope, who admits as valid my old resignation of January 8, 1841, written in due form for the Government but confided as a deposit to the members of my council until a successor would be named according to our religious Constitutions? The Ministers of the king will note that a General Chapter is being held only because of a papal decision, on a planned resignation by the Superior General named by the king; that although this resignation has always been contested by the Superior, the pope has decided it should take effect; that the Superior had no more to say than if he were dead; that my three former Assistants, Caillet, Roussel, and Clouzet, have been reinstated in their "precarious" administrative functions (delegated functions which had been revoked by the Superior). What conclusions will the Ministers of the king draw from the procedures of the pope? Does the pope have the authority to pronounce on the nominations or dismissals from office in his States? Will the king not be offended? Will not both sovereign powers, the spiritual and the temporal, take offense?

Oh! Monsignor, what a multitude of ideas come to my mind at this point! But the turmoil is so great that I experience great difficulty in writing to Your Excellency. At the same time I am having copies made of the greater part of my correspondence with the Archbishop of Bordeaux. I call the venerable decree which His Excellency has just obtained from His Holiness a "complimentary decree." I say this because I am truly and sincerely devoted to the pope; this is why I resist the more than forced interpretation which he gives to the hallowed brief. I would rather die in a dungeon or on the scaffold than to ever lose my docility to the Holy See!

¹ The Minister of Public Instruction, in fact, still considered Fr. Chaminade as Superior General; only on September 22, 1845, did the Archbishop of Bordeaux, without informing Fr. Chaminade, reveal to him the resignation of January 8, 1841, and the future session of the General Chapter.

The communication of the venerable decree to all our houses in France has caused great alarm because Monsignor added the command to submit to the decision of the Church. To correct this, I issued the enclosed communication; no mention is made of the spiritual, or of Our Lords the Archbishops and Bishops; I will give it a wide distribution.

I feel deep sorrow because I cannot resign as the prelate of Bordeaux desires, but I cannot lie, I cannot betray all the youth, both men and women, who compose the three Orders which grace has caused me to found; I cannot allow the Society of Mary to be degraded, bastardized, etc.

I have often asked the Archbishop of Bordeaux to leave me free and to remove the heavy burden which, without authority or by an abuse of authority, he has imposed on me in a certain status quo, in a general interdict on all the priests of the Society of Mary, and in other constraints, to trouble the government of the Society which he knows he cannot take from me.

Because the Holy Father has never given a decision, in spite of all his petitions, the archbishop has secretly solicited the new decree which dispenses the Holy See from pronouncing itself.

I pray and ask Your Excellency to write to the archbishop and to ask him to allow me the same liberty I enjoyed before my resignation, and in the present situation, in view of his interpretation of the revered Decree to suspend its execution until further orders; peace will soon reign again.

I have reason to believe that the Government will be aware of nothing; in case it should, I can easily calm it.

If Your Excellency deems it proper to send all these documents to the Sacred Congregation of Bishops and Regulars, please present my humble respects and my entire submission to all the orders of the Holy See, and even to all its suggestions.

I am. . . .

G.-Joseph Chaminade

* * *

This letter to the Bishop of Saint-Claude, an old friend, is the first in a series which will continue for months. He asks the bishop to back him by seeing to it that his petition reaches Rome through the nuncio. He also includes copies of his letters to the nuncio and to the archbishop.

1388. To Bishop de Chamon of Saint-Claude

September 23, 1845, Bordeaux

Original, Agmar

Your Excellency,

With great pleasure I have received the letter you sent me on September 11. How many times would I have liked to have recourse to your paternal goodness to stop the scandalous suits launched by my three Assistants, Caillet, Roussel, and Clouzet; but I have always hesitated to reveal to you the abominable conduct of Father Roussel,¹ for fear of stirring up in you too strong an indignation against his person. I admit now that I should have. I had thought that after the revelations to the Archbishop of Bordeaux and then to Their Excellencies of Albi and Besançon² and after sending the Sovereign Pontiff a copy of Father Roussel's letter admitting his dissolute conduct, everything would stop there.

¹Fr. Roussel came from the diocese of Saint-Claude.

²Fr. Chaminade revealed the immoral conduct of Fr. Roussel only to the Archbishop of Albi (letter no. 1365). who later informed the Archbishop of Besançon. Fr. Chaminade had denounced Fr. Roussel to the Archbishop of Bordeaux in reserved terms.

Everything did in fact stop in Rome when the Archbishop of Bordeaux, by a furtive petition to the Sacred Congregation, obtained the decree in question. Although I opposed him energetically, the archbishop put it into force and ordered the convocation of a General Chapter at Saint-Remy. As soon as I learned of this, I sent an order to all the directors of the Society of Mary; you will find a copy enclosed. I have just written to the Archbishop of Nicaea, the Apostolic Nuncio in Paris. Your Excellency will also find a copy of this letter, to which I will append a copy of my last letter to the Archbishop of Bordeaux. I am sending Father Perrodin copies of the first two I wrote to him after he sent me the decree; he is not very informed on what has transpired. My third letter is a short summary of the first two.

Your Excellency has good reason to be surprised that I, a Founder, would consent to resign purely and simply from my generalship. Thanks be to God, I have not succumbed to such an imprudence, which as someone who knew the situation of the Society of Mary and of the two other Orders which the Lord has allowed me to found would have been a crime of the first magnitude.

But I am told that the Roman Decree presupposes it. True, but it is invalid because of the covert petition of the Archbishop of Bordeaux. Here are the facts. In November, almost one year ago, the Archbishop of Bordeaux told me he was writing to the pope. I asked him to allow me to enclose a short letter to His Holiness. Monsignor told me very curtly that his letter had left. Not knowing what the prelate had written to the Holy Father, I did not think it was necessary to write myself. I waited a few months, and then I heard that His Excellency needed a copy of one of my early circulars. I sent him a copy, asking that he permit me to add some remarks of mine, but he refused. At that time I sent my first petition to Rome.

I gave the Holy Father some explanations of my resignation, and especially of the character of Father Roussel because he is the admitted ringleader of this entire matter, chosen by the archbishop. At first he never disclosed that Monsignor was his secret partner. There is nothing I have written that cannot be proved by authentic documents.

Your Excellency, I come now to the act of resignation itself. An occasion presented itself when my Assistants would need my resignation from the generalate.

At a glance I see that not only is it possible, but that it might be useful both to the Society and to the Daughters of Mary. My death is approaching. Before dying, I would dearly love to see the Society advancing with a firm step in the spirit of its Constitutions, and I would dearly love also to have more time to prepare myself more immediately for a good death.

According to our Constitutions, the General may abdicate in two ways. The abdication of a Founder, as Founder, is out of the question. The first mode would be that of a General who is supremely unconcerned about the Society which he governs. He must therefore be condemned to a moral death, which is equivalent to a physical death. The second mode is that of a General who has the spirit of his position and who wishes to perpetuate it by proposing his successor.

The first mode is described in article 481 of the Constitutions and reads, "Should the Superior resign purely and simply without naming his successor, the procedure is the same as in the case of death." Article 465 reads, "In the case of the death of the Superior General (a physical death), the Head of Zeal is in charge during the interim, which must be as brief as possible. As soon as circumstances permit, a General Chapter is convoked and the interim head, called the Vicar General, presides at the sessions until a Superior is elected and the minutes approved; the Vicar General, relieved of his functions, delivers an address with strong religious overtones to the assembled Chapter and the meeting is adjourned."

The second mode is clearly described in article 482 of the Constitutions and reads, "If the successor he proposes is accepted by the Chapter and by the directors of the central houses, as a result he is invested with the full authority of the Superior General until the convocation of the Chapter, which will take place at the end of the 10th year of the generalate of his predecessor."

The Superior General is accountable to two sovereign yet very distinct authorities: to the authority of the king in the temporal or civil order, and to the authority of the pope in the order of the Catholic religion. He is appointed Superior General by both sovereign authorities; he has a twofold resignation to make. He can include them both in a single abdication, in the one made for the king, because the pope recognizes and authorizes the Superior appointed by the Society, just as the king does; and this is at the heart of the problem, what certainly invalidates the venerable decree.

After many suggestions are made concerning the resignation of the Superior General, all enter the council chamber. In a fairly lengthy address, the Superior General very clearly, very distinctly offers to resign according to the Constitutions. Father Roussel remarks that a pure and simple written resignation is required. The Superior agrees, to prove to the Government that he truly has resigned. The Superior complies; there is no other business, and the meeting is adjourned. All four are still standing when Father Roussel speaks up and asks, “What will we do now?” The Superior answers, “What the Constitutions prescribe.” Father Roussel replies, “The Constitutions did not foresee this case.” The Superior says, “They are very clear and explicit; I will give you an example.”

Father Roussel replies, “You understand nothing of the Constitutions, etc.” The Superior gives an example, featuring Father Caillet himself. Everyone leaves. The Superior calls Father Roussel and scolds him paternally for his outburst and for the improper way in which he had spoken to him. Father Roussel again answers with vivacity, “I prefer to resign” (as Head of Instruction). The Superior says, “I accept.” Dinner is served, and everyone withdraws. Around three o’clock, Father Roussel comes to my room and hands me a long letter and leaves. The letter is highly disparaging of Father Caillet. I had hardly finished reading it when Father Caillet came in. I showed him the letter.

This was Father Roussel’s first aggressive act, performed in his name and in the name of his two colleagues. The latter convince Father Roussel that if my resignation was disputed, it would not produce the expected effect in the courts and elsewhere. All three return and Father Roussel suggests Father Chevaux as my successor, Father Fontaine as Head of Instruction, and his two colleagues would be reappointed. After some discussion, I willingly accept all four to form the new General Administration.

I am omitting everything that happened after that. Finally, after some stealthy consultation, they would persuade the Archbishop of Bordeaux to the present mode of aggression, to which they thought it wise to return because it seemed foolproof. “The Superior has resigned purely and simply,” they say. “His only act of resignation is the written one which we have in our hands. This resignation is legal and will be accepted by any tribunal; it will be valid in Rome, just as in France.” The Superior General would also acknowledge it, if it were not tainted with treason. That is the case here. No matter what tactic they use—and they have tried many—the Superior retaliates and offers proof. They deny everything. In vain does the Superior insist that denials are not proofs. They stick to their arguments.

The consultation made in Rome on the question produced the same results. The Sacred Congregation asked itself the same question in all its simplicity, “Whether according to the act of resignation made by Father Chaminade on January 8, 1841, the office of the Superior General of the Society of Mary, of which he is the Founder, should be considered vacant.”

The Decree says, “Affirmative, to the first part.” But if Monsignor had added my reply to his statement, would the Sacred Congregation have pronounced “Affirmative, to the first part”? If the Archbishop of Bordeaux had added that I also acknowledged that the office of the Superior General would have been vacant as a consequence of that resignation, taken at its face value and in its actual form, just as a stolen gold nugget has identical value in the pocket of the thief and in that of the owner. . . . But if it can be shown that the nugget in the pocket of the thief was cleverly stolen, that nugget will not have much value for him. The same holds here. I allowed that pure and simple written resignation to be placed in safekeeping in the hands of my former Assistants,

that it might be honored by the Government when my resignation according to article 482 took place. It has never had any value other than that mentioned above; but they still deny this in spite of the proofs, and they adhere to their favorite argument that it is a genuine resignation.

I am sorry to speak thus about the Archbishop of Bordeaux. But why did His Excellency so obstinately espouse the cause of my adversaries, to the point of making it his cause? Why did His Excellency induce his two colleagues in the episcopacy into the same error? I said all these things to the Archbishop of Bordeaux immediately after his decision. I offered authentic proof of everything I maintained, but he never would ask me for these proofs. Once, when I had the honor of being admitted to an audience, I wanted to show him the section of the Constitutions which bears the title "On the Assistants," where it is clearly shown that my adversaries have no right to attack me. He refused to read the paragraph, on the pretext that he knew it well. He rose and imposed a general interdict, including Mass, on all the priests of the Society who would come to help me perform my functions, and that was at least eight months ago, etc. Why did Monsignor enjoin my colleagues never to say a word concerning my protests to Their Excellencies? Why was I never given a copy of the memorandum written by Father Roussel with the title "For the Bishops Only"? They tell me only it is a fascinating document which defies rebuttal. Why not let me see it? Is it possible that this memorandum would not have enchanted me, and that I could have written a rebuttal, just as today I am answering the question of the venerable decree?

The last part of the question in the decree contains something which is even more offensive. It ordains the convocation of a General Chapter to be presided over by my three adversaries. Only when a Superior General abdicates according to the first mode, as explained above, is a Chapter convoked and presided over by other than the resigning General, if he is still alive. The decree is formulated along the same lines.

I must stop, Your Excellency, for I have no more time. The Sacred Congregation will soon disavow the interpretation of the decree given by the Archbishop of Bordeaux, if Your Excellency has the kindness to send it this letter through the Apostolic Nuncio in Paris. Meanwhile, I will forbid the convocation of a General Chapter.

I am with the deepest respect Your Excellency's most humble and most obedient servant.
G.-Joseph Chaminade

* * *

To describe the situation, Father Chaminade resorts to irony and repeats the "there will be a stench" from the story of Lazarus. He insists again, "The decree has been obtained by a secret and furtive petition, which, in Canon Law makes all decisions null and void." He asks Father Perrodin to protest the validity of the elections at Saint-Remy. He will not run for reelection, for that would suppose a true resignation. He urges him to abide by the election held in December of 1844.

1389. To Fr. Jules-César Perrodin, Acey

September 24-26, 1845, Bordeaux
Original, Agmar

My dear Son,

I am writing to the Bishop of Saint-Claude, and I believe I can prove to him the lack of validity of the venerable decree from Rome. I am asking His Excellency to send my letter, or a copy of the same, to the Apostolic Nuncio in Paris; he will need to place his seal on it. His Excellency would add a short petition to the Holy Father.

The letter I am writing to the Apostolic Nuncio has no other essential purpose. The decree cannot be a decision on Society matters, in particular on my resignations, for this would assume that His Holiness would wish me to lie, that as I made my resignation of January 8, 1841,

I considered my office of Superior General purely and simply vacant. If this were the case, why would I have always denied it? Why is this old resignation still in the hands of the members of my council? What need would there be for a decision? What need is there for a decision from the Roman court on that resignation, if it were not contested and if I had no reason to cry “Treason!” at the violation of the deposit which my Assistants were to regard as sacred, and who were to fulfill the conditions of the deposit? Has there been an abdication? Do I have a legal successor? Do I not continue my relationship with the Minister of Public Instruction? Is it not almost ridiculous to ask the Sovereign Pontiff to decide a case like this? His Holiness has not wished to decide, in spite of the number of letters the Archbishop of Bordeaux has sent him.

Finally, Monsignor sends a secret petition; the Sacred Congregation answers with great wisdom in a doubting statement, “affirmative, negative,” and Monsignor tries to present the Roman document as a decision or an absolute decree. This decree reinstates my three Assistants and treats me as if I had died.

In the case of a General who would like to resign and have his successor named by a General Chapter, it would be up to him to convoke and preside. But here we find the order reversed. He gave a pure and simple resignation. Such a resignation, according to article 481 of the Constitutions, inflicts such moral death on the Superior that he must be treated as if he were physically dead. In fact, my dear Son, if I had died on January 8, 1841, how would I be treated today? It would no longer be the “there will be a stench” of the death of Lazarus. Yet this is what the decree states. This decree does marvels. A few days ago, I was alive. The archbishop shows it to me, and its revelation kills me. Because I still feel alive, the Archbishop of Bordeaux writes to many bishops that I am dead. In the name of the Chapter, or the decree, Father Caillet declares to the 19 religious who are living at Sainte-Anne for the annual retreat that I have written a circular which contravenes the decree. They scamper away during the night without seeing or speaking to me. This is a bit stronger than the “there will be a stench.” Enclosed you will find their schismatic letter showing that my obedience, my humble submission to the Holy See and my docility to its orders, separate me from the Church! In fact, I believe I detect a true invalidity in the decree because it was obtained after a fraudulent consultation which, according to Canon Law, makes such decisions null and void.

Prompted by a frank and sincere attachment to the Holy See, I present my case to Monsignor the Apostolic Nuncio in Paris and ask His Excellency to convey the expression of my sentiments of perfect devotedness, of humble submission, and of my docility in heeding not only its orders but also its desires. How can a person see in this the “if he ignores even the Church, then treat him as you would a Gentile or a tax collector” [Matthew 18:17]?

If I lied and admitted that I had resigned in a manner which immediately rendered my office of Superior General vacant without reservation, how guilty are my three adversaries for not arranging immediately for a successor, according to a text of the Constitutions! And is it not because of their long and too-long delay and of crying abuses that I rescinded the powers I had conferred on them? Only after 3½ years did I withdraw their right to use them and the means to abuse them. I will not recall here the very particular abuse they made of them at the court of arbitration, when they promised to have my successor named who would need to go to court for what is called the case of Auguste Perrière. At the end of the court session, Father Caillet and Father Roussel were mortified at being treated as comedians by the honorable lawyers of the opposition, and even before the judge. These facts are public knowledge. One of these lawyers whose name is known throughout France¹ wrote to Agen that I “was playing the comedian.” Ascribing the actions of subordinates to their superiors is a common occurrence. This scandalous item was reported in all seriousness to the Superior General of the Daughters of Mary. But how is it possible, someone may ask, that priests and religious could be insulted in this way and could

¹De Sèze.

allow such shame and scorn to be directed to the Society of Mary? They caused it, and they bore it because my resignation was contested. And what would someone have thought of them had the tribunal known that I disputed it? For what reason did the Superior contest it? None, except that it was usurpation or treason and his obligation not to deny it was binding on him. In a word, he said that if he yielded to his adversaries he would have been a monster of iniquity, and he has often explained this expression. But his adversaries must have had a great deal at stake and powerful reasons thus to persecute their Superior. This can be measured by the reasons the Superior had to resist!

If the consultation which the Archbishop of Bordeaux had with the Roman court had presented arguments for and against, would he have obtained the venerable decree? Was it entirely in vain that as I was acknowledging to the Archbishop of Bordeaux the reception of the decree, I immediately made a distinction in the manner of interpreting it? I told His Excellency that I could see nothing in it except a complimentary decree, and he understood very well that I meant the consultation had been a secret one. Most of our religious understood not a single one of these expressions: “a complimentary decree,” “furtive consultation.” A decision, a decree, a dispensation is surreptitious when the explanations and the consultations do not reveal the truth which must be presented if a decision is to be reached; otherwise, the decision is not valid. Try to discover in this case if the consultation contained those truths and those facts which the Superior would have brought to light, had he been informed of the consultation. “A complimentary decree,” a decree given in all confidence, granted because of the high esteem in which the petitioner is held. The high judge may not, without disrespect, suspect that the person consulting is not revealing all the truth necessary to obtain the desired decision; and in the present instance, the integrity of the Archbishop of Bordeaux is not questioned. Nothing appears in the consultation except the illusion under which His Excellency labors, thanks to the reports of Father Roussel from the very beginning of the quarrel.

The Sovereign Pontiff rendered a decision along the lines already held by the archbishop, who had been influenced by the sophisms of Father Roussel. The Sovereign Pontiff, as the First Superior of the Society of Mary, has simply confirmed the decisions of the archbishop.

My dear Son, you can make whatever you can out of the considerations I have put before you, but do so with wisdom and prudence. If you can do so immediately, it might be good to present a petition to the Holy Father, one that is more developed than the letter which I had the honor of sending him. Moreover, I tell him that I am sending you the two enclosed letters, and that the third letter to His Excellency concerning the decree, of which I am also sending him a copy, is simply a summary of the other two.

Concerning the order I issued—I believed it was absolutely necessary. And if the directors of the Society go to Saint-Remy, where I am told the General Chapter must in conscience be held, according to the expression of the Archbishop of Bordeaux and where the very great majority, or at least a majority of two-thirds, did not know that I had never truly resigned, and where the ballots did not contain the expression “I look upon the Founder of the Society as my Superior” (this is the substance of the letters which I have received from everywhere¹ so that in the last election, I had the almost totality of the votes), you can protest in my name against the validity of the Chapter.

You must be on your guard; this is not reelection. A reelection would imply a true resignation, and that is the key to the entire discussion. A reelection would not settle anything, and I could not accept it.² The minutes of the sessions must be kept with wisdom and prudence.

¹During the consultation of the previous winter.

²In September of 1844 Fr. Chaminade had accepted the idea of a reelection. In the current circumstances, he saw in a reelection a means of halting all discussion and ending the debate peacefully. In addition, as he has just remarked, the approval of the Society of Mary was more an acknowledgement of his rights than a true reelection. Actually a principle was involved, and Fr. Chaminade was convinced that he had to uphold the rights of truth without any thought of compromise.

What an abundance of other things I would have to say to you, but for the moment, this is the one that absorbs all the others.

I embrace you, my dear Son, with a most paternal tenderness.

P.S. Have copies of my orders made promptly; sign them for me, through the authorization I am giving you, and send them to all the directors, even to Brother Clouzet, just as I did here for Father Caillet. I mean all the directors except those in Haut and Bas Rhin; for those of Alsace, I have delegated the elder Father Meyer. Always consult with him, in spite of the efforts of the opposition; instead of extinguishing the fire, the venerable decree has merely fanned it.

[September 26.]The events succeed one another with constant new variations. I have just written a last letter to the Archbishop of Bordeaux. If he does not rescind his command, this will mean Satan is truly involved in this, and more truly than we thought. What! By this decree, the Holy See would have me lie! Meet with Father Meyer, be present at the Chapter, and act as you see fit. No one must react to any statement by the chairman, but let everyone either abide by the recent election¹ and the direction which I gave or have another election. Without a near unanimity, I think we must fear a schism. I am enclosing a copy of the letter I have just sent to the Archbishop of Bordeaux.

* * *

Last, Father Chaminade tries to have Archbishop Donnet suspend the Chapter “until we obtain a solution to the problems arising from the Decree of the Sacred Congregation.”

1390. To Archbishop Donnet of Bordeaux

September 26, 1845, Bordeaux

Original, Agmar

Monsignor,

The deep sorrow I experience to see Your Excellency being compromised by going along with the matter of my resignation, a matter which is concerned with the revolt of an inferior toward a superior; a pure and simple revolt without a shadow of any justification and without any purpose other than to satisfy the ambition and the base financial interest of the rebels; and finally, a revolt which is abetted and led by a young priest who is an ingenious and confusing thinker, a most pleasant, crafty hypocrite who disguises the most fiery passions—this sorrow induces me to write to you again, Your Excellency.

Try as I might, I was not able to convince Your Excellency that the venerable decree which you have obtained from Rome was a complimentary decree and not a true decision of His Holiness on the questions separating the two parties. Who in this Christian and Catholic world will believe that the intentions of the Holy See in this decree were to oblige me—to force me even by the full weight of its authority—to lie? The Holy See obliging someone to do what the church forbids, “You shall not lie!” What a detestable lie that would be; it would consummate all the wickedness of the rebels! I would have put up such a long resistance, I would have supported so patiently the persecution you are waging against me, only to weaken in the last days of my life! You claim my opposition is poisoning their minds. But in this case, not to oppose is to lie;

¹It took place throughout the dispersed Society of Mary.

it would mean that when I wrote my resignation on January 8, 1841, I believed that the office of Superior General was vacant. (Expression used in the decree). Oh no! That I believed only to the extent that I was convinced that the members of my council would effectively carry out my intentions, which were so clearly expressed and which must have been consigned to the register of the council. My resignation was a deposit which my adversaries violated.

What danger there is, Your Excellency, in returning to the settlement proposed by Father Caillet and M. Faye, and which I accepted on the Feast of Pentecost? Not only is there none, but you and your respectable colleagues in the episcopacy are extricated from the criminal and underhanded tactics my adversaries have used against me. No doubtless you never believed it was criminal in nature, but does that make it less so?

The success of your efforts could be complete, Your Excellency; you may even have the Society of Mary dissolved and, following that, perhaps also the other two Institutes which are bound to it with such sacred ties.¹ I do not venture to name the house of the Miséricorde, for its ties with the Society are less perceptible. If Your Excellency has no fears in this regard, the higher clergy might have some because of the times we live in. What! Archbishops and bishops would force a Superior General to tell untruths, the one who has founded a Society which is doing good work, in the opinion of friends and foes alike, and they themselves would not be compromised!

If Your Excellency feels you are not in duty bound to rescind the order for the convocation of a General Chapter, I ask you to withhold the order at least until we receive an answer to the new problems created by the decree from the Sacred Congregation. I do not believe His Holiness is ordering me formally to lie. But how many other ways does he have to paralyze me completely while preserving the Society of Mary!

I promise him submission and obedience, not only to his orders but also to his suggestions, as I have indicated to the Apostolic Nuncio in Paris.

P.S. Father Caillet has not yet left. Your Excellency could command him to postpone his departure and to inform in writing those who were expecting him.

* * *

The religious of the Society of Mary complied. "Rome has spoken, the case is closed," they said with Father Rothéa, the friend of the Founder (see Father Perrodin's letter to Father Chevaux, August 30, 1845, Agmar 7.5.445; Father Fontaine's letter to Father Chevaux, September 16, 1845, Agmar 7.6.304, 305). Father Caillet therefore gave the order to assemble at Saint-Remy (Father Roussel's letter to Brother Laugeay, Agmar 7.6.313; Father Chevaux to Father Meyer, Agmar 7.6.310). Forsaken, and realizing that all his efforts had not succeeded in preventing a Chapter which would be chaired by his Assistants, Father Chaminade addresses a letter to the capitulants.

¹The houses of Agen and Auch.

1391. To Members of the Chapter at Saint-Remy

September 28, 1845, Bordeaux

Original, Agmar

To all the Directors of the houses of the Society of Mary,
Illegitimately gathered at the château of Saint-Remy (Haute-Saône).

My dear Children,

Your father, who is considerably distressed, would like to address a few words to you perhaps for the last time. Yes, perhaps for the last time, for although he is still living, he has been struck down with a moral death whose effects, as far as you are concerned, are those of a physical death.

My great worry since the revolt of my three Assistants under the protection of the Archbishop of Bordeaux has become public knowledge is the possibility of a real schism. And my fears are solidly founded. When I published my last circular,¹ already all the establishments in the south were schismatic; today, only the house of Réalmont remains. My fears today are based on that single reality, the decree from the Sacred Congregation which the Archbishop of Bordeaux obtained from His Holiness after a petition which was evidently surreptitious. I say “evidently surreptitious,” otherwise a person would need to suppose that the Holy See wants to force me to go against the commandment of the Church which forbids lying and to acknowledge as my judges my three rebel Assistants who have convoked the General Chapter and who are its presiding officers. This decree installs my three rebellious associates in the chairs of the presidency and of the supreme authority of the Society of Mary, among whom Father Roussel, the ringleader and apologist who was dismissed from his office of Head of Instruction on February 11. Father Roussel is especially well known to his two colleagues on the council and also to the Archbishop of Bordeaux, and in this critical situation I venture to say also to our Holy Father the Pope. I will very briefly explain both points.

Here is the main part of the decree, in its indeterminate form. “Whether, according to the act of resignation made by Father Chaminade on January 8, 1841, someone must consider the office of Superior General of the Society of Mary, of which he is the Founder, as vacant, and whether a Chapter for the election of a new Superior should be convoked according to the Constitutions.”

If I submit to the decree handed to me by the Archbishop of Bordeaux, I am guilty of lying; I mean “according to the act of resignation of January 8, 1841,” I should “consider as vacant the office of Superior General of the Society of Mary,” for when it says “someone,” “someone must,” it can only mean that this is the opinion of the Superior General. It also implies that at the time, he did not consider it vacant, for he had deposited it into the hands of the members of his council until such time as the council would carry out the intentions he had manifested in the proposal to resign according to article 482 of the Constitutions. His proposal was never carried out. The deposit he made of his resignation was violated. Is it the intention of the Sovereign Pontiff that I obligingly admit that I considered my office as Superior General to be vacant? How many lies would I have been guilty of since then, for I have constantly resisted! And because of this resistance the act of resignation is still in their hands, and I am still dealing with His Excellency the Minister of Public Instruction every time this is necessary. Even the Archbishop of Bordeaux sent one of his petitions to His Excellency, thus adding the weight of his influence to my demand. Why is my written resignation today so outdated, so obsolete? Because they never dared to make use of it, because it was continuously contested. And today, before revealing it they wish to hold a General Chapter so that having named my successor, they can claim that they withheld it because it was a pure and simple resignation, and if I dare to attack their stand, I will be depicted as a poor old man who no longer knows what he is saying, etc.

¹From Fr. Chevaux in December of 1844.

What is certain, my dear Children, is this.

(1) On January 8, 1841, I truly proposed to my council to resign my generalate according to article 482, and the most authentic proof of this would be the record of it in the minutes by the Secretary of the council in the very register which he must keep. But access to the register of the minutes has always been refused to the Superior General. Father Caillet even swore an oath on his honor as an upright person and as a priest that he would never show it without authorization from a competent authority—that is, without an order from the Archbishop of Bordeaux, who plays the double role of judge and participant in this matter which he espouses. There are many other reasons, but I will confine myself to these, my dear Children, for I am in a hurry.

(2) It is certain beyond a doubt that the Superior has always challenged the resignation written on that same date, January 8, 1841.¹

(3) It is highly certain that my three adversaries have no real grounds for their revolt against their Superior, especially since the secret consultation of Father Caillet with the Archbishop of Bordeaux and since he was given the famous decision by His Excellency, which by its very nature is null and void. Before this decision, their attacks against their Superior went through very different phases.

(4) It is certain that in the beginning they boasted about the executive powers which the Constitutions did not give them; they were appointed Assistants to help, to advise—in a word, to assist their Superior—and not to prosecute him. Read the part entitled “On the Assistants” in the Constitutions. The circular which they invoke¹ gave them only delegated powers, which the Superior rescinded in two authentic documents before the decision of the Archbishop of Bordeaux.

(5) It is true that at the time of the last Feast of Pentecost there was a plan for reconciliation actually proposed by Father Caillet, which suggested that the Superior would convoke a General Chapter as soon as possible and be its president; this plan was accepted during the Octave of the feast and was later rejected by Father Caillet on the pretext that the archbishop, who was absent, had not advised its adoption; it was during this absence that the Roman decree was obtained. The pope had never wished to pronounce himself on the question of the resignations raised by the archbishop before the tribunal of His Holiness, in spite of all his attempts. In fact, the long period of hesitation was one of the reasons Father Caillet proposed the plan. I must stop here.

My dear Children, if I go into all these details, even though very briefly because I am so pressed for time, it is not that I desire to win your votes, but rather that I wish to prevent you from swerving from the narrow path that leads to life. I must warn you to mistrust all those insidious counsels which can denature the Society of Mary, to which you have been called by a divine inspiration. It is easy to form a bastard Society of Mary, camouflaged as the legitimate Society. You have a striking example before you: my adversaries have tricked the Archbishop of Bordeaux; in turn this respectable pontiff, through his justly merited esteem, has seduced several archbishops and bishops, and their combined efforts, led by the first prelate, have obtained the decree which has convoked you.

The schism is imminent, and should one or two of our adversaries be named by the Chapter and if your votes do not admit that I never did truly abdicate, then I will be in relationship to the Society just what I was before the entire discussion. There will be no unanimity in your votes unless you can obtain at least a two-thirds majority; it is to be hoped that the only minority will be that of our aggressors. I say “aggressors” because my adversaries are those of the Society. I am sending you this letter through Father Chevaux, whom you know and respect; he will hand it to you personally. For more rapid distribution, he may see to it that the

¹Considered in itself, or separate from the first.

¹Of January 7, 1841.

following read it also: the elder Father Meyer, Father Rothéa, Father Fontaine, and Father Fidon—in a word, those he sees fit, circumstances permitting. The essential thing is to obtain as unanimous a vote as possible.

Another essential point in these circumstances is that a good secretary should be named, a religious with a delicate yet not scrupulous conscience, who can write what is happening and what is said, more in line with the spirit than with the letter.

As soon as the Chapter convenes, it would seem to me to be desirable that some of the principal directors, for instance Father Meyer, propose that the Chapter will confirm the dismissal of Father Roussel as General Head of Instruction, even if he is not present at the Chapter, sitting at the right hand of Father Caillet. For what a scandal it would be to see him put in an appearance! I had more than sufficient reason to dismiss him, and I still have not lost that power. For him to reappear, Satan, the enemy of Mary, our august Mother, will have to spread great darkness among people who are remarkable both for their personal merit and for their dignity.

I will never admit, because I cannot do so without betraying the Society and also the Institute of the Daughters of Mary, I will never admit, I repeat, that I abdicated purely and simply from my generalship on January 8, 1841. However, I am ready to resign now purely and simply, if there is not a great unanimity in the voting and if there is no danger of a schism, such as for instance the one I have pointed out to you. Furthermore, if you admit that I never did resign,¹ it is perfectly useless to appoint Assistants; in my capacity as Founder, according to the civil and the religious laws I have the power to name my own Assistants.

Not that I do not have the true intention of resigning, my dear Children, just as I did on January 8, 1841, to set aside the weight of my generalate in order to see before my death the General Administration advance with a firm step along the beautiful paths of virtue and perfection. This upheaval in the Society is attributable to a merciful Providence, which seeks to strengthen and purify it.

My dear Children, receive my paternal blessing, with all the tenderness of my heart.

G.-Joseph Chaminade

* * *

Father Chaminade entrusted his protest to Father Chevaux, but Father Chevaux kept it to himself.

1392. To Fr. Jean Chevaux, Bordeaux

September 28, 1845, Bordeaux

Original, Agmar

My dear Son,

I am sending you, or rather I am having someone give you, a letter addressed to all the directors of our houses whom you will find illegally meeting at Saint-Remy. If you think you will not have the time to communicate it to each one individually and to give them the necessary explanations, you could ask some directors—those you can trust, for instance Fathers Meyer, Perrodin, Rothéa, etc., who could discuss the matter in twos or in a group and with whom you would have a preliminary understanding. I leave everything to your good judgment.

I embrace you paternally and pray to heaven for the success of your mission.

G.-Joseph Chaminade

P.S. I may write to you again within the next few days; do not hesitate to keep me informed of whatever interests you.

¹In a total manner, with the interpretation so often given.

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N.A. 1392-2. To the Superior

September 30, 1845, Bordeaux

Printed in Volume 8-2.

Copy, Agmar 218.2.30

As the cleric in charge of the church of the Madeleine since the early 19th century, I have the duty to see that it fully serves its purpose. Father Caillet, to whom I had given this responsibility, left without telling me of any possible arrangements he might have made. From His Excellency the Archbishop I have learned that the church has a fourfold function, and that you have been kind enough to agree to preach, according to custom, after the chanting of Vespers. No doubt Father Caillet had accepted this responsibility from obedience; but I did not confide it to him in virtue of my title of Superior, but rather in virtue of my original title as titular pastor of the church. I wish to thank you for the service you have rendered me. I may perhaps have the opportunity of hearing you preach, either directly or through those who are in my service. You are aware of the close relationship I have always had with Father Rauzan the elder and all his family.

If the position in which I find myself is painful and difficult, this is because the archbishop has adopted the quarrel which my three assistants are having with me. I very much fear that His Excellency might compromise himself, as you can see from the copy of the letter I sent to him just a few days ago.

I am with the deepest respect your most humble and most obedient servant.

G.-Joseph Chaminade

* * *

There is another protest against the interpretation of the decree given by Archbishop Donnet. Father Chaminade insists again on the compromise proposed by Father Caillet on the Feast of Saint George in 1845 which had been discussed and accepted by him (letter no. 1370 and following).

1393. To Archbishop Donnet of Bordeaux

October 2, 1845, Bordeaux

Original, Agmar

Monsignor,

It was with a feeling of most profound sorrow that I wrote to Your Excellency on September 26. This feeling of sorrow has been deepened since Your Excellency thought it was appropriate to ignore the remarks I took the liberty of making to you.

The cries of my conscience compel me to protest against your interpretation of the venerable decree which you obtained as a favor from the Sacred Congregation, and against the manner in which you are having it implemented.

I am protesting even more vigorously against the interpretation which you give to certain expressions found in the decree, for instance “should be convoked.” Your Excellency seems to imply “by my three adversaries, Brother Clouzet and Fathers Caillet and Roussel,” and then you give them the order to convoke the Chapter and to preside at it. I consider such a General Chapter to be illegitimate because of the illegality of its convocation.

My act of resignation of January 8, 1841, has always been contested; the proofs are there for anyone to see. The decree of His Holiness also witnesses to the truth of my statement. I am not defying the Church or the Holy See. On the contrary, because of a profound respect and an entire obedience, I protest against the abuses to which we are subjecting this venerable decree.

I have asked Your Excellency to revoke your orders, or at least to suspend them until this new incident can be judged by a competent authority. You have found yourself the judge in this case, probably because you believed the case was urgent. I can easily prove that this motive was entirely illusory.

It would be a very simple matter, Your Excellency, to revive the plan for a settlement proposed by Father Caillet. Even though it would be humiliating for me, I would accept it with good grace. I thank the Lord that in this entire business of my resignations I have never sought my own interests, but rather those of the glory of God, for the maintenance of the Society of Mary just as it has been approved by the Holy See.

I know Your Excellency is grieved to see a poor old man at the head of a Society of Mary which you seem to respect, which is developing remarkably, and you have every reason to. My capacity is very limited, and even if I had the competency, my strength is deserting me and I am rapidly nearing the tomb. I have wished and still wish to abdicate from my generalate, but I will do so only into the hands of people who are truly religious and sincerely devoted to the Society of Mary, who will guide it according to the spirit of its religious Constitutions, which are in no way contrary to the spirit of the Civil Statutes.

With all due respect, I am Your Excellency's most humble and most obedient servant.

G.-Joseph Chaminade

P.S. Oh, Your Excellency, what harm would there be in the order of religion and conscience if you were to at least suspend your orders? Your Excellency can see that I cannot suppress my protests, which my conscience as Founder and Superior General imperiously obliges me to make.

* * *

On October 4, Archbishop Donnet answers Father Chaminade that he had informed only his colleagues of the decree. "I have not had and cannot have anything to do with the convocation of the Chapter unless I receive a special delegation." The archbishop adds that it is not up to him either to delay or to block the holding of the Chapter (Agmar 7.6.319). Father Chaminade sends him a copy of a letter he had received from Father Bouet (Agmar 7.6.317). According to Father Bouet, the pastor of Cordes, Father Larivière had heard Our Lord say, "Father Chaminade had been chosen by him to found the Society of Mary; he had been given all necessary graces, but he had abused them and was laboring under an illusion. He had completely abandoned him, and by abandoning him, in turn, he would come to a miserable end." Father Bouet continues, "What I am about to add will surprise you, but I must say it. It concerns Father Roussel, and you can conclude that Our Lord would have shown him mercy which he could not find in you. When the priest in question asked Our Lord if he should reveal this to Father Roussel, he replied, 'Yes, tell him.' What you have just read will, according to all appearances, be published throughout the Society unless you prevent it by submitting to the decree from Rome" (Agmar 7.6.317).

1394. To Archbishop Donnet of Bordeaux

October 4, 1845, Bordeaux

Original, Agmar

Monsignor,

During your lengthy absence from Bordeaux, the Church of the Madeleine was placed at the disposal of four groups of people by Father Caillet, with Your Excellency's permission.

Father Bouet has charge of all the directors of the various groups of men and women. Your Excellency knows with what devotedness he carries out all of Father Caillet's orders, especially from the moment Your Excellency thought you had the power to dispense Father Caillet from his vow of obedience to his very legitimate Superior and to nullify the order I had given him to choose another confessor in town, one duly approved. Your Excellency also knows of the furious letters Father Bouet wrote to me at that time. But you still have not heard of the one which I received yesterday afternoon, entirely new in tone and very different in purpose. I have the honor of enclosing a copy. I will not permit myself in its regard any reflection and commentary.

Must I continue to suffer patiently the scandalous behavior to which my person has been subjected here at the Madeleine for so long? I am giving scandal because of my lack of faith and obedience to the Holy See. I find this impossible to believe. "Faith in the heart leads to justification, confession on the lips to salvation" [Romans 10:10].

I am with the most profound respect, Monsignor, the very humble and very obedient servant of Your Excellency.

G.-Joseph Chaminade

* * *

A last appeal to Archbishop Donnet is remarkable, especially because it is Father Chaminade's last profession of fidelity to the Church.

1395. To Archbishop Donnet of Bordeaux

October 7, 1845, Bordeaux

Original, Agmar

Monsignor,

The two letters with which Your Excellency has honored me, one of September 15 and the other of October 4, are different in two essential respects. I believe it is proper for me to point these out to you without entering into a discussion. The most I can permit myself is to make a few reflections on the Roman decree which you have obtained. The text reads, "Whether in consequence of the resignation handed in by Father Chaminade on January 8, 1841, someone must consider as vacant the office of Superior General of the Society of Mary, of which he is the Founder, and convoke a General Chapter in order to elect a new Superior General according to the Constitutions." This, Your Excellency, is the first part of the decree, and this first part embodies a principle and its consequence.

The principle. Because of my pure and simple act of resignation from the generalship on January 8, 1841, did the office of Superior General actually become vacant? My three adversaries and all those they have been able to convince have pounced upon this apparent possibility. The abdicating General has always protested against this, and for very good reasons. As you well know, Your Excellency, the very short reflections I intend to make are not an attack on the venerable decree, but rather on the convocation of a General Chapter because of the supposed vacancy of the office of the Superior General of the Society of Mary.

Under what circumstances should and must a General Chapter be convoked? Who has the authority to convoke it? I can think of only two cases relative to the Founder—that of the death of the actual Superior whose tenure is for life, and that of his resignation because of his advanced age. Article 17 of the Statutes has foreseen this case and states, “The Society acknowledges as its Founder and Superior for life, or until his voluntary resignation, Father. - - -.”

How can a resignation be voluntary when it is constantly being contested? In fact, my adversaries have never dared to produce it precisely because it has always been contested. And if it has not been directly contested for three years, this is because they only pretended to have fulfilled the condition under which I deposited it into their hands. When the Superior General detected in their lies and denials that they would not admit that a new General Administration had been appointed and accepted by him, he withdrew the aforementioned resignation in two authentic, written proposals.

No, Your Excellency, much as they would like to have it so, my resignation was not voluntary; it was deposited conditionally into their hands, and the violation of this deposit is a actual treason. I understand why my outspoken protests trouble my adversaries; it is because of the improper use they made of this act of resignation before the court of arbitration, to the point that they were labeled comedians. You will kindly dispense me, Your Excellency, from repeating this story. Also, Your Excellency must know of it; it is so shameful.

The decree continues, “Whether in consequence of the act signed by Father Chaminade on January 8, 1841, “someone must consider” as vacant the office of Superior General of the Society of Mary of which he is the Founder, etc.” I take the liberty, Your Excellency, of asking you how a person can interpret “someone must consider”; “someone” is a generic expression, and in that sense it includes all types of individuals. I am included in it, along with my adversaries, and you must recall, Your Excellency, that I look upon this act of resignation as truly valid before the Government, as completely legal in its form. I am not attacking the validity or the legality of the act itself; I am only saying that I placed it into the hands of the members of my council as a deposit which they have violated, and that this violation continues and becomes more serious the more they deny it. Is it not true that a gold piece has the same value in the pocket of the owner as in the hand of the pickpocket who has stolen it? If it can be shown to have been stolen, will the pickpocket be allowed to keep it? Will he be allowed to spend it? I think this analogy is clear enough. Now I have proven the nullity of this act of resignation (1) because of my continued resistance and (2) because of their refusal to produce the minutes of the council, in which it would be shown that the act was on deposit. If it is claimed that these two proofs, taken separately or together, are valueless, then I must ask for a proof.

If a person considers the Roman document as expressive of a doubt, then I am obliged, not as Your Excellency would oblige me, to accept the “someone must consider as vacant” the office of the Superior General of the Society of Mary—but to say *whether* I accept the “someone must, etc.” To this I reply that I cannot consider as vacant my office of Superior General without lying, even without committing a heinous lie, without deceiving the king at the same time as the pope; for, having been named Superior General by the king, I have a duty to perform, that of not delivering into dishonest hands the functions of my office as Superior General. Having been also named by the pope, I have a duty to perform, that of not delivering my functions into the hands of General Heads who would not be animated by the same principles in the order of the Catholic religion.

Several pious and enlightened people, Your Excellency, have come to me on their own or on your behalf and have asked me to submit humbly to the venerable decree. Your Excellency has even *entreated me* to do so. Well, Your Excellency, in your vast diocese is there a priest who has shown you more signs of respect, of submission and obedience to the Holy See, and therefore to the pope and to the Catholic Church? Is this not the doctrine I have preached all my life, and even at the peril of my life, before and during the Revolution which so convulsed France?

And in the present case, did I contradict my principles when Your Excellency sent me the Roman decree? When I immediately acknowledged reception of the document? Did I not add that I accepted it as an order from Jesus Christ himself?

Furthermore, Your Excellency, just because I have taken the liberty to make some comments to you on the nature and form of this venerable decree, does it necessarily follow that I am not submissive to the Holy See, that I am disobeying the pope? According to the most apparent and obvious meaning of the decree, I understand the intentions of the Holy See are not to force me to lie, to oblige me to allow into the administration of the Society some General Assistants whose teaching is false and erroneous—as I had the honor of exposing to Your Excellency in the very first letter I had the honor to write to you—and above all the ringleader of this entire matter, who combines false doctrine with morals that are more than suspect, as I had the honor to expose to Your Excellency in my first letter after your decision following the secret consultation with Father Caillet. No, Your Excellency, I cannot believe the Sovereign Pontiff has any such intentions. On the contrary, I believe I am giving His Holiness the greatest proof of my respectful devotedness and my entire obedience to the Holy Apostolic See by opposing the misuse that is being made of its decree.

The pious and enlightened people who have urged me to submit absolutely to the sacred decree—in line with the decision you made last year with respect to my resignations—understood, after I was able to explain my situation to them, that there was no other recourse in the present storm but to pray and to ask for prayers.

The only way to dissipate the storm is to put into effect the compromise plan which I have accepted. How often did M. Faye, one of Father Caillet's two witnesses, not declare that there was no other possibility of a reconciliation! How can conscience possibly object to such an admission? M. Faye thought he was faithfully interpreting your views and those of your respectable colleagues in the episcopacy, and I have written proof of their intentions in the matter. I am ready to consent to any sacrifice which my conscience will allow me.

Witness, Monsignor, the methods used by those who side with my adversaries in their search for success. The day before yesterday I sent you a letter from Father Bouet, the new president of all the Confraternities which meet at the Madeleine. I will not repeat any of the insults contained in that letter. What stratagems have been plotted and are still brewing at the Madeleine because I refuse to comply with their wishes! What is the spirit which is inciting them?

One person in whom I place great confidence reports that Your Excellency has taken steps with the Government to have them adopt my act of resignation. This I will accept if the Society, represented by the General Chapter of Saint-Remy, wishes to sever all relationship with me after being fully informed of all the circumstances. If the Society wishes to reject me, how could I not wish to reject it? I know of nothing I may have done to warrant such a separation. If it has been corrupted to the point of refusing my government or that which I could leave it after my death, it is my Christian duty to abandon it, to lament in silence, to abdicate and to put to use my title as priest in charge of the Madeleine, home of the Confraternities of both men and women. "It is good for me that I have been afflicted" [Psalm 119:71].

Concerning the conclusion, "one should convoke," my reasoning, Monsignor, is the same as for the principle.

I will stop here and thus avoid that lengthiness which must displease Your Excellency.

I am with the deepest respect, Monsignor, the very humble and very obedient servant of Your Excellency.

G.-Joseph Chaminade

P.S. In closing, Monsignor, I thought it might be useful to send Your Excellency a copy of a letter I have just received from M. Ravez the elder. When I wrote to this eminent lawyer, Father Caillet vehemently and clumsily opposed the planned settlement. Today, Your Excellency,

this plan enjoys the same authenticity as when I first accepted it. At the time, Your Excellency and your very respectable colleagues had no part in our miserable discussions. The complimentary decree which you obtained confuses everything. Should M. Faye feel like declaring himself on the question, he will most certainly admit this. Your Excellency, in the interests more of the Society of Mary than in mine, please bring to an end the disastrous current situation and to lift the interdict on all the priests of the Society who would desire to help me in my functions, etc. You can count on the very true and respectful devotedness I have for your sacred person more than on the highly hypocritical Father Roussel, whom I pointed out to you at the proper time as the sole ringleader of the revolt.

* * *

With a trembling hand Father Chaminade writes to Brother Clouzet, in one of the last handwritten letters which has been preserved.

1396. To Bro. Dominique Clouzet, Saint-Remy

October 7, 1845, Bordeaux

Autograph, Agmar

My dear Son,

Last week I sent Father Chevaux a copy of the protest I had just presented to the Archbishop of Bordeaux. His Excellency answered in a manner which brought a halt to that protest. My answer is in the copy which I am sending to you. Please give it to Father Chevaux; he may use it as he sees fit, according to the conduct of the Chapter.

The hour has come which will mark the downfall or the preservation of the Society of Mary.

Sincere greetings,

G.-Joseph Chaminade

P.S. If Father Chevaux is ill, Father Fontaine or any other priest of the Society can replace me; things must finally be settled, but settled well.

* * *

Finally, unaware of what had transpired in Saint-Remy, Father Chaminade writes to Father Meyer, giving him final instructions concerning the Chapter. Emotion stirs the soul of the Father at the thought that perhaps he would be cast out of the family by his own Sons. Twice he recalls the thought of the pope, the supreme judge. Finally, after struggling with indomitable courage to remain faithful to his conscience and to do his duty to the point that he scandalizes even his adversaries, who cannot understand the reason for his resistance, he has only one fear before God—not to have offered sufficient resistance!

1397. To Fr. Léon Meyer, Ebersmunster

October 10, 1845, Bordeaux

Original, Agmar

My dear Son,

Ever since I received your last letter of October 3, I have ceased to busy myself with the matter which will be discussed at Saint-Remy.

I have entrusted a letter to Father Chevaux addressed to all the directors of our houses. Father Chevaux is to communicate the contents of that letter to them, first to you, then if necessary to the other priests of the Society who are favorably disposed, and I believe that all are. He or some other priest will do this to avoid a schism, and if he should note that he has not rallied a good majority, he will protest in my name against the illegality of the Chapter. On the contrary, if the majority of the Society represented by its directors appoints a new Superior General on the strength of a resignation that is almost 5 years old, which has been contested from the moment I deposited it into the hands of my adversaries who have violated this deposit, etc.; if, I say, all the directors or nearly all want a successor purely and simply, I may not protest it for the simple reason that if the Society wants none of me, then I want none of the Society. My replacement should then not be called my successor; an intruder has never been called by this name. Let it be said that the pope will legalize everything. So be it!

In the midst of the struggle, my dear Son, you have adopted a wrong policy, that of refusing any major office in the Society and holding to this policy even at the height of the conflict. Actually, you had your brother take your place; you maintained that he would do better than you could. This is possible, but it is also very possible that Satan, who is at the head of this great disturbance, might say to one of the three, *Delegatus non potest delegare* [a delegate may not delegate].¹

In fact, my dear Son, if you are given a Superior General and Assistants of the same caliber as the three adversaries of the Society of Mary, you can expect great difficulties with your numerous and precious novitiate. Do you intend to spend the rest of your life supporting a bastard Society, one that is very illegitimate before God? Will you have recourse to the pope, etc.?

For the time being, my dear Son, I am leaving everything in the hands of the Lord and of his august Mother. I believe I have said and done what I could and should up to the present. I may be guilty of not having cried out sooner against the decision of the Archbishop of Bordeaux. If he was able to gain so much ground, this is only because I did not dare to prove openly that his first two decisions were null and void, as Canon Law states.

The only reason I am writing to you today is because I have just received a letter from the mayor of Puylaroque, district of Montauban, asking that I send him the qualifications of the men I am to provide by All Saints. Permission for this establishment was requested and granted three years ago. The mayor and the entire council of the commune adhere to the principles of our holy religion. The higher committee, speaking for the government, was always opposed to the granting of this establishment to the Society. I finally agreed with the Minister of Public Instruction; I promised to send personnel by All Saints. I suppose our enemies will spy and try to find some weakness in the arrangement, to denounce us once again. Please send me as soon as possible the people you think are available, with or without degrees. Brother France is very pious, they tell me, but he is short and appears timid. Give him the encouragement he needs and send him on. Also send the person from Ribeauvillé, the one who has a diploma, but find a capable substitute for him. They tell me Brother Hoffman finds great weaknesses in the former, so that his replacement might be preferable for our work. I do not need to name the other three or four whom you mention in your letter; send them on. Two with diplomas would have done temporarily; however, if you can send only one, at least there will be one important vacancy filled.

¹This actually happened, and young Fr. Meyer was not permitted to attend the chapter.

I will stop here, my dear Son; I embrace you very tenderly in the Immaculate Heart of Mary, our august Mother, where I believe you habitually take refuge.

G.-Joseph Chaminade

P.S. See to it, I ask you, that the diplomas are in order and that the people concerned do not forget to bring them; we must face the enemy.

* * *

From the General Chapter to The Second Reply from Rome

October 10, 1845 to December 31, 1845

When Father Chaminade was writing the following lines, the General Chapter in session at Saint-Remy on October 5 had done its work. What Father Chaminade had foreseen happened—on Father Caillet's right sat the unworthy Father Roussel. He had drawn up the procedure which was imposed on the Chapter formally forbidding capitulants to discuss the elections among themselves. According to law, this nullified the elections (Ferraris, Electio, IV, 5). On the other hand, although the Assistants had imposed silence on the other capitulants they themselves did not feel bound by this; they had "agreed among themselves that some things need explanation." "In spite of my reluctance," writes Father Roussel, "I was given that delicate mission" (letter of October 8, Agmar 7.6.330).

Among the great number of declarations on the subject, this is from a letter which Father Rothéa asked Father Lalanne to read at the General Chapter of 1858.

Among the great misdeeds for which the entire Society of Mary is responsible must be mentioned that of ingratitude and scorn, of treason and calumny, especially when these faults are committed by the Children of the family which was remarkable for its dignity and the loftiness of its ideals, and against a Father, a Father so worthy of esteem, veneration, love, obedience, and support. However, he was treated despicably, slandered, and dragged in the mud during the sessions of the General Chapter of 1845. Father Roussel had the audacity to wish to trap in the web of his ambitious plans, the fruit of his treason, of his blackest treason, several directors of the south and the north. He convinced us that Father Chaminade had lost his faculties, that he no longer desired to be at the head of his beloved family, even that he had taken a false path, and that he would plunge the Society into ruin if he were to govern it any longer. Today we must confess before God, and publicly, that we have sinned; when I say "confess before God, and publicly," I mean before all those who are members of the present Chapter (Agmar 8.8.464).

Soon after the Chapter, the Bishop of Saint-Claude wrote to Father Chaminade.

I knew very well that the directors (of the houses in my diocese) were all firmly determined to reelect you Superior General, and this helped quiet my fears a little regarding the outcome of the Chapter. Since then I have learned that the great majority of the voters were similarly inclined, but they were so adroitly maneuvered at Saint-Remy that they finally, sorrowfully and regretfully, chose a successor for you. However, it was difficult if not impossible for them to act otherwise after everything that had been heard from the lips of the heads who had been appointed to preside at the Chapter by the Archbishop of Bordeaux (November 5, 1845, Agmar 7.7.124).

Father Roussel gave them two alternatives—either to disobey the Holy See or to forsake the Good Father; the capitulants could no longer hesitate. Because Father Chevaux had declared that he was unwilling to assume the responsibility, Father Caillet was elected Superior General on October 7, 1845 (see H. Lebon: Dernières années du B. Père Chaminade, I, pp. 237-49. See also Agmar 1820.28). After being informed of the results of the election, Father Chaminade wrote to Father Caillet.

1398. To Fr. Georges Caillet, Saint-Remy

October 15, 1845, Bordeaux

Copy, Agmar

My dear Son,

I received your dispatches near the end of the morning of October 15 (Feast of Saint Theresa); I had someone read them to me, then I continued to dictate my letter.

Once that letter was finished, I had my secretary take down a letter for the Apostolic Nuncio. In the afternoon, after reciting Vespers and Compline, I thought you might like to know what I was writing to the Apostolic Nuncio. I will send you a copy by tomorrow morning, I hope, and this letter may still find you at Saint-Remy according to the date you gave me for your return to Bordeaux.

I greet you, my dear Son, most fraternally.

* * *

Father Chaminade protests against the holding of the Chapter and against the Assistants. He again broaches the subject of the plan for reconciliation and manifests his intention to resume his charge of the Chapel of the Madeleine and to continue to exercise his functions as Superior General of the other Orders, those he has founded and those still to be founded. "I say, "to be founded"; there is only one to be founded at the moment, that of the religious women of the Miséricorde. Their Constitutions need just a final touch."

1399. To the Apostolic Nuncio, Paris

October 16, 1845, Bordeaux

Copy, Agmar

Your Excellency,

The difficulties keep multiplying. Today, October 15, I was notified of the conclusions reached at the General Chapter; it was not thought necessary to send me the minutes.

This General Chapter was held at Saint-Remy (Haute-Saône) and was presided over by Fathers Caillet and Roussel and Brother Clouzet, my three adversaries who have banded together since the last meeting of the council when we had planned the procedure of my resignation according to the spirit and letter of our Constitutions; they banded together to remove me from office, and in such a fashion that the Society would henceforth treat me as if I were physically dead.¹ From that moment it was denied that my resignation was according to the Constitutions and the intentions of the Sovereign Pontiff, in order to make me appear so careless that article 481 of the Constitutions could punish me with a moral death which is comparable to physical death. What a sight! To see three rebel inferiors triumph over their Superior and thus prove that they are not the authors of the scandals which are rampant in Bordeaux and which will continue throughout France!

Against all plausibility, the Archbishop of Bordeaux has insisted that the venerable decree which he obtained should be considered as the definitive decision of the question of my two resignations from the generalate. And yet it is evident that Monsignor presented two documents to the tribunal of the Sovereign Pontiff which were completely different. My first case became entirely religious in substance because of my intervention and that, above all, of the

¹The official minutes of the Chapter do in fact declare this, and in these terms.

Daughters of Mary and of their Third Order, when my adversaries found themselves accused of practicing a false and erroneous doctrine. My second case dealt with a single point, the validity of my resignation in the opinion of the French Government.²

If the decree is a true decision, acknowledged as such by the Sovereign Pontiff, it follows that in France the Sovereign Pontiff is not only sovereign in matters of religion, but also in the temporal order and over the acts of the French Government. I had been given the assurance that the archbishop had taken every precaution so the Government would have no idea of the matter, and I will not be the first to divulge the tactic. I will take care to do nothing that touches the Archbishop of Bordeaux directly. I pity him, just as I pity the prelates who have been so imprudent as to side with His Excellency. But should the Government, or rather the Minister, ever complain that in spite of my resignation I have always had dealings with him in my capacity as Superior General,¹ and if the Minister of Public Instruction ever becomes aware that the Archbishop of Bordeaux himself presented a petition to the Minister invoking my name as Superior General to obtain some favor—that is, exemption from military service for your young people who are subject to the law—and if it were simply a matter of the improper use of that old resignation in a court of law, the complaint would be serious enough. In how many ways can the Government learn that I have never admitted, that in conscience I cannot ever admit, that any use of that ancient act of resignation of January 8, 1841, is a continual violation of a deposit, that it is tainted with treason as I had to declare to the judge of the court of arbitration (M. Ravez the elder). Can I deny, Your Excellency, that this act of resignation, which was perfectly legal, was not on deposit? Can the Archbishop of Bordeaux ask me to lie?

I know my adversaries have always confronted me with the threat of the dissolution of the Society of Mary by the Government if I should complain of their opposition to me. Sometimes I have replied that it would perhaps be better to have the Society dissolved than to have it denatured and plagued by the grave abuses which they had introduced. I am forever reminding the Archbishop of Bordeaux that he is running the risk of compromising himself and the hierarchy of France. Is this insignificant in these times of ours?

When I explained to the Archbishop of Bordeaux that the Roman decree was not a decision, I was always careful to add that it was a complimentary decree, and I sometimes explained what I mean by “complimentary decree.” I said his consultation with the Holy See was a stealthy procedure. Why was it stealthy? Because it took place at the time when the plan for reconciliation had been proposed, when I had accepted the plan, and it is almost evident that the Sacred Congregation did not intend to pronounce itself on the first case he had presented to the pope. In spite of all his negotiations, the Archbishop of Bordeaux could not obtain the decision he wanted; he then discarded the plan for reconciliation which he had merely tolerated and sent the consultation to Rome, which is mentioned in the decree. All this can be made known if necessary.

It is not the Sovereign Pontiff who compromised himself by the form of the decree which emanated from the Sacred Congregation, but rather the archbishop by the misuse he is making of the decree. For this reason I protested to His Excellency against the convocation of the General Chapter of the Society of Mary, especially one presided over by Fathers Caillet and Roussel and Brother Clouzet. What a pitiful interpretation of the Roman decree! It goes contrary to the plan for reconciliation.

Father Roussel was there, it is true; he was needed by the archbishop to formulate an agenda for the Chapter which would guarantee the success he wanted. He has always been the ringleader of that odious plot; his crafty and ingenious mind had begun the attack, and he was needed to carry off the fight with honor. He is a fine speaker, with a sophistic manner, a response to every objection, and is ashamed of nothing that will help him attain the objectives set by his

²This distinction between the two cases seem to stem from the imagination of Fr. Chaminade alone. About the first case, see the letter to the pope, February 26, 1845.

¹Very recently, in the case of the foundation of Puylaroque (see letter no. 1397).

ambition. If only his objectives were honorable! I will say nothing more. If he is exonerated here of all his criminal and sacrilegious deeds, what assignment will he be given? Will he return to Réalmont, or become superior of the establishment of Saint-Remy? These are the positions which Father Caillet and Brother Clouzet had offered to him to compensate for the loss of the office of Head of Instruction, as they advised when they agreed to a series of nominations which I had in mind.¹ Saint-Remy is the finest and the largest of the establishments of the Society of Mary. Two hundred people can easily be lodged there. Actually there are about 100 boarders and 75 religious. How easy it would be for him to give vent to all his passions, especially because as Superior he will be subject to no inspection. Your Excellency, can I allow such infamous actions?

“He will be obliged to give in,” they said. Oh! Your Excellency, if only you and His Holiness were aware of all the means they have used to prevent me from speaking out! Their principal means is to ask me to yield in the interest of peace, to show me the eternal crown which my sacrifice will earn me, etc. At other times they threaten me with hellfire and the terrible judgments of God. At the moment they offer me the joys of an old age which is respected and provided with all the comforts which reverent, submissive Children can provide.

In the letter announcing that he had been elected Superior General, Father Caillet tactfully tells me that I will be blessed with a double happiness, one being that I will no longer need to “bother myself with temporal affairs.” Your Excellency, this is their objective, to have everything at their disposal and to do with it as they please. I have always told them that the vow of poverty in the Society of Mary is not only an individual commitment, but that it is also a collective one; the entire Society of Mary has made a collective vow of poverty. This is one of the reasons I have resisted so strenuously. They think they have won, and Father Caillet tells me that I will no longer need to worry about temporal affairs. But as I used to tell him, do you realize that temporalities are rarely isolated affairs? Are they not mixed? Has the vow of poverty no spiritual or religious aspect? What is the reason for the decadence of so many religious Orders which used to edify the Church? Was it not their great riches? If the Society of Mary has possessions, is this not—after caring for the religious according to the Constitutions—to spread our works according to the spirit of our Constitutions and according to the purposes prescribed by faith? Brother Clouzet, the Head of Temporalities, has in his name assets of at least 2,000 or 3,000 francs, and he has never taken the steps necessary to guarantee them to the Society to whom they belong. Most of the time, especially since our discussions have become more lively, he spends the funds of the Society as he pleases. It would be easy to create a schism, just as they had done between what we call the Midi of France and Bordeaux. They and their friends could be very well off, while the true members of the Society of Mary could go begging, as we say. Shortly before the decree, Brother Clouzet threatened in writing to bankrupt the Society if I did not yield.

This letter would be too long, Your Excellency, if I were to give you all the evidence that comes to mind now to prove (1) that the venerable decree is a complimentary document and decides nothing with respect to my resignations, and (2) that the decree was obtained after secret consultations.

I could add that the two decisions¹ on the strength of which the Archbishop of Bordeaux has hounded me relentlessly, after having ardently espoused the cause of the members of my council who had revolted against me, are not only null and void because they are based only on the secret consultations; there is more than that. His Excellency declares himself openly as the First Superior of the establishments which are in his diocese, which is against the Statutes given to the Society of Mary by the Government. The Society acknowledges the archbishop as First Superior of the houses in his diocese in the order of religion, and no more. Here is the text of the

¹To the council of the General Administration.

¹Of July 30, 1844.

law of the Government. Article 11, “All the establishments of the Society acknowledge Their Excellencies the Archbishops and Bishops of the dioceses in which they are situated as their First Superiors in the spiritual order, and the Superior General retains the right of immediate action over all his members, who will everywhere follow their rules and customs.”

Until now, Your Excellency, I have preferred to tolerate all his abuses of power, even when these abuses were directed against the Government, because I have no doubt that the Lord has allowed Satan to stir up this great disturbance against the Society of Mary in order to purify it along with its Founder, and thus to prepare it to carry out the purposes of its institution today, when it is solicited on all sides and even by foreign countries whose rulers are Catholic. But by the very fact that I have had to suffer for the expiation as much of my sins of infidelity in the exercise of the functions that Jesus Christ and his Vicar on earth have entrusted to me, as of all those of the members of the Society, in order to stop the encroachments of hell, I have the strict duty to reveal to Your Excellency and to His Holiness through you the abuse to which the venerable decree has been subjected, and to ask His Holiness to define its precise meaning so that it may not be considered as a decision relating to the first case brought before this court, and to denature its meaning by the various interpretations given to it.

For instance, the decree says, “A Chapter should be convoked for the election of a new Superior General according to the Constitutions.” Where does it say in the Constitutions that the new Superior General² must be president of the Chapter, especially if he has reached that position by fraud?

The new Superior is chosen from among all the priests of the Society. The former General could have been reelected, if he had so desired; in fact, all the capitulants said this was their wish. On the other hand, he could not allow this because a reelection supposes a resignation or a withdrawal from power for 10 years, which is out of the question in his case, for his tenure is for life. Now is it not more evident than the sun at high noon that the old resignation of January 8, 1841, although pure and simple and legal, was not purely and simply deposited into the hands of his council, but had its reservations? Why did they not produce it in the last 5 years, if it was purely voluntary? I challenge its validity. I have always considered it null. Why did they not check its validity before convoking a Chapter?

Please excuse me, Your Excellency, I have just strayed a little from what I wished to tell you. What an interpretation Father Caillet has just given to that expression, “election of a new Superior General” by applying it to himself: I must be that new Superior General! It could have been the former one, but it must be me! I am afraid the burden is too great and I must submit; this is the meaning of the decree. And in effect, “God has changed my heart.”¹ Even at my age, I cannot understand how a person can have so little tact. I do know, however, that this can be expected from one who usurps authority.

M. Faye, counsel for the Archbishop of Bordeaux and for the defense of the three insurgents against their Superior, has told everyone interested, “There is only one way of extricating ourselves from the abyss of confusion into which we have fallen, and that is the plan for reconciliation which was proposed and which I accepted last Pentecost and which has lost none of its authenticity.” If it is the will of Our Holy Father the Pope, Your Excellency, I will be willing to accept it again. But I must confess that I can see another plan which can extricate the Sovereign Pontiff and our Archbishop of Bordeaux and all his illustrious colleagues. They would like to have the full responsibility fall on my three Assistants, and especially on Father Roussel.

²Should Fr. Caillet, the newly elected Superior General, have presided at the chapter from its opening day?

¹Taken from a letter from Fr. Caillet to Fr. Bouet which the latter showed to Fr. Chaminade.

Our honorable prelates now realize that I was telling the truth when I wrote in the very beginning, “Father Roussel is the ringleader in this matter.” For a while they thought I was exaggerating, but they are now convinced that what I told them was an understatement. Your Excellency, I cannot enter into these new details today. I will try to do so tomorrow. I would like to conclude my discussion of the present situation.

Father Caillet announced his arrival in Bordeaux for October 24 to take up his functions as Superior General of the Society of Mary; he also asked pardon for the slight lapses in kindness and humility he may have been guilty of toward me due to the liveliness of our discussions. To avoid all scandal, I will receive Father Caillet and his three Assistants in the house next to the church, where there used to be a small ecclesiastical novitiate. I will then take charge of the Madeleine, which I have never abandoned and which is in no way dependent on the authority of any Order I have founded, but to which have been attached all the Confraternities of men and women, long before the existence of the Society of Mary. I have thus informed the Archbishop of Bordeaux and the Missionaries of Saint Jacques, who preached at the Madeleine during the absence of Father Caillet.

Father Caillet alone will exercise the functions of Superior General over all the establishments of the Society, except for that of Barsac.² As for the novitiates, I will ask him to see only that a certain number of candidates will be available for teaching and to assign them where needed, and this until the Government has spoken on the validity of my resignation, if he wants such a decision. I do not wish to attack, but I will continue to defend myself. My conscience obliges me to do so.

Everything that needs to be settled today is of the temporal and civil order. Today Their Excellencies the Bishops and Archbishops have no reason to be involved in our affairs, and they most certainly will not want to do so. I do not wish to rule concurrently with Father Caillet so that there will be no division of authority which would cause trouble in the Society. I alone will continue to exercise my functions as Superior General of the other Orders I have or will found. I say “will found”; there is only one at the present time, that of the religious women of the Miséricorde. Little remains to be done, merely to touch up their Constitutions, and I will do this as soon as I have a little peace.

Father Caillet, his First Assistant, Father Chevaux, and the other priests who have worked with him may continue to exercise their ministry at the Madeleine until further orders without prejudice to what I will do myself. I hope I will never be responsible for any trouble.

Should Father Caillet need to have recourse to the Minister of Public Instruction or to the local authorities, he can confer with me to avoid any conflict in policy, and I hope that my three Assistants will finally open their eyes to their past conduct. This is what I desire, and this is what I and more than a thousand other people ask of God.

I am most respectfully. . . .

* * *

Father Chaminade claims the convocation of the Chapter and its proceedings are irregular and illegitimate. He asks to see the minutes of the Chapter.

²No doubt because the archbishop had taken it under his authority.

1400. To the Apostolic Nuncio, Paris

October 17, 1845, Bordeaux

Copy, Agmar

Your Excellency,

I had the honor of offering you guarantees that the pope and the archbishops and bishops need not be implicated in the discussions with the Government; I agree perfectly with their views on that score.¹ I have all the proofs with me, but there may be danger in trying to send them to you. I will not attempt to do so unless Your Excellency orders it. Moreover, that one document which I added to my petition to the Sovereign Pontiff must have impressed you.²

To contest the usurpation which Father Caillet has made of the generalship, I need only to prove that the convocation and the holding of the Chapter are irregular and unlawful. Furthermore, I always contested that old resignation of January 8, 1841; it is not a pure and simple resignation.

I can prove the irregularity and the illegality of the General Chapter because my adversaries themselves have convoked it and presided over it, which would be a serious crime in the eyes of the Government and which they could not justify by calling the archbishops their collaborators. But I have the means of exonerating Their Excellencies. However, I do not see how I can justify the Archbishop of Bordeaux in the Barsac matter¹ and the Archbishop of Albi in the matter of the novitiate at Réalmont.² Nevertheless, perhaps I will succeed if my adversaries are not prudent enough to separate themselves from Their Excellencies.

Does it not follow that because Father Caillet has usurped the title of Superior General of the Society of Mary, the Holy See will not recognize him as such, will not give him its approval, and as a result the privileges which it had graciously accorded me will not pass to him as my legitimate successor? I do not intend to revive my resignation of January 8, 1841, as the venerable decree supposes in its second part. I never did resign purely and simply, although the written resignation may be pure and simple. They have violated a deposit, and is this violation not a crime, and is not such a crime sufficient for the Holy Father to withhold his approbation and favors from Father Caillet?

I know very clearly, Your Excellency, that they will continue to deny that there were any preliminaries or any aftermath to the resignation of January 8, 1841, written and signed by me. In the first place, these denials are not proofs, especially when a person considers the people, most especially Father Roussel, the instigator or better the leader of their aggression against me and the base motives which animate them. Secondly, the register of the council should contain the account of the procedure followed in my two resignations, the one according to our religious Constitutions and the other written and signed by me to present the truth of my resignation to the Government. In this there is nothing contrary to the views of the Government; the Government knows I am a Catholic priest and I have always wished to follow the laws of my religion. Let my adversaries produce this register of the council; Father Roussel, and not Brother Bonnefoi, took charge of it; Brother Bonnefoi was Secretary General at the time, but he was appointed director of the new establishment at Barsac.³ Let the register be produced! More than a year ago the Superior General insisted that Father Caillet produce it; he complained to the Archbishop of Bordeaux about his constant refusal. While the Superior complained from time to time because of Father Caillet's refusal to let him see the register, the latter took a fearsome oath to be rid of these

¹See the last part of the preceding letter.

²A reference to Fr. Roussel's confession of January 22, 1845.

¹See letter no. 1383.

²Where the archbishop left Fr. Roussel after his dismissal.

³Bro. Bonnefoi was named director of Barsac only on January 22, 1841; he himself wrote the minutes of January 7.

importunities; in fact, he never did allow him to see the document. Had the minutes been revealed, all the difficulties which are the cause of these scandals would have been resolved, for either the register reports on my actions at the time of the resignations or it makes no mention of them. If they are reported, I no longer need to deny anything; if they are not reported, who is to blame? Government law would be very severe in the face of such an omission; I will not quote it here for the sake of brevity.

Because Father Roussel still continues to direct the Society of Mary—for Father Caillet is Superior General in name only—I presume they will soon qualify as exaggerated my explanation of the word “election” used in the decree and draw their own conclusions. What I said was inspired by a letter from Father Bouet, to whom Father Caillet or some other person had revealed the election, and I answered in a similar manner. I still have the letter and the reply.

Why does Father Caillet not send me the minutes of his nomination? It is his own true title; does he perhaps fear there are some irregularities?

I am asking you again, Your Excellency, to express to Our Holy Father the Pope or to the Sacred Congregation the assurance of my most profound respect and obedience to their orders; my sentiments are those I have for Jesus Christ himself, whom I keep almost habitually before my eyes especially when I need to deal with important matters such as the one occupying us now. Your Excellency will judge whether you should write to the Archbishop of Bordeaux and ask him to give me the liberty I had before. Order would soon be reestablished. Or send my letters as soon as possible to His Holiness and ask him to tell me what I should do.

I am with the most profound respect. . . .

* * *

After having written to the nuncio on October 17, 1845, Father Chaminade receives a letter from Father Fontaine, who informs him of what happened at the Chapter. He writes, “On several occasions, it was said to the members of the Chapter that you were opposed to the execution of the decree, that you were protesting, etc.” This leads to two letters, one to Father Caillet and the other to Archbishop Donnet, in which he again protests against the Chapter, against his Assistants, and against Father Roussel.

1401. To Fr. Georges Caillet, Saint-Remy

October 18, 1845, Bordeaux

Original, Agmar

My dear Son,

Yesterday you received a copy of the letter which I had the honor to send to the Apostolic Nuncio in Paris, and since I had promised him a second one for the next day, I thought I should send you a copy; you will find it enclosed.

In the interval—yesterday was October 17—I received a letter from Father Fontaine dated October 13 from Saint-Remy in which among other things he reports, “Your opinions and feelings were made known to them. At various times the capitulants were told that you were opposed to the enforcement of the decree, that you protested, etc.” My dear Son, I not only did not oppose the enforcement of the decree—much less did I protest against it—but I received it with the same respect and the same submission with which I would have received it from Our Lord Jesus Christ. I protested only against the abuse which they wished to make of this venerable decree, and according to Father Fontaine, the abuse was committed during the Chapter itself. I protest against your nomination as Superior General of the Society of Mary, against the nomination of Father Chevaux as Head of Zeal, against the nomination of Father Fontaine as Head of Instruction, and against that of Brother Clouzet as Head of Temporalities.

This protest will be sent to our Apostolic Nuncio in Paris, asking him to forward it to His Holiness Our Holy Father the Pope, and similar protests will be sent to the Government of the king, if you have the audacity to accept the functions along with your so-called Assistants. I hope you will finally stop compromising Their Excellencies the Archbishops by stopping purely and simply your struggle against me, and that you will seek only to convert Father Roussel and have him return to the Madeleine where, if he is truly converted, I hope to save him body and soul for time and for eternity.

With this hope, please accept, my dear Son, my tender embrace.

G.-Joseph Chaminade

* * *

This letter forcefully recalls the role played by Father Roussel. Father Chaminade adds the other protests contained in the preceding letter; he tells the archbishop he will protest to the Government if he obtains permission to install Father Caillet as Superior General.

1402. To Archbishop Donnet of Bordeaux

October 20, 1845, Bordeaux

Copy, Agmar

Monsignor,

In the interest of Your Excellency and of your illustrious colleagues in the episcopacy, to whom I am truly devoted, I resort to the pen.

Father Roussel was dismissed from his office as Head of Instruction which he held in the Society of Mary, reduced to the condition of an ordinary member of the Society and sent to the Madeleine to be employed according to his talents. This dismissal took place February 11, 1845. Father Roussel recognized the importance of the motives which dictated the dismissal; he wrote to me that he accepted it and that he would relinquish his title to the Archbishop of Albi. However, the Archbishop of Albi had never conferred this title upon him. The prelate must have acted as a proxy.

The dismissal of Father Roussel was very legitimate, both on the part of the acting authority and also because of the motives behind the action. From the point of view of authority, it was recognized by the Archbishop of Besançon and even by Your Excellency. Canon Law is very explicit on this question. The Archbishop of Besançon had explained it to Father Chevaux in a letter which he was good enough to write to him from Paris when the latter consulted him about the obedience he owed to me. On this point civil law does not seem to differ from Canon Law. As to the motives of the dismissal, there are two types: the first are apparent and, although less forceful and solid in principle, must be used, and they were; the others are more imperative but less apparent, and it was believed proper to omit them.

The questions of the dismissal of Father Roussel was a very delicate one for me. On the one hand, I was very certain to displease both Your Excellency and Father Caillet, whose cause you had espoused against me because there was no longer a General Administration composed of the required three members; on the other hand, both my conscience and the laws of the Government of the king made it a strict duty for me to proceed with the dismissal.

What could I do in this most delicate situation? I asked Father Chevaux to write the preambles of the act of dismissal and to choose from the many reasons which he knew those which were the least injurious to the reputation of Father Roussel. I still possess these preambles to the document in Father Chevaux's handwriting. I limited myself as strictly as I could to the same arguments in my resistance to Father Caillet during the entire time he opposed the plan for reconciliation which he himself had presented very authentically and almost solemnly, but I frequently remarked to him how improper it was to speak to me about the uncertainty of my right

to dismiss Father Roussel; how in the plan it is much better not to speak either for or against it, and that in speaking of it some indiscreet person with some knowledge of the previous conduct of Father Roussel could bring about the loss of this young priest rather than his conversion and his return to obedience.¹

Permit me, Your Excellency, to tell you what I have frequently said to Father Caillet. You wish to justify Father Roussel, and you are taking the means to destroy him. In spite of my objections you have obstinately wished to give these men the right to convoke this General Chapter and to preside over it; indeed, this General Chapter has taken place and my three adversaries have presided over it; they affirmed that I was insubordinate in not enforcing the Roman decree, whereas because of my inviolable devotion to the Holy See I oppose the misuse of this venerable decree. If you say, Your Excellency, that it should be enforced as you understand it, it should have been delayed until a new decision had been reached.

And Your Excellency believes you should proceed! They told me you have obtained a permission from the Government to install Father Caillet. I did not believe this. I do not want to think how imprudent that would be. But if that were the case, I should immediately be obliged to protest. I would protest the validity of the nomination or the election of Father Caillet; whatever may happen, Father Caillet would never be my successor, at least in the order of religion.

Everything I have told you here I have written to the Apostolic Nuncio in considerable detail. I have requested His Excellency to forward to the Holy See, to Our Holy Father the Pope, all the documents which I took the liberty to send him and earnestly to petition him to point out to me the line of conduct which I am to follow in the confusion resulting from this matter.

Do you not believe Father Roussel is running some risk by being brought into all our discussions? I will take every possible precaution not to touch on the main point, but can I prevent someone from suspecting it, especially if I am obliged to produce the first letter which I wrote to Your Excellency,¹ a copy of which was sent to the two respectable prelates of Albi and Besançon more than a year ago? I then described Father Roussel to you and told you that I had the proof of everything I was saying. I can keep silent about greater infamies which happened later, but I will not be able to prevent producing the proof which I offered to you and which you have never been willing to admit.

Have I reason to fear that Your Excellency might be compromised, and with you the higher clergy of France? To avoid these evils, as soon as I was positively aware of the ruse used to have the Chapter side with Father Caillet against the well-expressed leaning of all the capitulants toward their Founder and Father, I immediately wrote a letter to Father Caillet, a copy of which is enclosed. If Father Caillet has left before receiving it, I will send a copy to Father Romain, whom he has designated to replace him, and have him read it on his return. If he has enough prudence, he will pause before acting. I will make my protest to the Government. I will never attack, but I believe that I am obliged to defend myself; my conscience imperiously commands me to do so. If I should die in the attempt, this cause would seem worth it.

I am with the deepest respect. . . .

* * *

¹See letter no. 1376.

¹Letter no. 1320.

Father Romain had replaced Father Caillet at the Madeleine during his absence. Father Chaminade wants to be certain that the documents destined for Father Caillet reach him.

1403. To Fr. Jean-Baptiste Romain, Bordeaux

October 20, 1845, Bordeaux

Original, Agmar

My dear Son,

I am sending to Father Caillet the enclosed documents; two letters written in succession to the Apostolic Nuncio in Paris, then my protest against his election or nomination to the Generalate of the Society of Mary. Perhaps he left Saint-Remy before the arrival of my dispatches. If so I ask you, and if necessary I order you, to give them to him immediately upon his arrival, and I make you responsible for all the trouble which could result from failing to do so.

My dear Son, to avoid giving you more instructions I am sending you a copy of the letter I wrote to the Archbishop of Bordeaux; give this copy to Father Caillet along with the other documents.¹ If Father Caillet has received my dispatches before leaving Saint-Remy and if after reflecting upon them he has delayed his departure, send him a copy of my letter to the Archbishop of Bordeaux. My dear Son, you may make your own copies of the documents I am sending.

I greet your paternally.

G.-Joseph Chaminade

* * *

In spite of these protests, Father Chaminade prepares two letters in which he makes the largest possible concessions, one to Father Caillet and the other to the directors of the establishments of the Society of Mary.

1404. To Fr. Georges Caillet, Bordeaux

October 22, 1845, Bordeaux

Original, Agmar

My dear Son,

Upon your arrival at the Madeleine, Father Romain has been charged to give you the copies of the two letters I felt obliged to write to the Apostolic Nuncio to be forwarded to His Holiness, in case you did not receive them at Saint-Remy before your departure for Bordeaux.

You will have read in them my humble submission to every decree coming from His Holiness and from the Holy See. I am persuaded that I can see two different meanings in the last decree, and precisely because of my inviolable attachment to the Holy See and to every order which comes from it, I have resisted only the part which appears to me to be excessive.

However, you could have a different interpretation. By an inspiration of the Spirit of the Lord and without perceiving the distinctions which I see in it, the Chapter in session may also have interpreted it differently and adopted the Roman decree in its entirety and submitted to it, and therefore I am far from blaming the elections which have just taken place.

In view of this, I told the Apostolic Nuncio that if you returned as Superior General, I would immediately yield the generalate without participating at all. But that is not enough; the entire Society must be informed, and through it all who could have known of our difficulties and could have been more or less scandalized.

¹Notice with what fairness Fr. Chaminade defends himself, revealing to his adversaries everything he had written about them, so conscientious is he about doing only his duty.

In my protest I told you, my dear Son, that I would make a similar protest to be sent to the Government. I wrote it immediately, but I did not send it to Father Romain. You can read it if you will, but it will not be sent. In no way do I want to compromise the Archbishop of Bordeaux. I prefer to keep a profound silence on that point; my conscience is not at all concerned here. It was for the protest which was sent to His Holiness—at least I believed it was.

I will also send to the entire Society the enclosed circular in case you become Superior General with your two excellent Assistants.

I heartily embrace you and them, my dear Son.

G.-Joseph Chaminade

* * *

1405. To the Superiors of the Establishments Of The Society of Mary

Bordeaux, October 22, 1845

Original, Agmar

To my dear Children,

The Superiors of the Establishments of the Society of Mary.¹

Oh my dear Children, how the news which I have received fills me with joy! How the Spirit of God, the spirit of faith has had you adopt my way of thinking! May God be forever blessed, this God our Savior whose name I greatly desire to be praised in time and eternity!

I had written to you through Father Chevaux.² I had revealed to you my fears that there would be a schism in the Society. During the Chapter and in the midst of fervent prayers, all of you have expressed this supernatural sentiment in your hearts, “Long live, long live the Roman decree; we submit to the Roman decree; let the elections begin!” You wanted to reelect me, but I had told you I did not want to be reelected. Amid this confusion you heard these wonderful words, “You are responsible to God and to the Society for your votes.” Then all of your votes converged on Father Caillet as Superior General of the Society of Mary. Then you have named in succession the three Assistants: Fathers Chevaux and Fontaine and Brother Clouzet, the Heads of Zeal, Instruction, and Temporalities.

What has impressed me most and what I consider a miracle in the supernatural order is the change of heart which God has performed in Father Caillet, and he himself told me about it. Let us say, “*Digitus Dei hic est*, the hand of God is here.”

My dear Children, share my sentiments, submit with love and confidence to Father Caillet. God will thereby be glorified and the Society of Mary saved.

On my own initiative I am writing these lines to you, and without recalling the conclusion of the letter Father Fontaine wrote to me on October 13; with surprise, rereading the letter, I see at the end, “You will fill them with happiness by blessing them, by removing from their minds the sorrowing thought that their Good Father disapproves of their conduct and by surrounding them always with your paternal tenderness.” Oh no, my dear Children, I do not disapprove of your conduct because I am writing to you on my own initiative. You are much more worthy of my paternal tenderness, and I promise you (1) to remember you always to the Lord and to his august Mother and (2) to watch that our dear Constitutions may always and everywhere be observed with great exactitude and that the abuses which might have been introduced into the Society might be suppressed according to the rules of prudence—in a word, that the Society, tested and purified by a great disturbance which God has allowed, may reach the goal which God had in view at its foundation.

¹See letter no. 1429.

²Letter no. 1391.

And so, my dear Children, in the effusion of my paternal tenderness toward you, I give you my paternal blessing. May the blessing of Almighty God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit come upon you and remain with you forever!

G.-Joseph Chaminade

P.S. I ask each one of you, my dear Children, to communicate this letter to all your fellow religious in your communities; I had them in mind when I gave you my paternal blessing.

* * *

Friday, October 24, Father Caillet read Father Chaminade's letters and visited him at Sainte-Anne. Father Chaminade noted a change in Father Caillet (see letter no. 1429 to Bishop Chamon). Father Caillet ordered Father Chaminade to leave the novitiate of Sainte-Anne the very next day, for his presence seemed "extremely harmful to regularity and obedience." Father Roussel was sent to the novitiate at Réalmont. On the morning of Sunday, October 6, Father Chaminade entered the Madeleine, where he was to live out his life. In the following letter, he acknowledges the reception of the minutes of the Chapter.

1406. To Archbishop Donnet of Bordeaux

October 29, 1845, Bordeaux

Copy, Agmar

Monsignor,

I have the honor to acknowledge reception of the minutes of the sessions which took place at Saint-Remy for the nomination of a Superior General of the Society of Mary and of his Assistants, which Your Excellency sent me on the evening of October 25. About a quarter of an hour later, Father Caillet came and read to me, rather rapidly, a copy of the letter His Excellency the Minister of Public Instruction had sent to Your Excellency concerning these minutes, asking you to enforce their contents.

Your Excellency could not have made a better choice to carry out these orders than Father Caillet. He did so immediately, both in what concerned me and also all the members of the community of Sainte-Anne without any exception, and just as scrupulously as he executed the various orders and decisions of Your Excellency last year, such as withholding the documents of the Society of Mary, enforcing the interdict on all the priests of the Society who might wish to help in my work as Superior General, the status quo, and all the services which that involved.

With the help of grace, I have obeyed all these former and very trying commands; with the same confidence in the grace of the Lord, in my room in Bordeaux I will obey all the new ones, although they are much more rigorous than the first. They may be compared to a dismissal pronounced by His Excellency the Minister of Public Instruction for some misbehavior in the exercise of my duties. This conduct of His Excellency in my regard seems completely contrary to the sentiments he showed in his letter of last July 9. In this short interval he must have been turned against me. For lack of knowledge, I cannot discuss this.

This move most certainly involves my resignation of January 8, 1841, which is basically invalid but whose nullity I can demonstrate only by reasons and facts which would lead to a great public scandal in Bordeaux and in a great number of prominent places in France. I prefer to keep silence and to suffer and lament. Up until now, I have been able to support the Society of Mary and the other works which the Lord has given me the grace to found and to maintain. I have been stopped by a higher force. This higher force affects even the works of God, but only because God permits this. I humbly adore the dispositions of Providence which needs no one to accomplish its impenetrable designs. Before acting, I will wait for new orders.

Your Excellency, I will continue to take every precaution, especially with Brother Clouzet, the Head of Temporalities or the General Steward.

The minutes of the General Chapter are full of irregularities, but its convocation is even more irregular. What is particularly shocking is to see Father Roussel act as examiner and finally as secretary at the last session of the Chapter, at the presidential table, after his very legal dismissal of last February 11.

I must comment here, Your Excellency, on one of the items in the letter you sent me where you speak of sending the minutes of the General Chapter “to all your venerable colleagues who have in their dioceses establishments of men or women who depend upon the Society.” You certainly will not object if I send to Their Excellencies and to the Apostolic Nuncio true copies of the letter which I am now writing to you.

A resignation by Father Caillet would remedy many evils before God and before others. It would be honorable for him and, with your cooperation, I would place him in a position about which he would not need to blush. If Father Caillet does not have the courage to resign, I hope Your Excellency will make my position tolerable.

I am with the deepest respect. . . .

P.S. Having ended this letter, I thought it would be good to show it to a businessman of the city who comes frequently to the Madeleine. He is informed of everything that has happened. After reading it carefully, he said, “The archbishop will be very displeased with your letter; you will be confined to your room.” Then I asked him, “What have you found in the letter which could so offend His Excellency? Can my conscience allow me not to defend the works of God?” “No,” he replied, “but I assure you that you will be under interdict and confined to your room.” He was then called away and left me.

I conclude from two interviews I have had, one with this person and another with two others, that the treason against me was hatched and, so to speak, consummated by Father Roussel in the most subtle and refined manner imaginable. I have learned that he used what he calls my written resignation of January 8, 1841, to mislead the Court of Arbitration and at the same time the entire city, and if the venerable Roman decree with the assistance of the Holy Spirit had not expressed a doubt, the absolute interpretation which Your Excellency persists in giving it would have been the true sense. If Your Excellency desires, I believe I am able to give a fairly coherent history of all the treasonable methods used during almost 5 years by Father Roussel. But if the Government should learn of this, the matter could become serious. I am convinced, Your Excellency, that you should persuade Father Caillet to resign.

* * *

On October 25, the day Father Caillet ordered Father Chaminade to leave Sainte-Anne, he also officially notified by a circular to all the religious the results of the election at the General Chapter, “regularly convoked in virtue of the Decree from the Sacred Congregation of Bishops and Regulars, dated July 30, 1845.” This circular rendered homage to Father Chaminade just as the Society of Mary had the right to expect.

Raised up by the Spirit of God in the difficult times in which we are living, in order to give to the Church a group of new workers who by adapting themselves to all the needs would work by all possible means to prepare for the Lord a perfect people, he possesses abundantly those gifts which come from on high. All of us, my dear Children, have admired the vivacity of his faith, all have felt the unction of his charity, the ingratiating kindness of his zeal, the wisdom of his counsels. What can a person say of the Constitutions which he gave us as a testimony of his love for us? After the praise showered upon them by the Holy See, our words would be rather cold. Age may have sapped his strength, but it has not lessened his courage or his devotedness; it merely

contributed to his ardent desire to see us walk along the beautiful paths which Providence, through him, points out to us. This very desire has aroused some fears in him; all of us will strive to dispel them by a total renewal in the spirit of our holy and beautiful vocation.

This, my dear Children, is the man whom I must succeed in your midst. If the comparison makes your sorrowful, it confounds me. And I can tell you in all simplicity, I would tremble for any member of the Society of Mary who, incapable and unworthy as I am, would be so blinded by pride as to desire the generalship and accept it.

However, in the midst of his distress the Good Father had received precious encouragement. In reply to his letter of September 23, the Bishop of Saint-Claude wrote on November 5,

Would that it were in my power to relieve your agonizing situation and to give you all the consolation you need during these circumstances, so painful for you and so sorrowful for my heart and for those of your many children who remain tenderly attached to you, who would give you solemn and eloquent testimony of this if it were in their power to do so!

I have frequently been a witness, both through individual conversations with certain people and by the letters they have sent me during the past three weeks, to their filial devotedness and to the sorrow which your trials have caused them. The immense majority of your Children are waiting along with me, Good Father, with a just and very legitimate impatience, the result of your proceedings with the Holy See, and like me they keep firmly hoping that they will be completely successful and that everything that has been done up until now . . . will be declared null and void by our common Father (Agmar 7.7.124).

The Archbishop of Bordeaux, who did not have any special complaint against Father Chaminade and who until now had persecuted him only at the instigation of Father Caillet, thought it was opportune to visit him. "On the return of Father Caillet to Bordeaux," he wrote to the Archbishop of Besançon, "I sent Father Chaminade my letter of October 25, a copy of which is enclosed" [Agmar 7.6.350]. "My letter was purely administrative, and consequently somewhat dry. The day before yesterday, November 5, I felt I should pay him a gracious visit, and on returning home I found a very offensive letter; I was told that he had had it lithographed and sent to Your Excellencies. I dare hope this will be his last rattling of swords and that peace will descend upon the Society. The Archbishop of Agen has taken it upon himself to explain things to the religious whose motherhouse is in his episcopal city" (Agmar 7.7.128).

Father Chaminade's letter of October 29, alluded to here, is stamped with the double sentiment of fidelity to conscience and obedience to authority. While he informed the archbishop of his intention to send it to the bishops, he also gave his reasons. It was in no way related to the visit of November 5 and was simply a reply to that "somewhat dry" letter of October 5.

A few days later, Father Chaminade himself tells of the interview; here is another proof of the levity with which the archbishop always behaved, God permitting, during this entire matter.

The archbishop paid me the honor of a visit. We remonstrated with each other. I observed to His Excellency that my adversaries, the Assistants, whose cause he supported, had harassed me without any administrative authority, and that I had taken it from them by two protests that were very authentic in form. His Excellency replied, 'Father Caillet never said anything to me. What can you expect? It is too late, I have already written to the bishops.' 'I had the honor of notifying you,' I replied, 'not to accept everything that Father Caillet told you.' His Excellency shrugged his shoulders and continued, 'It cannot be helped. I have already written to the bishops. Let us not say any more about it.' The visit ended with expressions of mutual regard (letter no. 1410).

Tireless but not at all discouraged, Father Chaminade continued the fight for what he considered his duty. On November 6 he wrote the following letter, which he hastened to send to the Holy See through the intermediary of the nuncio.

1407. To the Minister of Public Instruction

November 6, 1845, Bordeaux
Copy, Agmar

Your Honor,

On the evening of last October 25, I received the following dispatches from the office of the archbishop: (1) a copy of the minutes of the sessions which took place at Saint-Remy (Haute-Saône) for the nomination of a Superior General of the Society of Mary and of his Assistants and (2) a letter from the archbishop.

Here is a copy of the letter from the Archbishop of Bordeaux:

Bordeaux, October 25, 1845

Monsieur,

I have the honor of sending you a copy of the minutes of the meetings held at Saint-Remy for the nomination of a Superior General of the Society of Mary and of his Assistants.

I have sent the same to the Nuncio of His Holiness, to the Minister of Public Instruction, and to all of my venerable colleagues who have in their dioceses establishments of men and women which depend upon the Society.

The new Superior having arrived to take possession of the establishments in my diocese, from this date forward I give the authority to direct them to him alone.

Please accept, Monsieur, the assurances of my highest regard.

(signed) Ferdinand, Archbishop of Bordeaux

I had glanced at the document of the Archbishop of Bordeaux when Father Caillet, the new Superior General, entered my room and asked me whether I had read it. I replied that I had, but that I saw many irregularities in the minutes. Then he took from his pocket a paper, supposedly a copy of a letter Your Excellency had written to the archbishop, by which you gave him all authority to install Father Caillet as Superior General. The letter was rather long; I was preoccupied, and the only conclusion I drew from it was that I must obey. The demands which Father Caillet began to make seemed very rigorous to me, but I obeyed and recommended to all the members of the community whom I saw to obey him without a word of protest. Father Caillet then told me, "You can no longer remain at Sainte-Anne" (this is the name of the novitiate in Bordeaux, a small country place, where I am in charge of the novices). Because it was late and night had fallen, he was kind enough to let me spend the night at Sainte-Anne. I left for Bordeaux the next morning, Sunday.

When he left my room, Father Caillet had the bell rung to assemble the community. He scrupulously assured himself that all the members were present, then took about an hour to read the minutes of the meetings and the letter of the archbishop; he stressed especially the letter Your Excellency had written to the archbishop. The orders he gave were in the name of Your Excellency, of the king, of the Government, and of the archbishop.

At the sight of all these rigorous measures, I could not find a single reason for such conduct, unless it is that Your Excellency has dismissed for me some serious misdemeanor committed while discharging my duties as Superior General. I wrote about this to the archbishop, asking him to send me a copy of the letter he had received from you. His Excellency did not think it was appropriate to do so.

I am writing to you now in order to complain about the Archbishop of Bordeaux. Whatever you or he may think of me, I believe I am responsible for the good or the evil performance of the Society of Mary because I accepted the duty, the painful duty, of governing it. The archbishop firmly believes he is the First Superior of the Society of Mary; he believes that every decision he makes must be carried out. I will give Your Excellency two examples of this, but I could give you many more!

First. A member of the Society of Mary, a professor at the novitiate and the music teacher there, became bored at the novitiate because of the severity of the moral and religious direction which I was giving him. He had occasion to speak to the director of the establishment of Barsac, who told him about the wisdom with which the pastor of Barsac directed his own establishment. The teacher left the next morning for Barsac without saying anything to me. The director received him and then sent me a young teacher, whose place the older one was to take. I protested; fearing to compromise himself, the pastor wrote to the archbishop. Here is the reply.

Here is a copy of the letter of Brother Bonnefoi.

Barsac, August 8, 1845

Venerable Good Father,

Considering the state of things and the dispositions of Brother André, who came to Barsac with the intention of reestablishing his peace of mind and conscience, our worthy pastor and excellent director, not daring to take upon himself all the responsibility involved in the steps taken by Brother André, believed he should seek directives from the episcopal authority concerning this brother, so that neither might fall into error.

The episcopal authority replied that as First Superior, he wants the religious to remain in the community of Barsac until all the affairs of the Society of Mary are settled; that the director of the community should inform you of this reply so that each person will live in peace and tranquility.

Good Father, I am sending you only the reply of the Archbishop of Bordeaux because I wish to carry out my duties.

Please accept the homage of my true and sincere attachment to the Society of Mary with the expression of my entire devotedness to the work.

(signed) Bonnefoi

I took it upon myself, Honorable Minister, to write to the archbishop and to ask him to compare his reply to the pastor of Barsac with the two articles of our Statutes, which are worded as follows.

“Article 7. The member who of his own accord wishes to withdraw can do so only after notifying the superior of the Society 6 months ahead of time, and then only if his withdrawal does not upset the school year.

“Article 11. All the establishments of the Society recognize the archbishops and bishops in whose diocese they are located as their First Superiors in the spiritual order. The Superior General retains an immediate control over all the members, who everywhere observe their rules and their customs.”

The Archbishop of Bordeaux does not like to be contradicted. He knew that in spite of my patience I would fulfill my duties toward the Government, and that only a General Chapter could bring me to a halt. He found a pretext to convoke one; he ordered my three Assistants to convoke it, but at a distance from the central house. I was not to be present because I would have spoken against the old resignation of January 8, 1841, which the members of my council had deviously obtained from me, and which they could never present to the Government because I have always contested it for excellent reasons. What was a resignation which was not voluntary?

Now here is the second example of the supreme authority which the archbishop has usurped from the Society of Mary. Father Roussel was one of my Assistants, the Head of Instruction. He behaved so badly that I was obliged to dismiss him on February 11; the motives which caused me to dismiss him were so valid that he immediately accepted his dismissal. He was not in Bordeaux at the time, but at Réalmont (Tarn), where the archbishop had sent him so he could more effectively work at my dismissal. Indeed, here is where he composed a memorandum “for the bishops only,” which was acclaimed as enchanting. I had demanded to see this memorandum, but I was always refused.

The Archbishop of Bordeaux was hurt at the dismissal of Father Roussel because I did not ask his permission. Using his supreme authority over the Society, the archbishop reinstated him in his office. Father Roussel practically directed the General Chapter; he was the examiner and became secretary at the last session of the Chapter, so the minutes are from his hand.

I will not say more, Honorable Minister, in order not to compromise many serious people who were captivated by the miserable sophisms of Father Roussel after the example of the Archbishop of Bordeaux, who was the first one to be seduced, so much so that he embraced most warmly the cause of my aggressors.

Honorable Minister, I must not hide from you that especially from the beginning of January 1841, I desired to lay aside the burden of my generalship (I was an octogenarian), but I did not wish to leave the General Administration up to a vote without first instructing the Society, and I always encountered strong opposition to this plan. Was it appropriate to leave purely and simply the nomination of my successor to my adversaries—with me not participating, as if I were physically dead—with the knowledge I had of their secret intentions, and could I do that honorably and in conscience? Nearly four years after my resignation some superiors in the Society began to learn what was going on. Meanwhile, Father Roussel, with the consent of his two associates, misused the act of resignation which was in his possession. While he was in the General Administration, Father Roussel was a constant menace. The only reproach I have to make against Father Caillet and Brother Clouzet is that they were inseparably united to Father Roussel, whose advice and direction they always followed. How often have I reproached them for this union! But they needed him; I must keep silent about the motives which animated them.

However, one more word, Honorable Minister. The stratagem my adversaries used is that I had resigned purely and simply, in writing, which was no doubt very free, very voluntary. Now if I had wanted to make any reservation, I would not have failed to do so. My answer was that I was not supposed to add any kind of reservation to that document¹ which was to prove the reality of my resignation, but that another hand was to have written it into the register of the council, and that act of resignation was to be sent to the Government of the king only after the reservations or conditions written in the register had been fulfilled. It was precisely Father Roussel who had the register on that occasion, and ever since he has fulfilled the duties of Secretary. And I claim that the Secretary was required to write in the register all the essential elements of that meeting of the council in which I gave my resignation. The law is unbending in this matter. Let them produce the register! Either the deliberations and the decision of the council are written in the register, or they are not. If they are, why argue? If they are not, their denials are lies and cannot be believed. I have always asked that this register be produced. A continual and persistent refusal up to now! I spoke of this refusal to the archbishop; he did not deign to answer a single word! I continued to protest to Father Caillet; he replied with an oath of which I am still terrified. I dare not speak of it, but I believe I am obliged to tell Your Excellency about it.

Honorable Minister, I do not demand any outburst from you; the scandal would only spread, and I bear no grudge against anyone. I only ask that Your Excellency write to the Archbishop of Bordeaux not to impose his position as Superior upon me except in the order of religion, and to order Father Caillet to resign promptly from his fictitious generalship. I will see to it that his resignation will be an honorable one. The hearts of all the members of the Society are with me, the humble and the great. At a fitting time I will tender my resignation, which will no doubt be according to the intentions of the king and his Government. I have offered it to the Archbishop of Bordeaux, but he insists that I recognize purely and simply the resignation of January 8, 1841. This I cannot do according to my honor and in conscience. I would be a liar and highly unjust.

I am with the deepest respect. . . .

¹In the written resignation drawn up in view of the lawsuit.

* * *

Through Father Chevaux, Father Chaminade tries to persuade Father Caillet to resign his office. Father Chevaux refuses in a letter, giving reasons which are based principally on the decree. Another letter of the same date exists, but it was not sent (Agmar 7.7.125). Here is the reply.

1408. To Fr. Jean Chevaux, Bordeaux

November 10, 1845, Bordeaux
Original, First Part Autograph, Agmar

My dear Son,

Only on Saturday evening did I receive your reply. I asked Brother Bonnefous to answer at least that part of your letter which concerns the respect due to the Roman decree.² I adore the designs of the Lord, who allows some good religious of Mary to defect unknowingly to the camp of the enemies of the Society.

You thought you should accede to my request only at the good pleasure of Father Caillet.¹ It so happens that the latter felt I needed only one bed, and that Sainte-Anne had to send only two blankets. Soon afterward, I was informed that a large and substantial blanket had been brought from Sainte-Anne which, if folded, would make two. The young man made no comment; he is beginning to understand the value of mortifications and humiliations.² But because this type of blanket is used only for horses in sweat, I had it set aside. Madame de Carayon is too familiar with the Madeleine not to notice that it was perhaps and after all destined for her husband's young cousin.

The day before yesterday, I wrote to the Minister of Public Instruction to inquire if when he wrote to the archbishop he had the intention of dismissing me for serious misdemeanor. His Excellency behaved as if this were true and refused to let me see the letter, the one from the Bishop of Saint-Dié. Yesterday I received a letter from the Bishop of Saint-Claude; I believe I will be able to send you a copy tomorrow. As you know, he has the largest number of establishments of men and women in his diocese.

I embrace you with all my heart, my dear Son, and I pity you before God for choosing, no doubt under an illusion, a cause that is in contradiction with his plans.

G.-Joseph Chaminade

* * *

This letter announces the forwarding of the letter of the Bishop of Saint-Claude, dated November 5 (Agmar 7.7.124). Fr. Chaminade explains the reasons for his resistance and raises the question of the poverty to be observed, both collectively and individually. Father Caillet's disclosure of the contents of this letter to the Archbishop of Bordeaux is characteristic. "This is only a lengthy accusation, an unseemly diatribe against Your Excellency, and I would blush to bring these things to your attention if there were any need. In the state of exasperation which seems to be that of poor Father Chaminade he may resort to any excess, and we must be ready for anything" (Agmar 7.7.135). This letter was accompanied by a letter to the nuncio (letter no. 1409-2).

²Note the role attributed from now on to Bro. Bonnefous.

¹This probably refers to a request to the Sainte-Anne Community for a bed for a "sorry beggar."

²Probably Bro. Bonnefous, the secretary to Fr. Chaminade since August 21, 1845, who had been charged with the errand.

1409. To Pope Gregory XVI

November 13, 1845, Bordeaux

Copy, Agmar

Most Holy Father,

Humbly prostrate at the feet of Your Holiness and repeating to you my promise of entire fidelity and constant obedience to all your orders, to all your decrees, and to every expression of your will, the undersigned Founder and Superior General of the Society of Mary declares that he acknowledges every section of the venerable decree which came from the Sacred Congregation of Bishops and Regulars on July 30, 1845, at the request of the Archbishop of Bordeaux, who obtained it from Your Holiness after an appropriate investigation into the very troublesome matter which my three Assistants who formed my council or the council of the Society had instigated against me. This is a matter which the Archbishop of Bordeaux has championed with excessive zeal, doubtless from the deep illusion into which he had been drawn by the attractive and flattering sophisms of Father Roussel and echoed by his associates in the council of the Society of Mary.

This humble suppliant, Most Holy Father, staunchly submissive to all the orders of Your Holiness, has felt obliged from the strong attachment he has for the Holy See to rise and to protest against the abuse which this prelate, otherwise so respectable, has made of your venerable decree. Indeed, what a flagrant abuse, Most Holy Father, His Excellency has made of the venerable decree of Your Holiness! What outrageous interpretations he has read into it! He took it upon himself to have a General Chapter convoked by my three Assistants, Fathers Caillet and Roussel and Brother Clouzet, who had rebelled against their Superior General for the most despicable motives. The three presided over the Chapter, usurping an authority which they could have only when the Superior had died. This Chapter was held at Saint-Remy (Haute-Saône), more than 150 leagues from the central house. Father Roussel, whom your very humble servant and son had very legally dismissed from his Office as Head of Instruction last February 11, appeared next to the president of the Chapter, openly performed the duties of examiner for the capitulants, was the secret ringleader and counselor to the president, and finally was the secretary at the last session of the Chapter so that all the minutes are from his pen.

Most Holy Father, the all-important question of my resignation of January 8, 1841, was not dealt with, but it was argued that I protested against the venerable decree of Your Holiness, that I rebelled against the Church and the Holy See, and that the capitulants could vote freely but were responsible to God and to the Society. Then, according to Father Caillet, a hail of votes descended upon him and he became the Superior General of the Society. He immediately accepted with pleasure and gratitude. Everyone concluded with deep regret that it was unfortunate that I had rebelled against the decree because everyone wanted to elect their Founder and Father. I say "everyone" except my three Assistants, true enemies of the Society of Mary. They went so far as to sign hypocritically the letter of condolence which the capitulants wrote to me. I have the letters, Most Holy Father, which support in detail everything I have the honor to tell Your Holiness, but with this petition I will include only the letter which the Bishop of Saint-Claude wrote to me. He has in his diocese many establishments of men and women. The Daughters of Mary have two large convents devoted to various types of good works for the benefit of women. The faith is making progress in the vast territories of the Jura, where it was almost extinct. The Bishop of Saint-Claude is very interested in these convents.

Most Holy Father, as I was writing these lines Father Caillet, the new Superior General, came into my room and said to me rather coldly, "I come from the Archbishop of Bordeaux, who has learned that you have made copies of the letter which you have received from the Bishop of Saint-Claude; he absolutely forbids you to make use of these copies without the express permission of the Bishop of Saint-Claude." I replied that I had to have the copies lithographed

because His Excellency had suddenly withdrawn from me all the novices who were acting as my secretaries. Father Caillet added, “The prohibition is precise and decisive. What will I tell the archbishop?” “You can tell His Excellency,” I replied, “that I will inform the Bishop of Saint-Claude of the use I made of his letter.” I drew Father Caillet’s attention to the address written by the Bishop of Saint-Claude himself in these words, “To be given into the hands of Father Chaminade personally. To Father Chaminade, Founder of the Society of Mary and Superior General of this holy Congregation,¹ in Bordeaux, Department of the Gironde. Signed: A. J. Bishop of Saint-Claude.”

This letter is being written to take the place of a petition in support of the one I had the honor to write to the Apostolic Nuncio in Paris, to be forwarded to Your Holiness.² However, the Archbishop of Bordeaux was in such a hurry to convoke a General Chapter in spite of my very legal protests that when the Bishop of Saint-Claude received my letter, it was too late.

Most Holy Father, the Archbishop of Bordeaux is carrying out a veritable persecution against me, abetted by my three rebellious Assistants. What are the motives animating my persecutors? These are the real motives, which have been apparent from the beginning.

(1) To enrich the Society. They want each individual member of the Society to take a vow of poverty, but these same people taken as a group do not have the same vow of poverty. Therefore, the use of the goods of the Society would be determined by the major superiors, and because these goods are the property of the Society there is no need to consult God through the light of faith about their use; the light of reason is sufficient. Now this is precisely the cause of the decline of all the religious Orders which had amassed great riches. Moreover, I have often proved in my writings that the Society would be more truly impoverished by this irreligious concept than by following the lights of faith which make us understand the use which God wishes us to make of our goods. If it follows the leanings of my adversaries, the Society will have slight expansion and will deteriorate more and more. If it is faithful to its origins, it will spread far and wide. Already, Most Holy Father, I am asked to establish houses everywhere, and several sovereign states are asking for them. This will not come to pass if it is found that the zeal of the Society of Mary is motivated by a vile interest in money.

(2) They would like at all costs to clear Father Roussel and to annul his dismissal. They can do this only if they force me to admit that my resignation of January 8, 1841, created a vacancy in the generalate. They also have seriously misused my resignation in court. To mislead a tribunal in France is a serious thing. But I would be the one misleading it if I lied by admitting that the generalate was vacant because of my resignation.

(3) The venerable decree in question is merely a reply to the secret consultation which the archbishop had with the Sacred Congregation and does not touch the question pending in the Roman court. That consultation, according to Canon Law, completely nullifies the decision concerning me as Superior. The archbishop took that step during the three months he was absent only because in his name Father Caillet had rejected a plan for conciliation which did not agree with his interpretation of the decree.

I had accepted the first plan for conciliation, but precisely because I had accepted it, it was contested and finally rejected. I saw their intentions, and that the archbishop would apply to Rome without telling me. I assembled the documents which could prove the authenticity of the plan and make His Excellency’s recourse to Rome rather questionable.

I could give many other reasons why I am being persecuted ever more harshly. However, I merely wish to prove to Your Holiness that the election of Father Caillet is not canonical, and that he is wrong to exercise the functions of Superior General. If everything I have said on this score in my letters to the Apostolic Nuncio in Paris and in this plea still does not convince Your Holiness, I ask you to request any supplementary information you may think is necessary.

¹Fr. Chaminade points out to Fr. Caillet that the letter recognizes his position as Superior General.

²February 25, 1845. See the letter of September 23 to the Bishop of Saint-Claude.

If Father Caillet's election is not canonical, it is no less irregular in the eyes of the Government. I have just written to His Excellency the Minister of Public Instruction, but I make no reference to religious discussions or to Your Holiness, or to Their Excellencies the Archbishops and Bishops. I mention only the Archbishop of Bordeaux, who can extricate himself by having Father Caillet resign and by no longer exercising a temporal authority in the Society which the Government denies to him and which is beyond his jurisdiction. I am enclosing a copy of this letter.¹

Please excuse the length of this letter, Most Holy Father. I could present many other interesting and pertinent facts concerning this matter to Your Holiness. For instance, the very regular and canonical election of a Superior General and of his Assistants which took place on January 9 or 10, 1841, but which for over three years the members of my council refused to ratify, in spite of my pleas. They so misled the court of arbitration that at the end of the proceedings they were labeled comedians. One of their lawyers, a very distinguished gentleman, wrote to Agen in good faith that I also was playing the comedian, and this to the Superior General of the Daughters of Mary, whose central house is in Agen. All these facts are contained in my long letter to Father Caillet at the time when, by decision of the Archbishop of Bordeaux, our discussions which hitherto had been private were to be made public. All these facts have been consistently denied. This was necessary if the problem was to be studied from its inception on January 8, 1841 and a decree were to be rendered that was favorable to the insurgents but against their Superior. However, this decree, by its profound wisdom, I might even say divine wisdom, could have halted the discussions if the Archbishop of Bordeaux had interpreted it literally.

Prostrate at the feet of Your Holiness, I humbly ask you to put a stop to the scandals, but without fanfare. Again, I express my most profound respect and my complete obedience, convinced as I am that I would be insulting you if I thought that by your decree of July 30, 1845, you were countenancing a lie, and such a lie that I would be guilty of a very great iniquity.

P.S. I have just received proof, Most Holy Father, that my persecutors are using several passages from the cover letter to the decree which the Apostolic Nuncio in Paris sent to the Archbishop of Bordeaux to justify its misuse. In order not to aggravate the matter, I will not permit myself any further reflections.

* * *

1409-2. To the Apostolic Nuncio in Paris

November 13, 1845, Bordeaux

Copy, Agmar

Your Excellency,

I have the honor of sending you a long petition addressed to our Most Holy Father the pope, and an exact copy of a letter I am sending to the Bishop of Saint-Claude. I ask Your Excellency to transmit both documents as soon as possible to the Sacred Congregation of Bishops and Regulars. For very good reasons I would ask you kindly to acknowledge reception of these items.

Because the Archbishop of Bordeaux has sought to compromise me with respect to you and to the episcopacy—that is, to all the bishops who have accepted communities either of the Society of Mary or of the Daughters of Mary, of which I am the Founder—I feel that I am obliged to enlighten Their Excellencies. You will soon receive another dispatch containing copies of the two documents I am sending to Rome so you may read them, along with the cover letter to the Sacred Congregation.

¹Letter no. 1407.

Because of the ever-increasing sternness of the Archbishop of Bordeaux, I am my own secretary, and in two or three days Your Excellency will receive, without further notice, the documents I intend to send to Rome.

I may need to do the same with the second set of dispatches I have mentioned. I am not complaining about my hardships and adversities. The Lord has allowed Satan to buffet the Society of Mary along with its Superior and Founder, in order to purify it and to make it a more fitting instrument for the accomplishment of his designs.

I am with the deepest respect. . . .

* * *

No new element enters this circular to the bishops. Bro. Paul Bonnefous, of subtle mind, uneasy, forward, short-tempered, became Father Chaminade's secretary in August of 1845 and will have an influence on his correspondence. (See his biography and comments on his role as secretary in Father Lebon's Les dernières années du B. P. Chaminade, I, 284-90). The examples of his influence are numerous; he adds his own reflections, and he answers for Father Chaminade (March 27, 1845, Agmar 8.1.557). In a letter to Monsignor Chamon on December 29, 1845, the Good Father says, "The young man who is my secretary took it upon himself without my knowledge to prove by means of his Latin grammar that the Roman decree was an act of condescension. Can we not suppose that the Sacred Congregation and its secretariat know their Latin?"

**1410. To Archbishops and Bishops Who Have in Their Dioceses
Houses of the Society of Mary or of
The Institute of the Daughters of Mary**

November 13, 1845, Bordeaux
Copy, Agmar

Your Excellency,

The Society of Mary has been subjected to quite a disturbance. Desiring to retire from my generalship but in a manner that would benefit both the Society and me, who am rather advanced in age (almost 85 years), I went through the formalities of resignation before my council on January 8, 1841. First I suggested a religious resignation in the manner prescribed by the Constitutions, to be followed by a pure and simple resignation to satisfy the requirements of the king's Government. This is the one I wrote and signed myself. I did, in fact, write it myself on legal paper and sign it. This gesture is what my adversaries have called my "written resignation." It is a legal resignation and attests that the successor I have chosen is acknowledged by the Society and is my deliberate choice. However, my three Assistants, the members of my council, maintain that I tendered only one pure and simple resignation, that neither in word nor in act did I suggest a canonical resignation—that is, one that conforms to our religious Constitutions and is directed to the Sovereign Pontiff who appointed me as his representative and Superior General of the Society in the order of religion, just as my written resignation was directed to the king, who had appointed me his representative in the temporal order. My Assistants are authorized only to assist me in my functions. They have become my adversaries, without any powers although they claim to be working for the Society alone. They are working only at the acquisition of more property for this Society, whose members have all taken the vow of poverty implying a divesting of all personal and collective goods. My Assistants would like me to share their sentiments, and they deny that my resignation had anything to do with the pope or with the Constitutions. I hesitate to qualify their repeated denials. They insist that I could have included any reservations I had in mind in my written resignation. What absurd reasoning!

My adversaries, the Assistants, easily convinced the Archbishop of Bordeaux, who eagerly espoused their cause and who has since actively promoted it. Earlier, our discussions had been kept within the family. Now they have become familiar to His Excellency of Bordeaux and also to the Archbishops of Besançon and Albi.

You are aware, Your Excellency, that I have had to struggle against a type of treason from the very day, the very moment I gave my written resignation into the hands of my council. When the Archbishop of Bordeaux embraced the cause of my adversaries the latter pursued it with vigor, and they sent me a copy of my resignation under the pretext that I could not recall its terms. I immediately noticed irregularities in that copy. On three successive days I sent a person of confidence to compare this copy with the original in the register of the council. Father Caillet would not allow my messenger to consult the register. I lodged a mild complaint with the archbishop; it was all in vain. In every letter I wrote to Father Caillet, I remarked that he could not refuse me this. He finally answered with an oath that ended all my hopes. The register would have been my judge. I still have not seen it. In any case, I have always been persecuted. One year ago, the Archbishop of Bordeaux told me, "I have written to Our Holy Father the Pope asking him to decide the matter of your resignation." His Excellency did not tell me what he wrote, and I did not dare to write myself. What could I have told His Holiness? Finally, I discovered through a happy chance that the archbishop had sent to the Sacred Congregation of Bishops and Regulars a copy of a circular in which I delegate the administrative powers, which they called a "relinquishing of powers." When His Excellency sent the document to His Holiness I had already withdrawn that abandonment, which was actually a simple delegation of administrative functions in two successive protests in due form.

That delegation took place in rather strange circumstances, Your Excellency. A few days before, the archbishop had paid me the honor of a visit. We exchanged a few observations. I remarked to him that my adversaries, whose cause he had embraced, were pursuing me without any administrative authority because I had withdrawn that in two protests in due form. His Excellency replied, "Father Caillet made no mention of this. I cannot help it; I wrote to the bishops." "But I had warned you not to rely too much on what Father Caillet says." His Excellency shrugged his shoulders and continued, "I cannot help it; I wrote to the bishops, and the chapter is closed." At the end of the visit, we exchanged the usual courtesies. The next day I told Father Caillet of our interview. "His Excellency did not remember," he said, "that I gave him those protests, or withdrawal of powers. I do nothing except under his orders."

His Excellency would like to see the end to this, and so would I. But I do not want to end it all with a lie which would lead to a great iniquity. The archbishop would like me to acknowledge the appointment, or rather the election, of Father Caillet by the General Chapter which has just met at Saint-Remy. This Chapter is not canonical; I might even say that it is anti-canonical, and the pope would not acknowledge it. The Chapter was basically irregular, and I doubt whether the Government of the king would call it legitimate.

I have the honor, Your Excellency, of enclosing a copy of the petition I am sending to His Holiness through the Apostolic Nuncio in Paris. This petition also contains a true copy of the letter I wrote to His Excellency the Minister of Public Instruction in which I make no mention of religion, for I have no wish to jeopardize the sacred by introducing the purely temporal. If the Archbishop of Bordeaux follows my advice he will not be compromised, and I will do my utmost to avoid such a calamity with its resulting scandal. Otherwise, I do not believe that in conscience I can remain silent. He, not I, will be responsible if he is compromised. How often have I warned him! If His Excellency continues to defend himself as he is doing now, the higher clergy and perhaps even the Society of Mary may be the victims.

To me the motives which are inspiring the Archbishop of Bordeaux are more like illusions. He wanted to have Father Roussel reinstated in his Office of Head of Instruction, from which I removed him last February 11. He would like to absolve him of the misuse he made of my resignation at the trial of the Society of Mary in the court of arbitration. As far as his first

wish is concerned, everything has been foreseen. If Father Roussel converts, he can be saved, body and soul. However, both body and soul are in grave danger if the archbishop persists. As for his second wish, the judge of the court of arbitration is willing to help suppress this matter. Now, do you not believe you should side with the Bishop of Saint-Claude? I am happy to enclose a letter he sent me recently. Is the Society of Mary no longer worthy of your protection because the Archbishop of Bordeaux has discovered in Father Roussel and his two colleagues men who are more capable of directing the Society of Mary in its development than the poor old man who was commissioned to do so by the pope and the king? His Excellency has clear indications that he will not have to support me or my defects very long. I know I will never overcome those that come with old age, but I can certainly see to it that my presence as a person will not be a burden to him. I believe His Excellency is mistaken. God does not usually rely on the fine qualities of mortals to do his work. "God has chosen the weak of this world." If the administration of the Society of Mary is composed of men of faith, I will die in peace. The Society will fulfill its destiny; it will be imperishable.

I know it is not customary, Your Excellency, to send you a petition addressed to His Holiness. I seem to be lacking in the deep respect which I have had all my life for the Sovereign Pontiff. But time is short, and after the interview with Father Caillet the archbishop deprived me of almost every means of communication until everything has been resolved. Therefore, I dictate and I have copies made; my postage costs will be reduced, and if I have to continue my struggle, Your Excellency may expect to receive more of the same, but without any cover letter. This very letter will be sent to the Holy Father, the supreme, the divine authority, to whom I have the honor of speaking with the trust of a child.

Should Your Excellency not be satisfied either with my procedure or with the proofs I have presented, or again if you should need some explanation of this rapid summary of my case—I must rely on my memory for everything—please let me know. You may be certain that if I am resisting the designs of my opponents, this is only because my conscience forces me to do this. If it can be shown that my conscience is false on any point, and with all the more reason on the whole, I am ready to give up the struggle.

May the holy name of Jesus Christ be glorified, along with that of his august Mother; this is my only ambition, to which I would like to add your protection for the houses of the Society of Mary already in your diocese or to come later and which are not schismatic.

I am with the most profound respect Your Excellency's most humble and most obedient servant.

* * *

Father Chaminade expresses his regret at Father Chevaux's blindness.

1410-2. To Fr. Jean Chevaux, Bordeaux

November 15, 1845, Bordeaux

Original, Agmar

My dear Son,

Allow me a few more words. I am sorely troubled by the short-sightedness which seems to characterize you. The elections which took place at the General Chapter at Saint-Remy are neither canonical nor regular. From the religious point of view they are not canonical, and it is easy to prove they are anti-canonical. From the civil perspective, they are irregular and even illegal.

You soothe your conscience with the letter from the Apostolic Nuncio to the archbishop, but it seems to me you are deluding yourself. The venerable decree from the Sacred Congregation is in answer to the consultation by the Archbishop of Bordeaux, and nothing else. The Sacred Congregation must have replied to the archbishop because of the high regard in which he is held.

The Archbishop of Bordeaux was granted his wish, and the Apostolic Nuncio gave him the news; could he do anything else? If he were consulted further, the nuncio must have repeated what he had already said. Even the pope must support the true meaning of his decree. Now the decree shows consummate wisdom, but does it answer the question facing us? Not at all, and everything points to the contrary.

I embrace you paternally.

G.-Joseph Chaminade

P.S. A host of ideas come to mind, but I do not have time to share them with you at the moment.

* * *

On November 16, 1845, it was announced from the pulpit of the Madeleine that Father Chaminade would be replaced by Father Caillet as director of the Sodality. Father Fontaine refers to this in a letter, but he tries to lessen the import of the move. "It is still true that without warning, and perhaps in his presence, his dismissal from the direction of the Sodality was announced, from that work which he had founded 50 years before, to which he had given the better part of his life and from which came such wonderful fruits of salvation, among which is the Society of Mary" (Agmar 7.7.148).

1411. To Fr. Jean Chevaux

November 17, 1845, Bordeaux

Copy, Agmar

My dear Son,

I wrote to you the day before yesterday. Do I read your answer in the following events? Yesterday during the services at the Madeleine, you and Father Caillet went to consult the archbishop. Last night the retreat master announced from the pulpit that I, the Founder of the Sodality, had been replaced by Father Caillet, etc.

My dear Son, is there any link between these two facts? Is there also a link with his election as Superior General by the General Chapter, an irregular Chapter held at Saint-Remy?

If the Government—that is, if the Minister of Public Instruction—wished to dismiss me because of serious mismanagement, I would put up no defense for fear of compromising the higher clergy. If it is the archbishop who urged the Minister to go to such extremes, I will prove my innocence and trustworthiness without exaggerating my own worth in the sight of God. I am under no illusions about what is lacking in me to capably occupy the contested generalship.

I wrote to the Minister of Public Instruction on November 6 to find out how I stand at the present time. The archbishop did not think to send me a copy of the letter which His Excellency wrote after receiving my old resignation. I have this from Father Caillet, who read that letter to me very rapidly.

Has the matter been decided to the point that it could be announced from the pulpit that Father Caillet now succeeds me as director of the Sodality, in a church which in truth is just a large chapel, full of men from all parts of the town?

What type of election do we have here? Did the General Chapter even stop to think that Sodalities existed before a great number of the capitulants were born—that is, the Sodalities existed and were approved long before the Institute of the Society of Mary, and many of the young directors were probably not born before the Sodalities existed, for these date from the end of the last century.

If in another evening sermon the reverend preacher does not explain himself more clearly, at least leaves the matter uncertain—for His Excellency believes he has full power in all matters that have been my concern since I have resided in Bordeaux—I will have to let the city know the true meaning of that pronouncement. Is this what the Lord meant by *Oportet ut veniant scandal?* [It is inevitable that scandals will come, Matthew 18:7.]

I received a letter from Father Rothéa yesterday, my dear Son, in which he tells me that you have made a decision which no one was entitled to make. You insist on exercising the functions of Head of Zeal, and this makes it difficult for you to exercise proper balance in your allegiance. You do the same at Sainte-Anne, but very quietly. I also learned that Father Caillet enclosed the circular in the letter Father Rothéa was to read on his arrival in Saint-Remy and before his interview with me. Why did he not in good faith send me a copy of that letter?

I close, my dear Son, asking you to see about that business of the retreat preacher. I am and will always be your true Father in the order of religion.

* * *

A letter from Archbishop Donnet to Archbishop Mathieu on November 7, 1845, reads, “His Excellency of Agen has agreed to have the sisters whose motherhouse is in his episcopal city listen to reason” (Agmar 7.7.118). The Daughters of Mary were very reluctant to accept Father Caillet and asked to be placed purely and simply under the authority of the bishops. Only after the second reply from Rome did they officially acknowledge the new Superior General, yet their hearts remained faithful to Father Chaminade. (See the letter from Mother Saint-Vincent to the Bishop of Agen, October 31, 1845, Agmar 7.6.362; and the circular of Mother Saint-Vincent, January 24, 1846, Agmar 8.1.523.)

1412. To Bishop de Vezins of Agen

November 21, 1845, Bordeaux

Copy, Agmar

Monsignor,

The evening of October 25, I received the following letter from the Archbishop of Bordeaux.

Bordeaux, October 25, 1845

Monsieur,

I have the honor of sending you a copy of the minutes of the meetings which took place at Saint-Remy for the appointment of a new Superior General of the Society of Mary and of his Assistants. I have sent a copy of the same to the Nuncio of His Holiness, to the Minister of Public Instruction, and to all my venerable colleagues who have in their dioceses houses of religious men and women which depend on the Society. The new Superior arrived to take possession of the houses in my diocese, and from this day he is the only one to whom I grant the right to direct them. Please accept. . . .

I have heard of the consideration and honesty with which you have announced the orders of the Archbishop of Bordeaux to the Superior General of the Daughters of Mary. In your wisdom and prudence you allowed her the time she needed to consult and reflect to see what answer she should give to Your Excellency. She never expected to have to make such a decision. I thank you, Your Excellency, for the kind discretion you have shown to the Superior.

I considered it my duty, Your Excellency, to address a letter to the archbishops and bishops who have communities of religious men and women in their dioceses. In your diocese you have two houses of religious men (Villeneuve and Clairac) and two of women (Agen, the central house of the Daughters of Mary, and the convent of Tonneins). May I take the liberty to recommend them to your special care, for they will be responsible to Your Excellency if the letter which the Minister of Public Instruction sent to the Archbishop of Bordeaux signifies a true dismissal from my office of Superior General for some serious delinquency in the exercise of my office, and not the admission of a resignation which His Excellency would have believed free and voluntary.

I have written about this to the Minister of Public Instruction, and you will find a true copy in the petition which I have the honor of presenting to His Holiness.

If the Archbishop of Bordeaux had not pursued me with such vigor, I would have tried to make His Excellency understand that the election of Father Caillet as Superior General of the Society of Mary which took place at the General Chapter of Saint-Remy on October 5 and following was null and invalid, and that in the order of religion it was not only not canonical but anti-canonical, and in the civil and temporal order it was irregular and illegal. In my letter to the Minister I made no reference to Canon Law or to the higher clergy, and still less to the Sovereign Pontiff. Our Civil Statutes were basis enough.

I hope Their Excellencies will not join the opposition and risk jeopardizing themselves with the Government. The Bishop of Saint-Claude, who has a good number of religious communities in his diocese, has already warned me, and I am taking the liberty of including a copy of the letter he sent me.

I am enclosing four documents which I have had duplicated, and they are (1) my letter to the Archbishop of Bordeaux, (2) a copy of the letter from the Bishop of Saint-Claude, (3) my petition to His Holiness, and (4) an address to Their Excellencies the Archbishops and Bishops.

I am with the most profound respect. . . .

* * *

Father Chevaux and the Archbishop of Besançon had written to the Bishop of Saint-Claude about his letter of encouragement to Father Chaminade. Bishop de Chamon dismisses the charge of disobedience leveled against Father Chaminade and adds, "If you read his letter you will also note that we would have avoided many serious difficulties if we had agreed to look favorably on the means of defense suggested by Father Chaminade against the complaints which his adversaries had sent to Rome against him" (Bishop de Chamon to Archbishop Mathieu, November 30, 1845, Agmar 7.7.150). Nevertheless, the same day Bishop de Chamon asks Father Chaminade not to take action after the publication of his letter of November 6.

Another argument is now advanced: Qui tacent consentire videtur. [Silence means consent.] Father Chaminade applies it to the silence of the bishops and of the nuncio. He also informs Bishop de Chamon that the letter the Minister of Public Instruction had just sent to Archbishop Donnet, dated November 18, was not an answer to Father Chaminade's letter of November 6 (letter no. 1407).

1413. To Bishop de Chamon of Saint-Claude

November 23, 1845, Bordeaux

Original, Agmar

Monsignor,

As long as the tempest lasts, I will put off expressing my thanks and my devotedness to Your Excellency. I am convinced that you seek only the good of religion, and that you do so with intelligence. You understand that almost all my life has been spent in the support of religion and

faith, not so much by beautiful words but by insisting on practice, especially with the youth. Satan throws many obstacles across my path, but all the setbacks I have suffered so far have turned to his confusion. I hope the same will be true with this one, and that the Society of Mary and the other works I have founded will emerge more beautiful and purified to fulfill the designs which God had in their institution.

I duly received your first and most encouraging letter of November 5. I was writing an answer when yours of November 20 arrived, so this will be an answer to both. However, I have already put three documents addressed to you in the mail, (1) a new plea to His Holiness, (2) an address to Their Excellencies the Archbishops and Bishops, and (3) my last letter to the Archbishop of Bordeaux.

I sent Their Excellencies a copy of your letter of November 5. Because you may not approve, I must explain my reasons for doing so. Your letter, written in your own hand, was seen by Father Caillet when it arrived.¹ Greatly disturbed, Father went to see the archbishop. (I knew nothing of his anxiety; I simply asked my nephew to take it to the printer; he said he would see it duplicated before his eyes and never lose sight of it, etc.) The next day Father Caillet told me that the archbishop forbids me to have the letter duplicated without written permission from Your Excellency. My answer was this. "What! The archbishop deprives me of young men who could copy what I dictate, and now he wants to forbid me the only means I have left! Meanwhile, His Excellency can write against me to the bishops!" "That is immaterial; he expressly forbids you," was his reply. "I will reread the letter from the Bishop of Saint-Claude," I said, "and if I feel that I am not going against his wishes in having it duplicated and sent to the bishops, what difference does it make if I go ahead and have it done carefully? The Archbishop of Bordeaux does not need to be upset, for anything I will do will not be improper." Father Caillet reported my answer to the archbishop. Your letter, Your Excellency, is the source of great worry. Father would return the following morning and, without referring to the printing, bring me new orders from the archbishop, who formally forbids me to send this letter to our communities and says that if I send it to the bishops I will arouse them against me. I simply told Father Caillet to give me the orders of the archbishop in writing. I am still waiting for that paper. I believe this is when His Excellency wrote to the Archbishop of Besançon. I have positive assurance that the lithographer keeps no copy of the original, and as soon as his work is done the stone surfaces are cleaned.

The Archbishop of Bordeaux is ready to go to any lengths to have Father Roussel reinstated in his office as Head of Instruction, or at least to see him as director of some important house. Before his dismissal, all three Archbishops of Bordeaux, Besançon, and Albi had promised to obtain for him a chair of theology in some distant academy. However, since the respectable archbishops have heard, from Father's admission to me, some of the horrible things he has done, instead of helping me in my work of conversion and in trying to save his body and soul they seem to wish to destroy him by forcing me to speak often of him. How many times have I not cautioned the archbishop, Father Caillet, and the Archbishop of Albi! I dismissed Father Roussel, but I did not exclude him from the Society of Mary. I ordered him to go to the central house in Bordeaux, where he would be occupied according to his talents but with no title that would give him any authority.

Among the numerous strategies used either to frighten me or to seduce me are the following. The first was a letter written by Father Bouet, a former Trappist, a good man but much too simple and who has utmost confidence in Father Caillet. He wrote during the Chapter at Saint-Remy. I immediately sent a copy of his letter to the archbishop. Apparently, whatever helps their cause is acceptable. Your Excellency, I will enclose a copy of that letter.

¹The letter was addressed to Fr. Chaminade, Superior General of the Society of Mary.

A much more serious incident took place while I was writing this letter. Yesterday, November 22, Father Caillet came to read me a second letter,¹ from the Minister of Public Instruction, as if it were in answer to my letter to the Minister on the irregularities of the Chapter. I had made no mention of the Roman decree, of the bishops, or of anything religious, and if you receive my petition to the pope, you will find an exact copy of that letter to the Minister. I was writing to His Excellency to ask if the acceptance of my resignation meant a dismissal from my functions as Superior General because of some serious misconduct, for that is what I gathered from his letter. Yesterday, Father Caillet read me the second letter from the Minister as if it were an answer to mine. He admitted as valid my old resignation of January 8, 1841, and acknowledged Father Caillet as the new Superior General elected by the General Chapter of Saint-Remy. I asked Father Caillet for a copy of Monsieur Salvandy's letter. He said he could comply if the archbishop had no objection. In fact, today, after Vespers he told me that he did obtain that permission. I had it sent to me in all haste and read it; I am enclosing a copy. I immediately answered Father Caillet, and a copy of that letter is also enclosed.

The matter seemed to have been settled by the Minister's decision on the validity of my old resignation of January 8, 1841, although it was always contested, especially after the archbishop sent the minutes of the General Chapter to His Excellency. The Minister's letter gave the archbishop less support than he thought.

The matter takes a fresh start; very simply, this is what happened. Brother Hausséguy, the director of the house in Saint-Claude, wrote to the Minister of Public Instruction something like this.

“Honorable Minister, because of the action taken by the Archbishop of Bordeaux, the Society of Mary finds itself in a very perplexed and sad state. I do not know where the archbishop got the authority to allow the three Assistants of the aged and respected Superior General to convene a General Chapter of the Society of Mary at Saint-Remy (Haute-Saône), more than 150 leagues from the central house, against the will of our aged and most respected Superior General and Founder of the Society. His three Assistants had banded together after his resignation from the generalship, which he had tendered according to the prescriptions of the Civil Statutes. These govern the Society and have the approbation of the Government. They became his adversaries and proceeded to attack him under the pretext that the resignation he had given them in writing was a pure and simple one. The successor of his choice was appointed by the Society.

“They never dared publish this act of resignation of January 8, 1841, because our Superior always contested it. However, since the Archbishop of Bordeaux has declared himself First Superior of the Society of Mary and has ardently defended the cause of the adversaries, he wished to bring this opposition to an end by means of a General Chapter. He asked the three former General Heads to convoke a Chapter and even allowed Father Roussel to be among them, the man our Superior had dismissed from his office as Head of Instruction on February 11 of the previous year. These three heads, Fathers Caillet and Roussel and Brother Clouzet, presided at the Chapter and by means of theological considerations forced the conscience of the capitulants. ‘You are free,’ they said, ‘but be careful, you will have to render an account to God and to the Society.’

“Father Caillet was elected. There was no discussion at all of the principal question, the resignation of January 8, 1841. Was it a voluntary act on the part of the Superior, or was it tainted with treason, as he claimed? I was a witness, Your Excellency, of the tender and respectful attention which all the capitulants had for the Good Father. (This is the name we give our Founder and Superior General.) We all expressed our love for him and our sorrow at being obliged in conscience to give up his direction, and especially the successor he himself would have

¹The first letter was from the Minister to the archbishop dated October 7 in reply to the archbishop, who had informed him of the General Chapter on September 22. The second letter, dated November 18, was in answer to the announcement of the results of the elections.

chosen. Honorable Minister, if you believe you must accept the election of Father Caillet according to the minutes of the Chapter which the archbishop sent to you, the Society will certainly not resist. Immediately after Father Caillet's election, we obeyed him; we still do and will continue to do so unless Your Excellency has pity on our deception.

"I am, Honorable Minister, the director of the establishment of Saint-Claude. The bishop has been very kind to me and has great affection for this institution. I will show him this letter and ask him to express in a postscript his opinion on this house and on the others in his diocese.

"I am with deepest respect, Your Excellency's. . . ."

I took the liberty, Your Excellency, of expressing my thoughts in this sample letter which Brother Hausséguy may have sent to the Minister of Public Instruction. Now, Your Excellency, you may add or omit anything you wish. If Brother Hausséguy was not entirely convinced of the contents of this letter, he should not have written it without first consulting me about his problems. Everything here is based on truth, justice, and conscience.

By "theological considerations" I mean everything concerning the venerable decree which was the motive and the purpose of the convocation of the General Chapter and in which the only concern is the validity or nullity of my resignation of January 8, 1841. The Archbishop of Bordeaux argues that to protest against the abuses which could be made of the Roman decree is equal to a protest against the decree itself. Is this not a theological consideration, whether someone denies or supports it? It is surprising that two venerable archbishops, the prelates of Albi and Besançon, do not seem to understand this. But this is just a remark in passing. At the present time I am speaking only of Brother Hausséguy. I am telling the truth, and the whole truth, without mentioning the Roman decree and without asking for an intervention by the Sovereign Pontiff in a matter which is entirely civil in nature and without compromising the members of the higher clergy who accepted, more or less, with the unsound tactic of the Archbishop of Bordeaux in spite of the numerous warnings I had given him. He will be the only one to be compromised, and it will be his fault for following the sophisms of such a subtle mind as that of Father Roussel, whom I had shown (in my first letter to the Archbishop of Bordeaux) to be the sole ringleader in this matter. Father Caillet and Brother Clouzet are also compromised because they were inseparably associated with Father Roussel in vile financial undertakings, unworthy of true religious, especially of religious of the Society of Mary.

The Sovereign Pontiff will decide on the validity or the nullity of my resignation of January 8, 1841. According to our Constitutions, it is the Sovereign Pontiff who approves or does not approve the Superior General who is canonically appointed. Here, not only is the appointment of Father Caillet not canonical, but it is easy to prove that it is anti-canonical. Actually it is useless to prove the second part of this statement; the election of Father Caillet is not canonical, therefore, the election of Father Caillet, although recognized by the Government of the king, is not recognized by the Holy See, which is so to speak the government of the pope; it is the pope deciding *ex cathedra*.

You ask me, Your Excellency, whether the pope has pronounced himself on the interpretation I give to the decree of last July 30. No, and not even the Apostolic Nuncio has given any sign that he disapproves of my resistance! I know I take advantage of a few expressions of the Apostolic Nuncio in his cover letter to the Archbishop of Bordeaux to prove that the decree is absolute and worthy of the highest veneration. That is very true in itself. The decree is without a doubt a gracious gesture. His Excellency alone consults the Sovereign Pontiff, who responds by giving him a decree which is his and which concerns him alone. But does it promote his cause? Did the consultation bear on the question that is debated? You can read and reread the venerable decree, and you will find no mention of it.

They claim that the aged Superior took part in the very first quarrel, and that the Daughters of Mary did also with their motivated petition. True, but the Superior took part only by chance when he chanced to hear of the document which His Excellency had sent to the Sovereign Pontiff; then he asked His Holiness to give him access to all the accusations that had been made

against him, so that he might answer. Above all he wanted to respond to that famous memorandum written by Father Roussel for the bishops alone. The Superior never did see this memorandum; in vain did he ask those who had it to show it to him.

Has a decision ever come from Rome? No, but there is the clear impression that in spite of the efforts of the Archbishop of Bordeaux to obtain a judgment, the pope had postponed his decision. This was interpreted in the archbishop's circle as an unwillingness to decide. This led to the plan for reconciliation, which was not truly sincere on the part of those who proposed it, for they discarded it contrary to all good manners and justice. During this time the Archbishop of Bordeaux presented his petition, which is diametrically opposed to the plan for reconciliation.

In the petition I am presenting to His Holiness, Your Excellency, and of which you will receive a copy along with this letter, you will note that in a short postscript I do not hesitate to speak to His Holiness of the abuse which has been made of some expressions contained in the cover letter by the Apostolic Nuncio in Paris. My unsealed petition will pass through the hands of the Apostolic Nuncio; is there a better way to prove my good faith? In it I make no statement that cannot be proved, that does not fundamentally contain a type of evidence.

Finally, Your Excellency, in order to destroy my reputation, my adversaries repeat that when I say that the Archbishop of Bordeaux misuses the decree, I am criticizing the decree itself, and that I am insulting him when I say it is a decree which was granted as a favor. What else can I do but to patiently endure? Would the Sovereign Pontiff not agree that his decrees should be considered null and void, just as any decision of the archbishops and bishops when these are clandestine—that is, when the petitions which obtained the decrees failed to declare a truth that should have been declared? This does not mean I claim that His Excellency's petition is in bad faith, or criminal, God forbid! But it is still true that his petition did not express everything that was necessary so that the sovereign decree could bring an end to all our discussions. Please excuse me, Your Excellency, if I carry my reasoning to the very end. You are much more familiar than I with the principles at play here, but your goodness and charity toward me will stop me if I go too far. I would have yielded a long while ago if my conscience as Founder of the Society had not always strongly ordered me to resist.

Please let me know, Your Excellency, if you have received my last lithographed dispatches; these were (1) a petition to His Holiness, (2) my last letter to the Archbishop of Bordeaux, and (3) an address to the archbishops and bishops. I have good reasons to ask if you have received these, and just in case you have not I will enclose with this letter the circular sent to the prelates.

Your Excellency, do not think that you will cause me grief by making remarks and telling me your difficulties. I think I have some grasp, with the help of faith, of these words of the Lord, "I solemnly assure you, unless the grain of wheat falls to the earth and dies, it remains just a grain of wheat. But if it dies, it produces much fruit" [John 12:24]. How will the Society of Mary survive if I do not die completely to myself, if I am not deeply humiliated and discarded as absolutely useless and even harmful? May the name of the Lord be glorified! May the name of his august Mother be spread everywhere!

I am with the deepest respect Your Excellency's most humble and most obedient servant.

G.-Joseph Chaminade

[Here is the response of the Bishop of Saint-Claude.]

Venerable and most dear Father Chaminade,

I have received without fail all the letters and other papers which you have addressed to me in the past. You may therefore be completely reassured concerning your dispatches. Thanks be to God and to his holy Mother, I am now fully aware of the deplorable matter which has caused you so much grief, pain, worry, and anxiety. You know that my compassionate heart shares your misfortune and is torn by the unpleasant and painful situation in which you find yourself. Thanks to your lively faith, your confidence in the powerful protection of Mary, your holy resignation, and your entire and perfect submission to the holy will of God, I have the firm hope that you will bear with joy and even delight, with immense advantages for time and eternity, the rude trials which the Lord has allowed to accompany you on your earthly pilgrimage during these past years. Let us hope he will soon bring these trials to an end through the voice of the Vicar of Jesus Christ on earth and grant you the calm and peace which you need so much in your advanced age. All the members of my council share my feelings of veneration and attachment for you and express the same wishes. They would be just as happy as I to learn that the Most Holy Father, after receiving a supplement of information and your own humble and respectful observations, has given you justice. This we desire in the interests of religion, of the prosperity of the pious Society of Mary, and of your own person (Agmar 7.7.162).

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In the eyes of Father Chaminade, the Minister's answer did not solve the question of his resignation, which was still pending and which left the entire matter in suspense. Two letters to Father Caillet again attempt to make him admit the illegality and the irregularity of the Chapter and of his election.

1414. To Fr. Georges Caillet, Bordeaux

November 25, 1845, Bordeaux

Original, Agmar

My dear Son,

I thank you for sending me the answer which the Minister of Public Instruction gave to the Archbishop of Bordeaux. I have read and reread this second letter from the ministry, dated November 18, 1845; then I had someone read it to me again. I was very surprised to note that it had so much in common with the first letter which you read to me at Sainte-Anne on October 25. If His Excellency had given me a copy of the first, my letter to him would have been unnecessary because of the interpretation which you, my dear Son, and the Minister and the archbishop gave to its contents.

In this second letter, I find the exact answer to mine. In truth, I was complaining of the purpose and scope of the powers which this letter gave to the archbishop. Should a Superior who tenders his resignation be looked upon as one who is dismissed for serious mismanagement in the exercise of his functions? This was my only question. I was asking His Excellency to send me a copy of this most surprising letter; he refused. After I made inquiries about the reasons for this refusal, the Minister has him send me a copy of that letter.¹

Of course it was understood that if I insisted on seeing that letter, the archbishop had to comply. This is why he certified that the letter you sent me was a true copy; this was verified by Father Fontaine on November 23, 1845; the date of the archbishop's certification is not indicated.

¹The effects of age and worry on Fr. Chaminade's reasoning are evident here.

I find the Minister is very tactful in his answer. I had told him, my dear Son, but as if in passing, how irregular the General Chapter had been, and therefore also the elections which took place. I added that I did not wish to lodge a complaint against the archbishop, but that I only asked the Minister to plead for my liberty (these may not be the exact words, but it is the meaning). His Excellency did not care to discuss the matter any further. I hope Providence will quietly show us how to bring order from this chaos.

Receive, my dear Son, my paternal greetings; they are sincere, but nonetheless lively and energetic.

G.-Joseph Chaminade

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1415. To Fr. Georges Caillet, Bordeaux

November 25, 1845, Bordeaux

Original, Agmar

My dear Son,

The letter I wrote to you yesterday morning took for granted the decision of His Excellency on the validity or the nullity of my act of resignation of January 8, 1841, according to everything you told me when you read to me the Minister's letter to the archbishop. I also told you that I would look upon that decision as an act of sovereign authority and as a dismissal because, as the Roman decree of July 30 says, I did not believe my office was vacant purely and simply because of that resignation or, as our Constitutions say, I did not give my council a pure and simple act of resignation.

In both his letters to the archbishop, the Minister takes it for granted that I have resigned and makes no reference to that old act of resignation. The same thing happened at the General Chapter. This is no way to deal with important matters.

Are you the legitimate Superior General of the Society of Mary? You want to be, at any cost. Aside from the question of morality, I maintain that I have not made a pure and simple act of resignation. If you persist and if you do not answer me very soon, I will try to explain this to the Minister. The matter is of greater consequence than you think. You want me to lie; I hope, with the help of God, not to commit this iniquity. I must stop; please take note of this.

G.-Joseph Chaminade

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Father Chaminade asks for a definitive reply from the Minister of Public Instruction.

1416. To the Minister of Public Instruction

November 26, 1845, Bordeaux

Copy, Agmar

Monsieur Minister,

I had the honor of writing to Your Excellency on November 8, and my letter was highly moderate in tone given the situation in which I find myself.

When Father Caillet told me of Your Excellency's letter to the Archbishop of Bordeaux, it was to prove to me that you had accepted my act of resignation of January 8, 1841, although I had constantly challenged its validity and I still do so, and I hope I will die doing so because if I did not do so, I would be acting against the opinions and intentions of the Government which had the king acknowledge me as Founder of the Society of Mary and appoint me as Superior General "for life" or until my "voluntary resignation." Not that this act, in itself and in its form, is not very

legal and acceptable before the law, but there has been a violation of the deposit I made. There is a taint of treason. I told Father Caillet that someone had betrayed me—I did not want to name the Archbishop of Bordeaux. To accept this act of resignation is to accept a dismissal according to the well-known principles of my adversaries. Nevertheless, Monsieur Minister, you may have remarked that I made no reproaches in my letter. I merely protested that I was being treated as though my dismissal had been motivated by some serious mismanagement of the exercise of my functions as Superior General.

The election of Father Caillet as Superior General is at least null, if not revolting. If it is null, how can he act in virtue of his so-called office of Superior? The letter Your Excellency wrote to the Archbishop of Bordeaux and the latter's interpretation of it may confer a high-sounding title on Father Caillet. I do not contest his actions, but I am content to bemoan them. But Monsieur Minister, this is an explosive situation not only for me but for the public and for the Society of Mary. *Omne violentum non est durabile* [no violent state can be perpetual].

I ask Your Excellency to bring this matter to an end with the least fanfare possible and also with the least discomfiture for the Archbishop of Bordeaux. He is much more to be pitied than to be censured. I tried to make him see that Father Roussel was the only ringleader in this matter, the only true culprit; that Father Caillet and Brother Clouzet were guilty only to the extent that they were inseparably bound to Father Roussel; and that for the 18 months that the archbishop has championed this unhappy cause, anarchy has reigned in the Society! This would have led to great disorders had the Society not kept for me the love and respect which well-born Children have for their Father. But is there not a danger that this bond, as strong as it is, might not come to weaken?

Monsieur Minister, be so kind as to speak out. If you have any personal reasons for accepting the validity of the resignation of January 8, 1841, and for judging that I have "resigned voluntarily," I will accept your decision without a murmur. If in the interest of peace you should wish me to tender my resignation, I am ready to do so. How often have I not offered it to the archbishop! But what I cannot do without deplorable falsehood is to admit that I resigned purely and simply on January 8, 1841. If Your Excellency is not satisfied with the reasons I have put forward, perhaps too summarily in my first letter, I am ready to develop them further and to present them to you soon in a memorandum.

What would seem to me to be more effective would be for you to order the Archbishop of Bordeaux promptly to send me everything he has written on the validity of my resignation of January 8, 1841.

It seems to me that it would be appropriate for me to know by what authority the archbishop had my three adversaries convoke a General Chapter more than 150 leagues from the central house where it should normally have been held, and by what authority he could influence the Chapter by imposing on the consciences of the capitulants, so that my principal adversary became my successor. (Father Caillet, the First Assistant, is by right the head of the coalition, but in fact Father Roussel is the leader and has always been the spokesman for this coalition and the author of every memorandum).

I have felt obliged to write this second letter to you, Your Excellency, and lest I tire you, I will not relate what happened around the second letter which you sent to the archbishop on November 18 and about which he told me, along with all the explanations Father Caillet could give. I asked to see it, as I had asked to see the first one, and the prelate granted my request. I was surprised to see the similarity with the first letter, which had been read to me and commented upon with many explanations. I have the honor of sending you a copy; you may find that only the dates are different.

I am with the deepest respect. . . .

Father Chaminade states his respect for the Sacrament of Reconciliation, including his protests against the confusion between the external and the internal forum.

1417. To Fr. Jean Chevaux, Bordeaux

November 26, 1845, Bordeaux

Original, Agmar

My dear Son,

I have just learned that young Jeanjean has not confessed since my departure from Sainte-Anne. Allow him to make me a brief visit, not for Confession but so I might teach him how to confess to you or to any other.

I urge you not to make use of Confession, whether you believe I am a rebel against the Church because I suppose or truly believe that the archbishop misuses the venerable decree or whether I suppose that Father Caillet has been elected by the General Chapter, or for any other supposition. Everything that is being discussed either in Rome or in Paris falls outside the scope of Confession and should not be the subject matter of your private conversations.

And you, my dear Son, why did you not in conscience protest against the convocation of the General Chapter when you saw Father Roussel sitting in the second place next to the president of the Chapter? No, this is not the end of the matter; however, I hope we will soon know what to make of it. I said this to Father Caillet last evening.

It is too late now for this letter to reach you today. The deeper I see you sink into darkness, the more my tender and religious friendship for you suffers.

G.-Joseph Chaminade

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Father Chaminade voices the same concerns which impelled him to write to Monsignor Chamon and to the Minister of Public Instruction. Later (letter no. 1425) he will explain the reason for his persistence. "It is a fact that when the Founder of the Order dies before he has suppressed abuses, these same abuses become customs and can no longer be suppressed." He still believes Father Perrodin is on his side (see Agmar 7.6.336 and 7.5.445).

1418. To Fr. Léon Meyer, Ebersmunster

November 27, 1845, Bordeaux

Original, Agmar

My dear Son,

Have you received my last dispatches consisting of four lithographed documents, well tied and sent by post? There was (1) a letter from the Archbishop of Bordeaux, (2) my petition to the Holy Father, (3) a copy of a letter from the Bishop of Saint-Claude, and (4) a copy of a circular to Their Excellencies the Archbishops and Bishops. For very good reasons, please acknowledge your reception.

Everything is in a state of unrest. The Bishop of Saint-Claude has just sent me a second letter, but he cannot have received my answer to his first. To save time and to inform you of what is happening and what I believe I must do, I will send you a copy of the long letter I wrote to His Excellency in reply to both of his, to which I will add the documents mentioned.

We must not forget, my dear Son, that the Society of Mary is subject to two very distinct human authorities, and neither must be ruffled and much less enter into conflict. These authorities are two parallels, and two parallel lines may be drawn to the extremities of the earth but they will never meet. We are walking between them, supported by both parallels.

The Archbishop of Bordeaux represents the spiritual authority and, unaware for the moment that he should be following one parallel in his spiritual government, pushes us toward the temporal authority, wishes to frighten us with his appearance, and leaves us no middle ground on which to tread. His spiritual authority paralyzes us completely, or rather we are annihilated by it, Society, Founder, General; and in virtue of his double authority he no longer has a parallel to follow, but only a line, that of the temporal government. He will be skillful enough not to have the new Society jostle the sovereign spiritual authority. If someone had time and was sufficiently knowledgeable about past events, he could write a tale which. . . . I must stop; my conscience is always uttering loud cries, "The Society is betrayed! Wickedness has been committed, and committed by the very ones who have betrayed it! They are the ones who convoked the General Chapter and who presided at it. With the archbishop's support, the ringleader of the coalition can continue to direct the operations of the Chapter! And very capable he is! What a success he obtains! Through his agency, the Superior General elected is the one who steadily supported the coalition, in spite of his awareness of the passions dominating Father Roussel.

Let us limit the reflections and move to the facts.

Because the matter is completely within the competence of the temporal authority, the archbishop cannot continue the struggle by applying to Rome. I have been following his devious ways. He sends a copy of the minutes of the General Chapter to the Minister of Public Instruction and informs him that the Superior General who resigned has been replaced by Father Caillet. The Minister thanks him for the information. The archbishop then writes to me and sends a copy of the Minister's letter to Father Caillet. During the evening of October 25, Father Caillet comes to Sainte-Anne; in his own manner, he reads to me the letter from the Minister and in the name of the king and of the Government tells me I may no longer reside at Sainte-Anne. He spends an hour with the assembled community, reading these documents and the orders of the Government. I ask the archbishop to send me a copy of that letter. He refuses. I write to the Minister. I draw up a petition for the Holy Father in which I include a copy of the letter I have just sent to the Minister. The archbishop learns that I have written to the Minister of Public Instruction, so he writes to him and receives a reply. Father Caillet again reads that reply to me, so totally simple and honest that it would seem to me to be terrible and decisive. Nevertheless, I demand a copy of that letter. He goes to the archbishop and receives permission to give it to me. Does the archbishop agree with the Minister, or is he trying to mislead him? Is the Minister really sincere, or does he merely pretend to be?

My conscience as Founder and Superior of the Society will not allow me to close my eyes to the effects of a hypocritical game which could denature the Society and would stigmatize its early years and stunt its growth. A person would be ashamed to be a member of the Society of Mary; the same would be true for the Daughters of Mary. How many other disorders would be tolerated if I lied by saying that I resigned simply and purely on January 8, 1841! I have protested and still do against the appointments that have been made by the General Chapter of Saint-Remy on October 5 and later. In the eyes of the Church, not only is this Chapter not canonical, it is anti-canonical; in the eyes of the Government, not only is it irregular in its convocation and operation, but it conceals a monstrous series of betrayals.

I felt it was my duty to address myself once again to the Minister of Public Instruction. That letter will leave here at the same time as this one; I am sending you a copy. As I told you, I am also enclosing a copy of the letter I have just written to the Bishop of Saint-Claude. I was not in possession of all the facts when I wrote it, for I did not know about the Minister's letter. I felt it might be good if Brother Hausséguy, the director of our house in Saint-Claude, wrote to the Minister with the consent of Monsignor; I sent him an outline. My dear Son, could you find another director of an important house, for example from Strasbourg or Colmar, who would write along the same lines as Brother Hausséguy? Everything would return to the order that existed 5 years ago. It is up to us to profit from past experience for the good of the Society of Mary.

I still have the conviction in my soul that God is permitting this turmoil in the Society of Mary in order to purify it and to establish it more solidly, so that it might fulfill the purpose which the goodness and mercy of God had in its foundation.

As soon as you receive this letter, please confirm whether you have received the lithographed copies which I told you about. I think you should write to the Bishop of Saint-Claude. His very frank intervention is very timely indeed, after the letters which the Archbishop of Bordeaux has written to several prelates. Father Perrodin can introduce you to His Excellency of Saint-Claude. I believe His Holiness will be highly pleased to see our problem so happily solved. When you write to the Minister of Public Instruction, however, take care never to mention the Roman decree, the Sovereign Pontiff, or the archbishops and bishops. I have warned the Archbishop of Bordeaux that in struggling against me, he was compromising himself with the Government. He would not listen; he believes he is strong and powerful enough.

Truth and conscience are my only weapons, and I will be strong enough if it is in the designs of God to preserve the Society of Mary. I can say, in my extreme weakness, in my wretchedness, "I can do all things in God who strengthens me" [Philippians 4:13].

Due to a lack of time and the absence of a secretary, I will not have copies made of this letter. I think it is urgent for us to move ahead, without haste of course, but also without carelessness and dangerous delay. I am convinced that I am working for the Lord and for the glory of his august Mother. I embrace you paternally.

G.-Joseph Chaminade

P.S. The thought just occurred to me, my dear Son, that in addition to what I have told you in this letter, you might see the Bishop of Strasbourg and the Archbishop of Besançon and perhaps some other prelates, providing you have received the packets with the four lithographed documents which I have also sent to all the archbishops and bishops in whose dioceses we are established; you could show them the papers I am enclosing.

As far as the decree is concerned, how can I possibly be called a rebel against the Church when it is because of my attachment to the Holy See, because of my respect and devotedness for everything that comes from it, that I protest against the misuse and even the unworthy use which the Archbishop of Bordeaux makes of it! I have sent to the Apostolic Nuncio all the letters which I have written to the Archbishop of Bordeaux on the complimentary decree and asked him to forward them to the Sovereign Pontiff. You have seen how I express myself in my last petition. So far I have had no answer, either from Rome or from Paris. I know only that the Apostolic Nuncio has expressed sorrow that I was not able to put the venerable decree into execution; I myself am greatly saddened. I can admit only the truth and cannot be a party to the destruction of what the Lord has ordered me to build, with the approval of the Holy See.

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This letter vividly portrays the quandary of the adversaries of Father Chaminade resulting from Bishop de Chamon's letter to Father Chaminade dated November 5, 1845 (Agmar 7.7.124). It also underscores the silence of the Holy See; no answer was forthcoming. On the silence of the hierarchy, see Inquisitio Historica, p. 305 and following.

1419. To Bishop de Chamon of Saint-Claude

End of November, 1845, Bordeaux

Original, Agmar

Monsignor,

The letter which the Archbishop of Besançon has written to you merely echoes the statement of the Archbishop of Bordeaux concerning the so-called publication of your first letter.

Oh! If only you had seen the effect which your first letter to me produced, both at the Madeleine and at the archbishop's residence! For three days, with great eagerness the archbishop issued warnings, repeated his directives, wrote to the bishops, and wrote to the Archbishop of Besançon, who was corresponding with Your Excellency!

How is it possible, Your Excellency, that your letter, "full of goodness and love" on your part, could "aggravate the very critical situation"¹ of the Society of Mary? The Archbishop of Besançon tries to show how your good and excellent letter "nearly aggravated the very critical situation" of the Society, and he proves it by citing "my indiscretion" in having your letter "lithographed," that letter which the Holy Spirit inspired you to write to help the Society in the critical state in which it now finds itself. How does the Archbishop of Bordeaux know that I will make an indiscreet use of the lithographic method of duplication? He merely supposes this, and all his remarks to the Archbishop of Besançon are false.

Your letter was duplicated, Your Excellency, but copies were sent only to interested recipients. Blessed are you, Your Excellency, for having been chosen by Divine Providence to support its work which is all to the glory of the august Mary, and the letter appeared just at a moment of crisis, which is why the archbishop was so displeased. Allow me to vindicate the choice the Lord has made of Your Excellency. This great upheaval which seems to expose the Society to destruction will merely purify it, will make it known and esteemed even more, will give it the means to spread, and will enable it to do the good to which it is called for the present generation. What happiness for both of us, Your Excellency, when we leave this world, for having provided the means of enlightening it more and more in the truths of faith and of making the practice of this faith an object of esteem and love.

After these compliments, Your Excellency, I will turn to you with confidence. Fear not; I will not rebel against the Holy See. On the contrary, it is because of my true and sincere devotedness to it that I am protesting the archbishop's misuse of the decree he has obtained from His Holiness.

I have no answer yet from His Holiness. Convinced that in the present instance His Holiness could not give me an answer, I simply asked him through the Apostolic Nuncio to tell me how I should conduct myself. In another letter I will take the liberty of explaining to Your Excellency the terms in which the Apostolic Nuncio communicated with the Archbishop of Besançon. They were all favorable to the cause we are defending.

With the deepest respect, I am Your Excellency's most humble and most obedient servant.

G.-Joseph Chaminade

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The next two letters belong together. Father Chaminade reflects on the conduct of the Archbishop of Bordeaux and the Minister of Public Instruction. He asks Bishop Chamon to present the truth to the Archbishops of Besançon and Albi. He speaks of the invalidity of the chapter and discusses the recourse to Rome which produced the decree.

¹Expressions used by the Archbishop of Besançon.

1420. To Bishop de Chamon of Saint-Claude

November 29, 1845, Bordeaux

Original, Agmar

Monsignor,

I had just finished my letter to Your Excellency when I noticed that Father Caillet, undoubtedly inspired by the archbishop, tried to make me believe that the Minister of Public Instruction had accepted as valid my resignation of January 8, 1841. I have no hint of this in the Minister's letter. I must conclude that there is a secret agreement between His Excellency and the Minister, which seems rather farfetched. However, it would be risky not to be certain about a matter of this consequence and to always leave the initiative with Father Caillet. I felt it was my duty to write a second letter to the Minister; I have had a copy made and am enclosing it with this letter.

Will the Minister continue to play the role the archbishop has assigned to him? My act of resignation of January 8, 1841, is essentially null, even though they would not admit the work of treason and the use to which my three adversaries have put it is shameful and would be frowned upon by a court of law. At whatever cost, they would like the disgrace to fall upon the Society of Mary by first falling upon its Founder. After this, would anyone with a grain of self-respect want to join the Society of Mary whose Founder is a "comedian," and even the master comedian? I can prove that both these terms have been used by the court of arbitration. One of the counsels for the plaintiffs, of distinguished name and reputation [M. de Sèze] reported this to Agen, and the news reached the Superior General of the Daughters of Mary.

Was the archbishop aware of the abuse which was being made of my resignation? I have never wanted to believe this. The ardor with which he champions this cause leads me to believe that he supports the tactics of Brother Clouzet and Father Caillet. I must add that this was only shortly after the Holy See had approved the Society and praised its religious Constitutions. The course of action of the Society is canonical or is not, according to its conformity or nonconformity with the Constitutions.

However, Your Excellency, the motives behind my constant resistance are not temporal. I almost never speak of these, and only a few times in the past 18 to 20 months. At one time or another I have given the main reasons my conscience has cried "treason!" The Archbishop of Bordeaux never paid any attention to these reasons; the most authentic proof was before his eyes, and he has constantly closed them. The Archbishops of Besançon and Albi also closed their eyes, but they thought that His Excellency had his seriously open and had verified all my proofs. For instance, while Father Chevaux was talking to the Archbishop of Albi, His Excellency asked him if it was really true that Father Roussel had been accused of shameless conduct. Father Chevaux said he had heard something like this in the north. Monsignor replied, "We have all believed that Father Chaminade exaggerated in the account he gave to the Archbishop of Bordeaux. As for the memorandum destined for the bishops alone, I admit it is fascinating; no rebuttal is possible." In vain did I ask to be shown that memorandum which I might, perhaps, not find so fascinating. No, it is useless; no rebuttal is possible! Moreover, and of this I am morally certain, the Archbishop of Bordeaux urged his two respectable colleagues in the episcopacy never to answer a single word to any communication of mine.

The very few bishops whom His Excellency has convinced will find themselves in a situation more troublesome than they expected. What would happen, supposing the Archbishop of Bordeaux could convince the Minister of the validity of my resignation? One of the main reasons which spurred me to resist my opponents was the very grave danger, given the stance of my Assistants and the false principles guiding them, that because of the unfortunate elections they would have condemned the Society they were to govern. According to their principles, I was to be regarded as physically dead. The three same individuals presided at the Chapter and, with the backing of the Archbishop of Bordeaux, had themselves nominated. Who could have ever imagined such an outcome? Is such an election canonical?

Whatever form of sophistry is used to show that my resignation of January 8, 1841, was pure and simple and truly legal and that I tendered it purely and simply, it will first have to be proved that I have fallen into unparalleled perversity in that short interval between the approbation of the Society and the resignation, and that I suddenly lifted the mask of hypocrisy which I had always worn.

A General may resign in two ways; one is indicated in article 481 of the Constitutions, placed there to punish a Superior General who would have lost all concern and interest for the Society he was governing; the other, given in article 482, points out his duty to him. Why the insistence that the Superior General and Founder of the Society did not take article 482, but preferred article 481?

Monsignor, I have said that I would consider it worthy of your zeal and love for the Society of Mary if you were to attempt to enlighten the Archbishops of Besançon and Albi and also the Apostolic Nuncio. Not that I believe that he himself fell under an illusion, but I know he is exasperated by the reports and the tactics of some prelates and especially of the Archbishop of Bordeaux, who in any case would like to see his efforts crowned with success. If he does obtain this success through the Minister of Public Instruction, I do not believe he will through the Sovereign Pontiff because His Holiness can acknowledge as Superior General only a member elected canonically, and Father Caillet does not qualify. However worthy the man may be, his election is insufferable and offensive.

Add to this important consideration the nullity of the decree of the Holy See, a complimentary decree, a clandestine decree, which can be proved by the facts, the Canons, and the reasons which influenced the Archbishop of Bordeaux to make use of it. If I have not sufficiently described this report in my letters, Your Excellency, I can elaborate on it later. In order to disillusion the prelates, do you not think you should summon Father Perrodin, and if you find him sufficiently informed, have him interview the prelates most in need of enlightenment. You can easily judge of Father's competence by his answers to the questions which the prelates probably will ask him. Thanks to this initiative, the prelates might not consider Father Caillet, who was appointed by the Government, as an appointee of the Holy See also.

Let me return for a moment to that grave accident, Father Caillet's nomination and recognition by the Government; I believe it can be avoided. It is easy to prove that this election was irregular on all counts. (1) The one who ordered the convocation of the Chapter had no right to do so. (2) Those who convoked it had no authority; they had even less, for they had the obligation to avoid attending. (3) The true reason for the convocation was not an election. It was alleged that the resignation was pure and simple, given voluntarily by the General; on the contrary, since the very beginning it has always been contested, and for such important reasons that in conscience he was bound to resist and even to cry "treason" from time to time. The motive behind the convocation was not the obligation to elect a replacement. (4) If a Superior General wishes to resign, it is up to him to call a General Chapter in order to have his resignation accepted and to see that a successor is elected. However, his adversaries held the Chapter 150 leagues away from him; for a long time he did not know that Saint-Remy had been chosen, and a false motive was given, from which it was inferred that it was necessary to elect a successor and three Assistants. (5) The General Chapter is presided over by three former Assistants, Fathers Caillet and Roussel and Brother Clouzet; however, one of the three, Father Roussel as Head of Instruction, was no longer the head of that office. His Superior had removed him from that office, had reduced him to a simple religious, and had ordered him to go to the central house. This very legal dismissal took place February 11, 1845. Father Roussel had the right neither to convoke a Chapter nor to attend one, yet he sat with Father Caillet, and he continues in a hypocritical and underhanded way to influence his two colleagues, Father Caillet and Brother Clouzet. He skillfully alleges motives of conscience suggested by the archbishop. All the capitulants expressed their desire to keep their aged Superior and Founder of the Society. But those same

motives, skillfully addressed to their consciences, obliged them to vote for Father Caillet. I might remark here that in the non-convoked General Chapter, with the capitulants dispersed but very legal in every respect and consulted for the purpose—to express a choice between the former administration or the aged Superior—the General Administration received practically no votes, and the counting was done scrupulously.

What can be said of an election by a General Chapter that is forced by motives of conscience which are foreign to the essence of the election? Your Excellency, I feel the need of making many other observations, but time is lacking and the courier is coming. I will take the liberty to continue at the earliest opportunity. I will do nothing that contradicts your wishes, for I am convinced you are honestly seeking the good of religion and of the Society of Mary. Believe me when I say that I fear nothing, that my only desire is to do the will of the Lord, and that I am firmly convinced that God will not abandon me in my hour of need, in my helplessness and deprivation. May God enlighten me!

With the deepest respect, I am Your Excellency's most humble and most obedient servant.

G.-Joseph Chaminade

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1421. To Bishop de Chamon of Saint-Claude

November 30 to December 4, 1845, Bordeaux

Original, Agmar

Monsignor,

Because of the changes in the rounds of the courier, I have the honor of continuing the letter which left only yesterday, November 30, although it was dated as of yesterday.

In spite of the canonical and civil illegality of his election, Father Caillet continues with great effrontery to exercise the functions of Superior General, always assisted by the Archbishop of Bordeaux. I think it is pointless to try to discover what he told the Minister. It seems to me it is of the utmost importance to demonstrate this double illegality. I do not wish to fathom Father Caillet's mind. He is only too happy to accept the responsibility because this is what the archbishop desires at any cost. During those first days after I had upbraided him, he told me bluntly, "Another General Chapter will correct any irregularity."

I am governing the Society of Mary, the Institute of the Daughters of Mary, and its Third Order under two distinct yet sovereign mandates which are intimately linked. The Civil Statutes have never conflict with the Constitutions, and vice versa. I may resign my generalship, but cannot and may not give up my title of Founder. When I resigned my office for the good reasons I have so often given, I must keep to my dying day my functions as Founder.

Ever since January 8, 1841, I have proven conclusively that my act of resignation was not made purely and simply. What has the Archbishop of Bordeaux done? He consulted the Sovereign Pontiff, whose decision handed down by his own tribunal was supposed to settle the matter we were debating. This is the venerable decree which, it seems to me, His Excellency is misusing in an alarming fashion. On the strength of that decree of July 30, he is the superior of a General Chapter. He can easily mislead the Government; there is nothing simpler. All His Excellency has to do is write to the Minister that the aged Superior has resigned and therefore the Society has elected Father Caillet by its General Chapter. As proof, the archbishop can easily produce the minutes which he has taken care to check beforehand. So that I might have nothing to say about the invalidity of that act of resignation, His Excellency has me say through Father Caillet that I acknowledge the act of resignation of January 8, 1841, and that the Minister has

accepted the validity of that act in spite of its age, in spite of, etc. . . . The archbishop learns that I have written to His Excellency; he informs me that in reply to my letter, the Minister confirms his decision on the validity and that His Excellency has given the Minister what they call my “second resignation.”

After hearing about this so-called letter confirming my resignation, I believed I should write a second time to the archbishop. I inserted a copy of that second letter in the one which left by today’s post.

The two main tactics used today by the archbishop are reduced to the first, invented by Father Roussel; it tries to prove that I had resigned according to article 481 of the Constitutions and that the Society should consider me physically dead. The two means are the venerable decree of July 30 and my old act of resignation. If Your Excellency thinks it would be proper to send Father Perrodin to interview some of the principal bishops or archbishops who have been drawn into this illusion by the Archbishop of Bordeaux, he would need to be well-informed about the relationship of the Roman decree to me and to the Society, and on the value of the act of resignation of January 8, 1841.

I will begin by examining the decree. With respect to the Society, it is perfectly null and void. Canon Law, which emanates from the Holy See, declares a decree invalid when it has been obtained in the manner used by the archbishop last July 30. What must the Sovereign Pontiff think of the manner in which the archbishop is using the decree? What will Their Excellencies the Archbishops and Bishops think when they hear the consultation which resulted in the decree? I maintain that although this decree gives proof of the highest wisdom—the judgment of Solomon is merely a pale imitation in this respect—it is basically invalid because it is a complimentary decree. Every circumstance proves that the archbishop acted alone in the matter, in order to guarantee a happy outcome to the type of legal action in which we were both engaged in the Roman court.

Let us now look at the decree itself.¹

The decree is simply a reply to the consultation by the Archbishop of Bordeaux. Now what is the consultation? It is made up of two parts, and the first one reads, “Whether in consequence of the act of resignation tendered by Father Chaminade on January 8, 1841, the office of Superior General of the Society of Mary, of which he is the Founder, should be declared vacant and a Chapter should be convoked to elect a new Superior General according to the Constitutions.”

That section of the decree which answers the first part of the consultation reads, “The eminent Fathers, after mature deliberation, decided that they could answer in the affirmative concerning the first part.”

If the Archbishop of Bordeaux had sought a decision which would decide the dispute between us, why did he not add to his petition, “The Superior General of the Society of Mary admits, with everyone else, that in its wording and form the act of resignation of January 8, 1841, is a true resignation, valid before any tribunal, and that he had written it to be accepted by the government of the king. However, he also maintains that he had given it in keeping to his council with one reservation, one condition, but that members of the council have violated their trust and denied any reservation, any condition. In a word, the Superior contends that the use they have made of this act of resignation would have the tainted with treason and was a violation of a trust.”

Does the omission for which the Archbishop of Bordeaux is responsible not cause the decree to be clandestine? What is the meaning of the word “clandestine”? According to Pontas, Collet, etc., a statement is said to be clandestine if a truth necessary for the reception of a favor is withheld. In the case of the archbishop’s consultation with the Holy Father, was there the

¹The influence of Bro. Bonnefous is more and more evident.

omission of a truth which should have been declared? There must have been, because for the past five years, my adversaries did not dare show the act of resignation to the Government while it was being so strongly contested, and because the use to which it was put before the court of arbitration was always so secret that the court labeled them comedians.

Is it not rather insulting to His Excellency to call the decree a complimentary decree, a clandestine decree, as if the archbishop were not acting in good faith? The Superior General certainly does not intend to cast aspersions on His Excellency; to suppose this would militate against the profound respect he openly professes for His Excellency. Here he is merely revealing a fact which has existed since the incident of the resignation with his council and the adjournment of the meeting. In his name and in the name of his two colleagues, Father Roussel launched his opposition with extraordinary vehemence. His Excellency believed him, championed their cause, and in good faith presented it. He may possibly be blamed for not believing my true explanation of the matter, and the multifarious discussions which have since taken place are due to the illusion to which he had been exposed.

But when the Sovereign Pontiff gave his decree in answer to the intervention of the archbishop, should he not have taken into consideration the other petitions which had already been made?¹ Of course, the Sacred Congregation could remember and also rejoice over the fact that the archbishop had given them the means of settling the matter without having the parties themselves intervene. In fact, the matter would have ended there if the Superior General had been able to believe that by his resignation his office would be vacant and with no recriminations from either side. Even if the Superior could not be convinced of this, the matter would have come to an end because the archbishop, realizing that he had been deceived, would have withdrawn from the dispute.

Monsignor had also been deceived by Father Caillet, by a petition which suppressed essential truths. Ever since Monsignor has championed the cause, his decisions have always been clandestine, and what harm has been the result! This caused the departure of Father Roussel so he might more easily oppose me, in spite of his compromising position which strengthened the anarchy. That is when Father Roussel completed his fascinating memorandum for the bishops alone. The bishops did keep the secret perfectly. Why were they fearful of communicating the document to others? If the others would have been fascinated in their turn, the matter would have come to an early end; if the memorandum did not have the same effect on everyone, the principle and source of all our troubles would soon have been recognized. Whatever the outcome, it is evident that my opponents were very dedicated to secret communications, to recommending silence, and any persecution was carried out in darkness and confusion.

The General's three Assistants must at all times be readily available to their Superior and must be present in the central house when the Superior is absent. Only when they are together can they administer. They administer more collectively than individually—three form a chapter. In the early days when I took every precaution to assure an integral General Administration for the Society, I had appointed Father Chevaux as Superior General, Father Caillet as Head of Zeal, Father Fontaine as Head of Instruction, and Brother Clouzet as Head of Temporalities.¹ The composition of this General Administration was accepted by me and by my three Assistants. I never suspected such skillful hypocrisy, even in Father Roussel. I should perhaps have been more alert after the violent attack of the day before when the council meeting had been adjourned.

Ever since the archbishop is the head of the opposition, no mention has been made of that nomination. If I bring it up at times, a thundering rumble of denials soon drowns out my voice, and the original sophistry comes to the forefront. "You tendered a written resignation; it is pure

¹The archbishop's consultation in Rome in November 1844, and Father Chaminade's in February 1845.

¹January 9 or 10, 1841.

and simple; that resignation is perfectly valid because it conforms to article 481 of the Constitutions; you have no right to speak or to complain; the Society must consider you as physically dead; you may not even convoke a General Chapter to select your replacement; we will convoke it and preside at it; Father Caillet will be Vicar General and we his assistants; how dangerous it would be if you were present at the Chapter! You might speak, and all our scheming would collapse!”

See whether, contrary to the general thought of the Constitutions, the Archbishop of Bordeaux has not taken article 481 out of context. Not only am I being treated as someone physically dead, but they have treated me as a dead man for a longer time than Lazarus, who was dead for only four days. I will not interpret the *jam faetet* [surely there will be a stench, John 11:30]. I am not saying this to complain, but what will become of the Society under this administration?

Excuse me, Your Excellency, if my digressions are endless. I am convinced that Father Perrodin is knowledgeable enough and sufficiently aware of the catastrophe which God has permitted, in his impenetrable designs, to be able to open the eyes of Their Excellencies the Archbishops and Bishops and also of their vicars general, and to turn them away from the Archbishop of Bordeaux.

I will return to the Roman decree. What is to prevent it from being treated as a stealthy decree? Is it because I had intervened when the Archbishop of Bordeaux sent his first petition to His Holiness in November of last year, and because the Superior General of the Daughters of Mary also had intervened by her humble petition to His Holiness? She asked never to be under the authority of Father Caillet or of anyone who had adopted his principles; she gave a brief account of the false, erroneous doctrine of Father Caillet. Now, Your Excellency, is there anything in those documents to indicate that the Sacred Congregation would have linked our petitions with that of the archbishop?¹ Is there anything in the venerable decree which can be considered a precise and literal answer to the petition mentioned, the second consultation of the archbishop?² There seems to be a conspiracy of silence around the first petition; this is even more remarkable because the Sacred Congregation seemed determined not to reply to the first petition, however much the archbishop asked His Holiness for a reply. Because he lost hope of obtaining a reply, he proposed the plan for reconciliation, although this was not done in good faith.³ The Archbishop of Bordeaux absented himself for three months, and during this time he presented his petition to His Holiness and obtained the decree in question.

I will pause now, Your Excellency, and continue this later. I will discuss the decree itself and the various circumstances involving the Sovereign Pontiff, the Apostolic Nuncio, and Their Excellencies the Archbishops and Bishops. I will return also to my old resignation of January 8, 1841, which is truly invalid. My intention is not to minimize the importance of what I have already told you, but to refute an imposter.

Pardon me, Your Excellency, for I have said too much in using the word “imposter.” It is possible that the archbishop, Father Caillet, and Brother Clouzet are acting in good faith when they use those means commonly employed by imposters. I do not believe I can say the same for the ringleader of this entire unworthy matter, Father Roussel.

I am with the most profound respect Your Excellency’s most humble and most obedient servant.

G.-Joseph Chaminade

¹In fact, the summary presented to the Sacred Congregation quotes only from the documents of the adversaries of Fr. Chaminade.

²The second consultation by the archbishop in the summer of 1845 is pure conjecture on the part of Fr. Chaminade.

³Here again this is the product of Fr. Chaminade’s imagination.

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Both the General Administration and Father Chaminade were becoming more inflexible. Brother Clouzet writes to Father Chevaux, "Truly the Good Father is neither frank nor loyal." For his part, Brother Clouzet did not deliver the letters Father Chaminade was writing to Father Rothéa. Father Chevaux complains of this (see letter no. 1432). We can understand Father Chaminade's concern about the fate of his letters (see letter no. 1418 postscript, letter no. 1413, and letter no. 1425).

In a reference to Father Fontaine, Father Chaminade says, "He never says a word." Meanwhile, Father Chevaux is very bitter against Father Chaminade, whom he considers as a father who is determined to destroy his sons and who is in the wrong. "I am sometimes tempted to think, as Their Excellencies the Archbishops have said, that the Spirit of God has withdrawn from him" (to Father Meyer). As if this were not enough, another incident took place between Father Chaminade and Father Caillet. Father Chaminade refuses to pay the taxes unless Father Caillet repents; let him borrow the money.

1422. To Fr. Georges Caillet, Bordeaux

December 1, 1845, Bordeaux

Original, Agmar

My dear Son,

In your capacity as Superior General of the Society of Mary, you must pay all the taxes which I formerly paid myself. As general administrator, you should not have let them accumulate.

These attributions of yours have always been contested, especially the first, the main point of contention, your appointment as Superior General by the General Chapter of Saint-Remy on October 5 and following, which was basically irregular and absolutely invalid.

Because I myself cannot acknowledge you without being guilty in the eyes of the Government, I cannot pay the taxes addressed to my name. Nevertheless, my dear Son, I will pay them, although through your negligence they amount to a considerable sum, providing you put your demand in writing and confess to the status just as I have described it. It seems to me that you would do better to borrow the sum from M. Clouzet, the merchant, Rue des Fossés, to avoid a lawsuit with his brother Dominique, the Head of Temporalities in the Society of Mary.

G.-Joseph Chaminade

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Father Chaminade is convinced, and not without reason, that Father Caillet is exaggerating the demands of the Minister and the archbishop. He knows Father Caillet has been appointed Superior General by a Chapter which had been convoked irregularly and held illegitimately, and in which he was called a traitor to the Holy See. He was ordered by the archbishop not to set foot at Sainte-Anne, and he obeyed. Father Caillet tells him that the Minister, who in July had acknowledged him as Superior General, now refuses to do so for no stated reason; he will not even show him the incriminating documents.

1423. To Fr. Georges Caillet, Bordeaux

December 3, 1845, Bordeaux

Original, Agmar

My dear Son,

I am deeply pained by the contradiction between your statements and those of the archbishop. I do not think I can put off my return to Sainte-Anne any longer; I must be able to come and go freely. I doubt whether the orders you gave me on the part of the Minister of Public Instruction, through the archbishop, were truly those intended.

May I ask you, my dear Son, (1) to have the archbishop give me those in writing. Tell him that I no longer trust your word unless it is supported in writing; and (2) give me the Minister's decision as to the validity or nullity of my old resignation. Everything tends to prove that it is obsolete and void, even though you can deceive His Excellency as to its origin almost 5 years ago.

One of the main sources of my grief is to see that the archbishop concludes from the Roman decree that my dismissal of Father Roussel was done without sufficient authority, that he had the right to convoke and preside at the General Chapter, and that today you may place him at the head of an important establishment. Brother Descazals assures me that he is now at Réalmont; you may not have ordered this, but you certainly gave your permission.

Supposing—and I think this not likely—that the archbishop refuses to send me a word in writing, please let me know in your next letter.

G.-Joseph Chaminade

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To this plea, Father Caillet answers that Archbishop Donnet was not in Bordeaux. Father Chaminade then says that during this absence, he will be satisfied with a note from Father Caillet. On December 13 Father Caillet will ask Archbishop Donnet for personal guidance in the matter (Agmar 7.7.172). On December 3, Father Caillet writes to Father Chevaux in these terms.

Here is another letter from the Good Father, which is even more hostile. Please reflect on the measures we must take, then come to Bordeaux immediately after your Mass so we might agree on a plan of action. As a precaution, please lock the door of the room which he occupied, that of the infirmary, and the one on the other side, very similar to yours; bring all three keys to me. Please warn Brothers Michaud, Gobillot, Bidon, and Joncas of the Good Father's plans, so that they may be ready for any eventuality. Tell them I uphold everything the archbishop has decided, and I grant no special permission in favor of the Good Father (Agmar 7.7.164).

1424. To Fr. Georges Caillet, Bordeaux

December 6, 1845, Bordeaux

Original, Agmar

My dear Son,

Your answer to my letter of December 3 was to the point. You were to provide a proof that the strict orders you are relaying to me come from the archbishop, convinced as you are that he gave them in virtue of the Minister's decision on my outdated resignation of January 8, 1841, and that this decision included a denial of all communication with Sainte-Anne. Now, what if I communicate with the rest of the Society? You told me in so many words that the archbishop was absent. It is true, you could bring me no written word from His Excellency. Well, my dear Son, I will be satisfied during his absence with your written affirmation that the archbishop truly has given you orders and that he did so by a decision of the Minister.

My dear Son, please send me this statement. You can easily do this, whatever else you may have to do. If I do not receive it, I will go to Sainte-Anne under the presumption, which has some foundation, that the Minister's decision is so strict only because the archbishop hopes that he will make it so.

I have told you, my dear Son, that I will always submit to the orders of the Government, however demanding they may be, and that I will never complain. However, I will come to an understanding with His Excellency, if he so desires or so permits. Saturday afternoon, December 6, 1845.

G.-Joseph Chaminade

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In a letter to Father Meyer, Father Chaminade reviews the arguments in his favor. In a short note the following day, he says he finds his statement "somewhat shapeless" but expresses his confidence in the Bishop of Saint-Claude and the Bishop of Ajaccio.

1425. To Fr. Léon Meyer, Courtefontaine

December 5, 1845, Bordeaux

Original, Agmar

My dear Son,

I have just received your letter of November 29, and I hasten to answer with the following observations. (1) You did not acknowledge the packet containing four lithographed documents sent to you under seal and by post. The cover letter was sent a few days later.

(2) You refer to a short letter you sent me; if you mean immediately after the General Chapter, I did receive it. Since then I have acted, as you can see from the lithographed papers or from the letter sent by the Bishop of Saint-Claude.

(3) You agree that I did well to protest my resignation of January 8, 1841, which I entrusted to the members of my council; I did have a reservation or a condition. The members of my council deny the reservation, which is merely that I resigned according to article 482, but they insist that I did so according to article 481. To prove this, they claim that my only resignation was the one written and signed by me, and that if I had wanted to include a reservation, I would have done so; but no, it was a pure and simple resignation. Why have a secretary in the council? Is it not his task to keep the register of the council? "Show me the register of the council," I have always said, "and you will see that I did resign a first time, and that the resignation is truly canonical." In vain, I have asked, begged even, to see the register of the council. To get rid of me, Father Caillet wrote on oath, on his honor as a gentleman and on his status as a priest, that the register had never left the secretariat, but that he would never show it except by order of a competent authority. This miserable oath lacks the three conditions which the prophet Jeremiah required of an act of religion. The register of the council would be an authentic exhibit before any tribunal.¹²

(4) You know that our discussions last year were fruitless; the Archbishop of Besançon would not declare himself, but he was of the opinion that all the documents on both sides should be entrusted to the Archbishop of Bordeaux, who would transfer them to His Holiness the Pope.¹ Sometime later, the Archbishop of Bordeaux told me he had written to the pope on the matter. I asked him if he would allow me to enclose a short letter with his. "Oh," he answered, "my letter is finished," meaning he had already sent it. Because I did not know what His Excellency had

¹²In fact, the resignation had not been written in the register of the council, which was opened only on January 10.

¹See the letters of June 27 and July 4, 1844.

written, I did not write to the Holy Father. Long afterward I heard that the archbishop had sent the Sovereign Pontiff a copy of a circular which they called my “second resignation” from all power, from all authority. However, His Excellency had forgotten to place his seal on the document, and it was returned to him. I was asked to have a copy made from the original; I agreed, providing I was allowed to make some remarks about this circular. They no longer wanted my copy. Father Caillet chose rather to send Father Prost during the night to Barsac to find an original, a good 8 leagues from Bordeaux. He returned the next morning, and the archbishop was able to send it on by mail. That is when I addressed a petition to the Holy Father. I explained the document which the archbishop had sent. What is the purpose of a delegation of authority? Is a delegation a definitive resignation? I asked His Holiness to send me all the other documents they might have sent to support that cause which His Excellency had espoused with such ardor. I described to the pope Father Roussel, the ringleader in the matter, the one who was at the head of the coalition of my three Assistants. To my petition I added a letter which Father Roussel had just written, without explanation, at the end of January 1845. I still have the original in my desk. The three Archbishops of Bordeaux, Albi, and Besançon knew him well, and so did Father Caillet and Brother Clouzet. I did not dare to send you a copy, or to the Bishop of Saint-Claude, for it is too abominable and makes statements about the Archbishop of Bordeaux. . . . I will send you a copy if it is necessary because of the relationship which you will have in the future with the Bishop of Saint-Claude.

(5) Nine months passed, and in spite of the insistence of the Archbishop of Bordeaux, no decision was forthcoming from Rome. Under these circumstances, Father Caillet suggested a true plan for reconciliation, which I accepted. It seems certain now that it was presented hypocritically, for no sooner had I accepted it than Father Caillet did everything he could to reject it, alleging that he could do nothing without the approval of the archbishop, who had absented himself for a period of three months. During this interval he obtained the Roman decree which is actually in question. The archbishop sent it to me with a letter from the Apostolic Nuncio.

When I acknowledged these items to the Archbishop of Bordeaux, I told him I accepted this decree with the same profound respect I would have given to Our Lord Jesus Christ. I have always professed the same respect and obedience, but His Excellency always took pleasure in accusing me of rebelling against the venerable decree because I opposed the unprecedented abuse he made of it, especially in convening a General Chapter of the Society, which is anti-canonical in the eyes of the Holy See and highly irregular in the eyes of the Government.

Monsignor is dealing with the Government as he has dealt with the Holy See. He hopes by his condensed secret and personal statements to the Minister of Public Instruction to have him accept my old and outdated resignation of January 8, 1841.

6. The Bishop of Saint-Claude was kind enough to take up my defense in a very courageous fashion. I welcomed his gesture; I sent you a copy of his first reaction. I cannot send you copies of the other two, for I have no secretary, or of the four others which they tell me followed.¹ I advise you, my dear Son, to consult with the Bishop of Saint-Claude and Father Perrodin regarding your conduct, for I will always agree with His Excellency, just as he will never do anything without consulting me. We act from the same principles and have the same objectives; we seek only the truth, the honor of religion, the propagation of practical faith, and the support of the Society of Mary which has been founded for these ends.

(7) You cannot believe, my dear Son, that human motives inspire me to resist with such persistence and energy. Of course not! For so many years now, especially since January 8, 1841, I have sought to resign my generalship in order to prepare myself more immediately for death, and also to see the Society forge ahead with a firm step toward the purpose of its institution.

¹Bro. Bonnefous probably.

These are the motives behind my resistance. (1) My three former assistants are preaching a false and erroneous doctrine in matters of religion and faith which have to do with the principles behind the foundation of the Society of Mary. They proclaimed these false principles at the time when their struggle called for my moral death, to prevent me from speaking until my physical death. Had I not resisted, the Society ran the risk of being denatured, bastardized; it might have become a bastard Society of Mary. (2) I had more to fear from Father Roussel, whom Brother Clouzet and Father Caillet had chosen as their leader in the struggle. They were not masters of the sophistic weapon, as he was. Father Roussel was devoured by two violent passions, ambition and impurity. He realized that I had a deep knowledge of his character, although I had never been his confessor, and he knew I had authentic proof. Dangerous principles leading to anarchy were evident then. A spirit of resistance to unity and uniformity in the apparel reigned. Brother Clouzet encouraged this resistance, more by his example than by his teaching. I could point to other abuses. It is a fact that if the Founder of an Order dies without suppressing existing abuses, these same abuses are considered to be customs and cannot be eliminated, or they lead to controversy which is unending. Ever since January 8, 1841, these abuses have not been suppressed, and they have grown. Even as I write, Brother Clouzet has still not arrived at his new post, Father Caillet deals with matters which require his presence, etc. . . .

(8) Great harm will be done if there is no union among the priests of the Society. I believe we should all unite under the direction of the Bishop of Saint-Claude. An archbishop has espoused the cause of the opposition, so it is fitting that a bishop would champion the cause of truth. I suggest that you simply send him a rough copy of this letter. You will thereby show your confidence in him. I can give His Excellency factual proof of everything I have told you and written in this letter.

Not only do I not have time to have copies made of this letter, I cannot have it read back to me. I am writing to a loving Son; he will excuse me and understand. I embrace you tenderly.

G.-Joseph Chaminade

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1426. To Fr. Léon Meyer, Ebersmunster

December 6, 1845, Bordeaux

Original, Agmar

My dear Son,

Hardly had I mailed the unstructured letter I had just written to you, when a new one from the Bishop of Saint-Claude arrived. I am sending you a copy. You will notice that his regard for the Society and for me is increasing. Let us take advantage of the means provided by Providence to return the Society to the state God desires. If you have not written to the Bishop of Saint-Claude, give him an account of the letter I have just sent you; show him confidence, and that you will never be better off under my charge than by trusting yourself to his. He will inform his council of our problem, with which he is now well acquainted. I will answer him and prove to him that the Roman decree is entirely surreptitious and invalid as far as the Society is concerned and that the Archbishop of Bordeaux is misusing it. May the entire Society be of one accord on this point and it will always be strong, whatever happens.

I embrace you most cordially, my dear Son.

G.-Joseph Chaminade

P.S. The Bishop of Ajaccio will most likely support us, and very firmly. I believe he would not hesitate to go to Rome if this would become necessary. I still have not found time to write to him, but I hope to do so soon. I made no mention of this to the Bishop of Saint-Claude.

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Correspondence with the Bishop of Saint-Claude continues throughout December. The influence of Brother Bonnefous is seen in the interpretation given to the absence of Archbishop Donnet. His contemporaries tell us that Brother Bonnefous “distorted everything he heard and gave it a fanciful interpretation”(recollection of Brother Lestrade). Father Chevaux will write to Father Chaminade, “I certainly will not send you a list of all the absurdities he has had you say and do” (January 1847, Agmar 8.2.255).

1427. To Bishop de Chamon of Saint-Claude

December 8, 1845, Bordeaux

Original, Agmar

Monsignor,

I have just received the touching letter with which you honored me on November 30. I immediately wrote to Father Meyer the elder and asked him to place all his confidence in Your Excellency, just as I have done. There must be a complete unity of attitudes, feelings, and gestures among all the priests of the Society of Mary, and all the lay directors must be united to them and dependent upon their direction; and their direction will be guided by Your Excellency.

The ministerial decision on the validity of my old and obsolete resignation of January 8, 1841, is very important to the future development of this matter. The archbishop looks upon it as an affirmative decision and concludes that it is the Minister’s intention for it to be equivalent to a dismissal on the grounds that I have reached an age where I can no longer govern, although I wish to continue because of a senile obsession. I do not believe he will use other arguments. I do not think the archbishop has quite made up his mind yet, although under Father Caillet’s prodding, the rigor of his measures would lead someone to believe he has. In order to find out, I wrote a short letter¹ to Father Caillet, a copy of which is enclosed.

The next morning, Father Caillet came to tell me that he had gone to see the archbishop, but that he was absent. Several hours later I sent my porter and he verified this absence, adding that the prelate would be away for 12 days or so. Someone might suspect that the principal reasons for the precipitate departure of the Archbishop of Bordeaux was to discuss the matter in private with M. de Salvandy.² It seems the archbishop must truly be intent on harassing me, for it seems to me that all these subterfuges are very compromising for him. The Honorable Minister might recall the concessions he has granted to His Excellency and might ask to be repaid in kind. If Your Excellency and your council decide that Brother Hausséguy should write to the Minister, I believe he should do so soon, but that he should follow the directive which you will be kind enough to give him.

Sometime later, Your Excellency, you might want Father Meyer to ask some of the more prominent directors to write. I am much more at ease now that I know that I will be dealing with this matter under your direction only.

Until now, Monsignor, Father Caillet has seemed to want to wage war against me only in the name of the redoubtable Archbishop of Bordeaux; but now he wants to act under his own title of Superior General, which only the archbishop acknowledges. Here are the facts. When under a so-called ministerial order³ I was told to leave Sainte-Anne, the entire community was afflicted

¹Letter no. 1423.

²Note the influence of his imagination, and perhaps of the suggestion of Bro. Bonnefous. M. de Salvandy was the Minister of Public Instruction.

³October 24, 1845.

and alarmed. However, a certain number, especially among the younger ones, wanted to leave the novitiate and lead a lifestyle of which I did not approve and which was contrary to the promises they had made. Then came the retreat, at the end of which vows and promises were to be renewed; several refused to renew them. At the root of this dissatisfaction is the reinstatement of Father Roussel as Head of Instruction and the convocation of the General Chapter with Father Caillet and Brother Clouzet, both of whom, in spite of their knowledge of the disorders, follow him in the lengthy persecution to which they have subjected me. Some of Father Roussel's victims are still at the novitiate of Sainte-Anne, and the community as a whole looks upon him as a priest without piety, a lesser number as impious and sacrilegious in his profession, without a confessor for years, hypocritical, a master dissimulator who has a way with words. Do not think I am exaggerating, Your Excellency; I have ample proof of everything I present, and the archbishop is convinced of the terrible nature of his conduct at Sainte-Anne. "Convinced" is not the word I should use, but His Excellency has undeniable proof of his conduct. I wanted to give him genuine proof of his behavior while at Saint-Hippolyte, but the archbishop refused to look at it. He preferred to spread the belief among the Archbishops of Albi and Besançon that I had exaggerated, etc. After the Chapter, Father Roussel was sent to Réalmont as director of the novitiate and superior of the house of formation. How can I pacify the novitiate of Sainte-Anne? Father Chevaux tells them that Father Roussel made two extra days of retreat after that of the capitulants at Saint-Remy, one or two days of extraordinary prayer which converted him. When I voiced my astonishment and sorrow to Father Chevaux, that according to the decree of July 30 the pope seemed to intend to reinstate Father Roussel, he told me that he had truly converted and he had proved this. He said that since his return to Réalmont, he had not lapsed into his horrible faults. You can see at a glance, Excellency, what type of moral doctrine these men preach.¹

I wanted to continue from time to time to give my instructions at Sainte-Anne, so I wrote a second letter to Father Caillet; you have a copy enclosed. He did not wish to reply in writing. He came, accompanied by Father Fontaine, and told me that I was to write nothing without an order from the archbishop; that the prelate would return on December 13; that he needed no signature from the archbishop concerning Sainte-Anne; that the letter His Excellency had sent me in which he acknowledged Father Caillet as Superior General was sufficient; that as Superior General of the Society, he prohibited me from exercising any function at Sainte-Anne, but that for my health, I could go there but must be silent and turn away anyone who approached, for I was suspect. I will not report the other abusive insults, especially those dealing with the decree.

I am always deeply astonished, Your Excellency, at the relentlessness with which the Archbishop of Bordeaux seems to favor an opposition which is so wicked, from any point of view. It is wicked because my three Assistants hatched it among themselves without any type of authority. More than that, the Constitutions oblige them to assist their Superior and define the word "assistant." They exonerate themselves by terrible denials; only yesterday Father Caillet repeated these and added some others. I simply told him, "I believe you will have enough fear of God to believe that God forbids lying. But you have taken up the habit of mental reservations, and this easily convinces you that you are not lying." His face flushed, but he made no comment. Father Fontaine said nothing.

How is it possible not to see the literal meaning of the venerable decree? For 9 months the archbishop asked the Sovereign Pontiff to hand down a decision, but to no avail. Then came the plan for reconciliation, when they admitted that the pope did not reply and that these long periods of waiting were very harmful—taking into account the status quo ordered by the archbishop and the interdict threatening any priest of the Society who would wish to come to my assistance, plus the sequestration of all the documents of the Society by order of His Excellency.

¹In fact, Fr. Roussel had to be withdrawn from Réalmont, then he left the Society of Mary. Several years later he went to America and served as a priest in the dioceses of Monterey and Los Angeles, where he died in September of 1885 (Agmar 16.4.162-68).

I am asked to accept the reconciliation; I am given proof that there is no other way to end it all and to restore order. I accept very simply. Then difficulties are discovered in the wording of the plan. Under the pretext that the archbishop must be consulted, they announced his departure. I comment to His Excellency on the lack of good faith in Father Caillet; he leaves without a word. Rumor has it that the archbishop is going to Rome; he was not. It seems he went to Lyons and visited his family. The struggle over the plan for reconciliation continues in his absence; what would happen if the plan were adopted and a decision came from Rome? Fathers Caillet and Roussel are in perfect agreement.

Everything I have told you is true. The decree came quickly upon the return of the archbishop. The very dates of the decree, either of its petition or of its concession, are in that interval; the dates correspond perfectly. The doubtful answer concerns only the explanation given by the archbishop. Moreover, the decree itself is in answer to the prelate's consultation, and to no other. It is his petition, the one that I feared, and I had expressed these fears to several people and above all to Father Caillet, who always tried to reassure me. The archbishop sent the decree to him.

Monsignor had stated to the Holy Father that my resignation was a pure and simple one, and since no reservation had been made everyone considered it valid, given freely and voluntarily. He probably added that I would not admit this only because of stubbornness, and that my refusal caused great concern. Finally, His Excellency repeated to His Holiness the same objection which Father Roussel and his followers had made immediately after the adjournment of the council meeting at which the details of my resignations had been ironed out.

In the nuncio's cover letter, is it not said that the decree is "the decision on the question that had been proposed to the Sacred Congregation"? Why the question that had been proposed, and not the questions? Because, Your Excellency, for the past 9 months he had been seeking another decision. I am almost ashamed to be obliged to make so many comments on a fact which is so evident, and evident from the first reading of the decree, as I noticed when acknowledging the reception of the document to His Excellency. This decree is by its nature surreptitious, and by all Canon Law it is invalid; His Excellency should not misuse it to the extent he has, and especially in writing to several bishops if not to all, that I am straying from the paths of the Church. If I resist the abuse which the archbishop is making of this decree, it is because of my attachment to the Holy See from which it comes. Why is the decree handed to me, if not to say "yes" or "no"? After my resignation of January 8, 1841, did I believe that my generalship was vacant? If I would say "no," the archbishop would need no petition.

I must stop here, Your Excellency. I have barely the time to offer you the expression of the most sincere and most respectful devotedness with which I have the honor, Monsignor, of being your most humble and most obedient servant.

G.-Joseph Chaminade

P.S. I have no secretary; therefore, this letter was delayed beyond two postal deliveries. During the interval I have made another study of the venerable decree of July 30, and I am taking the liberty of sending you the rough outline; perhaps you will find a certain summary of the matter which occupies us.

I am very sorry to see Father Roussel exercising the functions of director and superior of the beautiful establishment of Réalmont. As his bishop of origin, you could put a stop to this, at least to his priestly functions. What can someone expect from such a General Administration of the Society of Mary?

Here is the study announced in the previous letter, composed under the influence and supervision of Brother Bonnefous, who introduced something foreign to the habits of Father Chaminade—the single and double underscoring of important passages.

Father Caillet wrote to Bishop de Chamon on December 5, 1845 and sent him the circular destined for the bishops (Agmar 7.7.168). At Father Chaminade's suggestion, Father Meyer also wrote to him, but to ask him to work for peace (Agmar 7.7.170). The same day, the vicar general of Saint-Claude informed the Archbishop of Besançon that his letter to Bishop de Chamon had impressed him and that new communications from Father Chaminade made him favor Father Chaminade. He informs Bishop Mathieu that Father Roussel has been dismissed from the seminary of Saint-Claude for reasons of immorality and that his reputation there is not good (Agmar 7.7.163); Bishop Mathieu replied on December 14. After a personal visit, Father Perrodin rallied Bishop de Chamon to the cause of Father Caillet. In a letter of December 22, Bishop de Chamon announces this to Father Chaminade. He insists he has studied all the documentation and adds, "I now know all the pros and cons. Well, dear Father, I have become convinced that the Sacred Roman Congregation . . . pronounced itself only after being informed of all your means of opposition, and therefore there is nothing furtive about the decree, as you claim. From this I conclude that it is for you a sacred duty to submit to it . . ." (Agmar 7.7.179). Father Perrodin had spoken to Father Caillet about this letter from Bishop de Chamon to Father Chaminade on December 20, 1845.

1428. To Bishop de Chamon of Saint-Claude

December 10, 1845, Bordeaux

Rough Draft Original, Agmar

A New Study of the Roman Decree. A Summary

Object of the decree handed down by the Sacred Congregation on July 30, 1845, and the state of affairs of the Society of Mary from the point of view of this decree, or remarks on the decree of July 30 obtained by the Archbishop of Bordeaux and on two circumstances regarding the two sections of the decree.

(1) An act of resignation of January 8 must not be considered separately, by itself, in its form and content, although the Superior admits its legality; it is highly legal but tainted with treason.

(2) The Superior and Founder never did give up his office, even though by means of a delegation he suspended the exercise of its powers; on resuming these functions, he did not resume the office.

The decree of July 30, given by the Sacred Congregation of Bishops and Regulars, makes mention of a consultation by the Archbishop of Bordeaux. This consultation is strictly on the initiative of the prelate, as the decree implies. In fact, the title or inscription on the document or collection of sheets composing this consultation declares that the resignation of the Superior General took place on January 8, 1841, and the consultation does base itself on this fact, which is admitted by all concerned.

The aged Superior only intervened to deny that a resignation had taken place, and he plays no role in the document. It cannot be said, therefore, that the decision of the question proposed to the Holy See condemns him, for he does not contest the decision, but rather the statement of the question.

When the archbishop saw the endless discussions between the Superior General and his Assistants, he thought he saw a means of bringing them to an end and reconciling the parties; he hoped the decision he would request would be accepted by everyone. The Holy See itself, being consulted and sufficiently informed, thought the decision sought by the archbishop might be final.

However, desiring to bring the discussions to an end in some manner or other, Rome hesitated for a time and finally decided on July 30, 1845, on a decree expressive of a doubt. By this decree, the Holy See invited the Superior to yield, if he could; if not, it authorized the archbishop to study the matter. His Excellency had no reason to support the Assistants once he recognized the injustice of their claim.

The Decree of July 30, 1845, pronounced as a result of a consultation by the Archbishop of Bordeaux, was granted as a favor and is intrinsically surreptitious.

It was granted as a favor if in his document the archbishop argued that the total religious problem of the Society of Mary could be reduced to that one question—that is, whether my resignation of January 8, 1841, was a true resignation from my generalship, one that could stand up in any court and one that was necessarily free and voluntary. The Sacred Congregation first addressed the question on July 18, 1845, but the decree was pronounced definitively only on July 30.

It is evident that it is a surreptitious decree (1) because the document presented by the archbishop contains exactly the same sophism used by Father Roussel and my Assistants to deceive the good faith of the archbishop, who then so warmly championed the cause of these Assistants who had become the adversaries of their Superior. (2) A study of the decree reveals that the Sacred Congregation actually took note only of the contents of the petition on which it based its deliberations, and the decision handed down is based on the statement contained in it. (3) All the circumstances which preceded, accompanied, and followed the Roman appeal show that the archbishop, believing it to be useless and perhaps dangerous to have the aged Superior intervene in a tactic whose success would end everything, wished alone and secretly to obtain a decree which would decide that my two resignations, one for the Sovereign Pontiff and the other for the Government, could be included in the one I wrote on January 8, 1841. The archbishop was correct in believing the resignation to be pure and simple and truly legal, for it had been handed purely and simply to the members of my council. But this is not the case. (Circumstance relative to the first part of the decree.)

Upon resigning, the Superior confided the act he had written and signed to the members of his council with an essential reservation; this reservation was not written into the act by the hand of the Superior who presided over his council, but by the hand of his Secretary, Father Roussel, in the register of the council. So far the Superior General, who resigned from his mandate, has vainly asked to be shown this register.

Is it so surprising that the divine wisdom which permeates the Holy See, in order to bring such a disquieting matter to an end, and one tainted by the horrors of Father Roussel, used a dubious form to conclusively answer all parties? The form is doubtful because the document is absolute only inasmuch as the statement on which the Sacred Congregation based itself is exact, and the act of resignation according to which the Superior General must be considered to have vacated his office must have been discussed in itself, form and content—that is, just as it had been presented by the Archbishop of Bordeaux.

The Sacred Congregation has issued a decree which is conditional on the Superior General's acceptance, but it asks for explanations. He must state if on giving his resignation on January 8, 1841, he believed the office of Superior General of the Society of Mary was to be considered vacant.

The Superior General answered the archbishop that he had not believed then and has not believed since that according to the act of resignation taken separately and aside from the reservation which must be written in the register of the Council, the office of Superior General of the Society of Mary was to be considered vacant. Consequently, he never intended to resign purely and simply, and the proof is that he has continued to exercise his functions except for the period when he delegated his powers (and also when obliged to do so by the Government). But this was not to abandon his office, and therefore he could not resume it as is stated in the second part of the venerable decree. (Circumstance relative to the second part of the decree.)

When around Pentecost of the year 1844 the Superior General resumed his functions by retracting by two authentic protests his resignation of January 8, 1841, and the administrative powers he had confided to his Assistants by delegation, the said act of resignation had not yet been returned to the bestowing authority, which is the Society of Mary. Father Chevaux, actually First Assistant to Father Caillet, recognized and admitted this himself. Moreover, the Assistants themselves had announced in a circular that the Superior General had confided the administration to them so he could occupy himself exclusively with the spiritual, and after that circular, some important members of the Society such as Fathers Chevaux and Fontaine, the actual First and Second Assistants of Father Caillet, still addressed as Superior General the person regarded today as having resigned and abandoned his office on January 8, 1841; they were writing to him under this title even in 1843. The Society saw nothing but a delegation of authority by which the Superior, in order to confine himself to the spiritual, allowed his Assistants to administer the Society. How then, can the Assistants call as a second resignation or as a confirmation of a resignation what they had considered and told the Society was a simple delegation justified as a delegation?

How deplorable is the illusion of the archbishop! How did those measures which were to calm everything become rigorous and unjust through the malice and the duplicity of the adversaries of the Superior who had deceived the archbishop? Is this not to misuse the venerable decree (an action which, from respect for our Monsignor, we dare not qualify) to call the Superior a rebel against the Church and the Holy See, to punish him as such because in all conscience he can only speak the truth? He cannot say before God and before others that according to the act of resignation of January 8, 1841, the Office of Superior General of the Society must be regarded as vacant. What would be the reaction if the true motives behind the Superior's resignation were known? Why he had to resign truly but only according to the reservations which must be mentioned in the register of the council? These motives are diametrically opposed to the hateful motives which seemed to animate his three adversaries, and more especially Father Roussel, who claimed to be and who was the ringleader of the opposition.

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Bishop de Chamon's letter might have shaken the resolve of anyone who relied on human resources, but not Father Chaminade. Notice that he had not received copies of the two circulars of Father Caillet mentioned by the bishop in that letter.

1429. To Bishop de Chamon of Saint-Claude

December 29, 1845, Bordeaux

Original, Agmar

Monsignor,

I received with great interest your letter of December 29. I sympathize with the health problem you are experiencing at the present time. I can put it in these words, "I will pray."

I believe your council made a wise decision concerning the documents furnished by Father Caillet. I was in no position to suspect a ruse in their composition. I have read neither of the circulars from Father Caillet, but I know enough to be able to answer them.

The first circular must have been similar to the one I proposed to send to all our establishments providing what he had written to me from Saint-Remy was true. This circular was in a letter giving all the conditions. It was given to him along with the letters I had sent to the Apostolic Nuncio, that he might send them to Rome. After reading them, Father Caillet came to see me. His attitude was not what I had expected. I withdrew the short circular about which I had already informed him. As he left he asked if he could speak to the community, and I agreed.

He had Father Fontaine read my plan for a circular to the assembled community. Aware of what had happened, I had the community listen to my letter to Father Caillet, which contained the plan for the circular. Father Caillet had not read this letter to the community, and everyone saw through the deception. I learned some days later that Father Caillet had sent copies of the circular to all the houses. Not knowing the details, I did not send anything to our establishments.

Your council mentions Father Caillet's circular of November 30. I know nothing about it. However, Father Rothéa wrote some time ago to tell me that Father Caillet's second circular was much different, and even the opposite of the first. I am not surprised that your council, thinking that I had suffered a lapse of memory, advised me to confirm what I had said in the first. I can easily confirm this deception by Father Caillet by producing all the pertinent letters. This deception is less serious than the one concerning the answer from the Minister of Public Instruction. He had always maintained very energetically that the Minister had decided that my antiquated and outdated resignation of January 8, 1841, was valid and that he had accepted it and wanted to see it implemented. I believe you read the two letters I wrote on this matter to the Minister; I sent a copy of the first to Rome along with my petition to the Holy Father. Annoyed by this undue deception, I took the means to check whether in fact the archbishop had on hand the decision from the Minister, and I managed to find out that he did not. I am about to write to the rector of the Academy of Bordeaux and have him halt the disorders of which Father Caillet is guilty in his administration, and these are already serious. I have no secretary and cannot send you a copy of this letter to the rector; however, I will have this done as soon as it is possible.

I am grateful to your council, Your Excellency, for their belief that I can submit to the venerable decree of the Sacred Congregation of July 30, 1845. I have said, and I repeat with them about this decree, "Rome has spoken, the case is closed." I submit to all the terms of this decree. If the decree is taken in its literal sense, the case is closed.

However, Monsignor, am I in revolt against the decree when I refuse to countenance the abuse which the Archbishop of Bordeaux has made of it? When I will not admit that the Sovereign Pontiff wishes by decree (1) to force me to lie and (2) that I interpret the expressions must be convoked by "Fathers Caillet and Roussel and Brother Clouzet will convoke," etc.? When it is necessary to convoke a General Chapter, who according to all the religious and civil Canons should convoke it and preside? Is it not the Superior General, if he is living? To interpret the decree as the archbishop did is to avoid the question, whereas the pope wants to end it all. Several days ago I said to Father Caillet, who had come to visit me, "Do you really believe, my dear Son, in your soul and in your conscience that the intention of the Sovereign Pontiff in granting the decree was to retract my dismissal of Father Roussel from his office as Head of Instruction so that he might convoke and preside with his two colleagues at the Chapter? Do you think that after all this he should be at the head of a large establishment such as the one at Réalmont, the novitiate where he is now? The Sovereign Pontiff is aware, as you are, that Father Roussel is guilty of immodest habits, a hypocrite who uses and sins and commits sacrilege of the most holy objects for his own satisfaction and for the corrupts the young." Father Caillet answered rather bluntly that the pope passed judgment as all the other tribunals do and did not take into account all possible intentions. Also, Father Roussel has converted. "How do you know?" I asked. "Since he has been at Réalmont, he has no longer been guilty of the base sins you refer to. It is because of malice that you always bring up Father Roussel." And with these words, he left.

Please allow me, Your Excellency, to add a few reflections. If I were to submit to the decree in the face of such abuses (here I mention only one, but there are many others), would I not be doing an injustice to the Holy See? Would this not be a criminal action on my part? Would this not make the Society answerable for a disgrace from which it would never recover?

I must not pursue this any further in writing. . . . The fate of the Templars immediately comes to mind. If I approve the government of Father Caillet, I would revoke my discharge of Father Roussel, for Father Caillet approves of what I disapprove, and he has always supported Father Roussel.

You tell me, Your Excellency, that several prelates have rallied to the decision of the Archbishop of Bordeaux. But no, Your Excellency, I have received no reaction from any bishop, not even to my last circular. Never has the archbishop or Father Caillet given me one word in answer; they merely affirmed their decisions. I am almost certain that the bishops prefer to rely on the judgment of the Archbishop of Bordeaux, for they believe His Excellency is intelligent enough to be their guide.

Do you think, Your Excellency, that if Father Perrodin, who is well informed, saw each bishop and explained as clearly as possible what I have told you that they would change their attitudes?

In all the discussions, attention is always turned to my failing memory. It is true that my already weak memory is steadily declining with age, but does the present matter require a great memory? We are dealing here with a single fact, recorded by the decree. Was my resignation of January 8, 1841, an isolated, definitive act? Or was this act to be handed to the Government of the king conditionally, once the reservation had materialized? My opponents insist that I made no reservation. I resisted; my resistance was persevering; how can I forget my resistance and its motives? Even if the opposition continues for some years still, will I forget my resistance? This is like trying to have someone forget his own existence. Instead of loss of memory, would this not be a loss of reason? Did Fathers Caillet and Roussel not tell me that I had fallen into second childhood?

I am with the deepest respect, Your Excellency, your most humble and most obedient servant.

G.-Joseph Chaminade

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Father Chaminade qualifies the method of obtaining the decree not only as surreptitious, but also as argumentative—that is, not only was there silence as to the true reasons for Father Chaminade’s attitude, but false reasons were given to obtain the decision.

1430. To Bishop de Chamon of Saint-Claude

December 29, 1845, Bordeaux

Original, Agmar

Monsignor,

I wish to take advantage of the few moments left to me before the departure of the postman.

It is claimed that the venerable decree is not surreptitious; this is true in a way because the pope was aware to a certain extent of the reasons given by the opposition. However, the decree would then be both surreptitious and argumentative and because of this, the Sovereign Pontiff has given a doubtful form to the decree. If the archbishop had been in good faith, he did this to bring the case to a close. And the matter is finished.

I must admit in all truth that I have never felt myself discharged from my functions after that resignation of January 8, 1841. Now Monsignor abandons the struggle, it is finished, the decree has decided everything, “the case is closed.”

The decree shows consummate wisdom and reflects the divine wisdom, but it must be read in the right spirit. For instance, it must be observed that the decree obliges me to lie, if it is not in doubtful form, and that would be detestable. One sign that someone does not wish to see

a doubtful form in the decree is the inconceivable interpretation given to the words a General Chapter should be, etc. by the following, “Fathers Caillet and Roussel and Brother Clouzet will convoke a Chapter.”

To more easily grasp this short explanation, you must remember that the Sovereign Pontiff has always refused to answer the first petition of the Archbishop of Bordeaux in November of 1844. In spite of the archbishop’s insistence, almost 9 months passed before the prelate again applied to Rome.

I have written some notes which develop all the facts I have presented, Your Excellency, and the young man who is my secretary has also proved, without my urging and using his Latin grammar, that the decree is complimentary. Are we not to presume that the Sacred Congregation and its secretaries are familiar with Latin grammar?

Would you be so kind, Your Excellency, as to send me copies of Father Caillet’s circulars and any other writing that may have been used to strengthen his position? If you judge it expedient to write to Father Caillet, I think that according to my conscience and if you share my views, you should tell him that all his proofs argue against him, and that you will send someone to tell the prelates this, especially the Apostolic Nuncio, and then will inform His Holiness.

I am with the deepest respect Your Excellency’s most humble and most obedient servant.

G.-Joseph Chaminade

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Unable to obtain from Father Caillet or the archbishop an explanation of the attitude of the Minister of Public Instruction in his regard, Father Chaminade turns to the rector of the Academy of Bordeaux for information.

1431. To the Rector of the Academy of Bordeaux

December 30, 1845, Bordeaux

Copy, Agmar

Monsieur Rector,

Is the letter of His Excellency M. de Salvandy to be considered a decision without appeal? The Archbishop of Bordeaux assured me that when he sent the Minister my old act of resignation of January 8, 1841, he had also mentioned the justified resistance to the presentation of this act to the Government, that the decision had all the overtones of a dismissal, and of a dismissal for faulty administration. The archbishop did not say this in so many words, but he revealed it in his actions. I always knew that a decision had been handed down, for the archbishop said so, but I found it hard to believe this was the tenor of the decision, and I am seeking proof.

I am certain now, Your Excellency, that no such decision is in the hands of the archbishop. I did not resign from my generalship purely and simply. However, the act of resignation was confided to the members of my council with a condition which was very legal and acceptable to the Government; once the condition was realized, it was to be handed over. I have always contested this act of resignation because the condition was never fulfilled. After almost two years of championing the cause of my adversaries, the Archbishop of Bordeaux has finally found a way to remove me. He has had a General Chapter convoked, and by means of religious considerations he has morally forced the capitulants to elect one of my adversaries. Everyone finally voted for Father Caillet. Without my knowledge, the archbishop then wrote to the Minister that I had resigned and had been replaced by Father Caillet and enclosed the minutes of the Chapter. I enclose the letter from the archbishop advising me of these steps.

I have suffered and am still suffering from this interminable persecution. I lament my situation and would ask you, as the representative of the Minister, to step in and put an end to it. Father Caillet submits in all things temporal and spiritual to the archbishop and faithfully carries out all his orders. In addition to the scandal, great disorders are rampant, although not visible to the public. The public is aware only of my complaints.

The Statutes given to the Society by the Government of the king acknowledge me as Superior General for life or until my voluntary resignation and stipulate that the Society recognizes that it is voluntary. Therefore, there are two conditions if there is to be a true resignation. It is not enough for it to appear to be real, but it must appear so to the Society represented by the members of the Chapter of that Society. Only the Superior General can convoke a General Chapter, and only for the reason that he has proposed, that of having his resignation accepted and of choosing a replacement when he presides at the voting of the capitulants. The opposite is what took place.

Without the knowledge of the so-called resigning Superior General and against his express wishes, the Archbishop of Bordeaux exerts his authority on an unsuspecting Society and convokes a General Chapter for the purpose of resolving the problem raised by my supposed rebellion against the Holy See, and this in spite of the protests of most of the capitulants. But as true and tried Catholics, they yield; they no longer recognize me as their Superior, and they appoint another. I ask you, Monsieur Rector, if the Society has truly accepted a resignation which was not presented by me and of which most did not know the origins or the circumstances.

The minutes of the election were kept. At the last meeting of the Chapter, these passed through the hands of Father Roussel, Head of Instruction and Secretary of the Chapter. Father Roussel had been dismissed from his office on February 11, 1845; however, His Excellency needed him to convoke and preside at the General Chapter and had used his supreme authority to annul my dismissal. I must say that this dismissal was justified and very legal, and I cannot disavow it. In addition, Father Roussel was the real leader of the coalition of my three Assistants who planned my dismissal. It is actually from his hands that the minutes have come to us.

I have in my possession authentic proof that this Chapter was held in the manner described, according to the intentions and plan of the Archbishop of Bordeaux.

Can someone affirm, Monsieur Rector, that this type of Chapter is what the law means and wants—that is, that the Society accepts the resignation from the Superior General which he tenders voluntarily? The Archbishop of Bordeaux, convinced that he was authorized to act as he did, hurried to send the minutes of the Chapter which elected Father Caillet to His Excellency M. de Salvandy. Could His Excellency, without failing in etiquette, fail to thank the prelate; should he not tell him that if everything did not go as described, the former Superior would protest? I did protest, in fact; but I protested only the exaggeration contained in his decision and concerning the validity of the old act of resignation of January 8, 1841. I did not imagine that the prelate would impose conditions to the point where justice is rarely deceived.

Today I call your attention, Monsieur Rector, and through you that of His Excellency to what has been labeled a “decision” in the second letter to His Excellency, the only one which was transmitted to me and which is actually a mere repetition of the first with a different date. I cannot find a decision on the controversy between the archbishop and me. It is up to you, Monsieur Rector, and up to His Excellency to indicate more clearly that the letter is merely an expression of gratitude for the minutes of the General Chapter and not, as the archbishop claims, a formal decision on the validity of my old act of resignation.

The most certain proof is contained in the letter which the prelate sent to me along with the minutes. He acknowledges that Father Caillet is the Superior General in his diocese by the following: “The new Superior arrived to take possession of the establishments in my diocese, and

from this day forward I give the power to govern them to him alone.” In the same letter His Excellency says to me, “I have sent the minutes to the Nuncio of His Holiness, to the Minister of Public Instruction, and to all my venerable colleagues who have in their dioceses establishments of religious men and women dependent on the Society.”

I have also had the honor, Monsieur, to write to the Apostolic Nuncio and to the other venerable prelates mentioned in the archbishop’s letter, and I have told them the same things I had pointed out to him—that is, the impossibility of acknowledging Father Caillet as Superior General of the Society of Mary. Not one of the venerable prelates has answered a single word. Not a letter from the archbishop or from Father Caillet indicating that the various prelates had accepted Father Caillet in his new capacity in their dioceses, from which it is easy to conclude that Father Caillet is acknowledged only in the diocese of the Archbishop of Bordeaux. He is the only one who reads a formal decision into the answer of His Excellency. He hastens to take advantage of it, and he does so by looking upon me as guilty for not thinking as he does, for not obeying him promptly. This explains the severity of both the prelate and Father Caillet, a severity about which I complained to the Minister of Public Instruction in two letters, copies of which you will find enclosed.

I would attribute all this severity to the decision of His Excellency on the assumption that I had been denounced, but now I see that it must be ascribed to the interpretation of the archbishop and Father Caillet. To disobey one’s prelate, one’s First Superior, what a sin! And it would not be permitted to say that the worthy prelate abused his authority! Is there not an abuse of authority when the temporal is confused with the spiritual, as he has done so often in the miserable matter of my act of resignation of January 8, 1841? I believe I mentioned this in a letter I wrote to His Excellency M. de Salvandy. How harmful is an abuse of spiritual authority! Please see for yourself, M. Rector, if I have deviated from the spirit of the law. If I do not, then the answer of His Excellency to the archbishop is only conditional—that is, on the supposition that the minutes which the prelate sent to him are authentic.

I am very interested in the prosperity of the Society of Mary, for I founded it for the benefit of civil society in general. What is my sorrow, Monsieur Rector, to see it fall into hands which will lead to its destruction! The Superior General and his Assistants have two sovereign superiors in the civil order, the archbishop and the Government of the king. Father Caillet and his Assistants who hold their authority from the archbishop will do nothing without an order from him. How many other examples could I give! But I must stop.

Father Caillet hurriedly exploits his position and multiplies his acts in order to confirm the unfounded title he has and to show the archbishop the grave drawbacks of a forced resignation on his part. Here is where I encounter a serious difficulty, Monsieur Rector, and where I need your advice. Father Caillet has already asked me for a letter I have from His Excellency M. de Salvandy in which the Minister gives evidence of a true interest in the Society of Mary and grants dispensation from military service for our young men who are at least 20 years of age, providing they in turn agree to be active in the primary schools of the Society. The letter dates from July 9. I told our various establishments about it; our young men and their families rejoiced greatly. Father Caillet hurriedly saw to it that our young men conformed, and in order to establish his credibility with the Minister as the successor to my rights and privileges, he asked me for what he called the last letter from the ministry in order to present it to you with the list of those given a reprieve. Will I not be compromising myself, Honorable Rector, in my present situation? Should I not wait until His Excellency discovers the trap which the archbishop has set for him?

Another difficulty, one that may not be as serious but is at least more troublesome, is that in allowing the Society of Mary to deteriorate, Father Caillet allows the Third Assistant Brother Clouzet, the Head of Temporalities who was also mine, to reside away from the central house of the Society and to administer as he pleases the goods and revenues of the Society. Brother Clouzet buys, sells, and borrows at will. On his return from the Chapter at Saint-Remy, Father Caillet did not bring him along. Questioned by me, he said he had allowed him to stay a few days

longer; but, Monsieur Rector, two months have gone by and he still has not appeared! He sends the creditors of the Society who go to him on to me. I pay sometimes in order to avoid a scandal. I wrote to Father Caillet that if he did not deal with Brother Clouzet, I would take him to court. He did pay, but he has since sent me more creditors.

These abuses, which are more than 5 years old and are the source of so many difficulties, are one of the principal reasons I never recognized the act of resignation, for in making the act I had reserved to myself the right to correct the grave abuses they were introducing into the Society and which have spread ever since the archbishop pronounced himself on my act of resignation of January 8, 1841, and claimed that it withdrew all authority from me. Could I have foreseen that they would be named to replace me? However, this is what will happen if after reading the irregular minutes of the General Chapter, His Excellency the Honorable Minister de Salvandy accepts the nomination of Father Caillet as Superior General of the Society of Mary.

Meanwhile, Honorable Rector, what am I to do? If the archbishop has reasons and motives superior to mine to want the Minister to condemn me and to restore things to what they were before these miserable altercations, reasons and motives which I have had the honor to disclose to you, let him give you in writing the reasons and motives for persecuting me, and you can judge from the answers I will provide. But will it not be necessary to take the interest of everyone into consideration?

With the most respectful confidence in your justice, I am

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