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# Fr. Chaminade and the Normal Schools

By John F. Emling, S. M., Ed. D.

In 1967 The Society of Mary will celebrate its sesquicentennial. As a “shadow cast before,” this essay deals with the Society of Mary—that institution *par excellence* which, in the words of an article written in preparation for its first centenary, is “the prolongation and extension of the shadow of its founder in space and time”—William Joseph Chaminade (1761-1850).<sup>1</sup>

It is primarily in understanding Fr. Chaminade that we come to grasp the significance of the coming sesquicentennial, for he organized the Marianists to be a lasting influence of apostolic action on modern society, first in France and then, potentially, in the whole world. In order better to appreciate the reasons for the vitality of the Society and its significant impact upon education today, we bring into focus and sequence the more important aspects of Chaminade’s biography which stresses his role in the founding of educational institutions and normal schools.

## *The Founder*

On April 8, 1761, in Perigueux, France, William Joseph was born of Catherine and Blaise Chaminade, the thirteenth of fifteen children. He declared later, as an adult, that this family circle enabled him to appreciate and to live the family spirit which later characterized and motivated him in his apostolic works.

William received a good elementary schooling in his native city and a classical secondary education in the neighboring town of Mussidan where his brother and spiritual director, John Baptist, a priest and former Jesuit, was a member of the College, and his brother, Louis, a student. Later William studied philosophy and theology in Bordeaux at the College de Guyenne. He was ordained at the Seminary of St. Sulpice in Paris and pursued advanced studies, terminating in the degree doctor of theology.

Fr. Chaminade returned to the College of Mussidan and became both treasurer and professor.<sup>2</sup> There he remained six years, giving valuable assistance to the youth of his day and to his two brothers, now also priests. This work at Mussidan was a presage of Fr. Chaminade’s future career and gave him the experience upon which

1 John E. Garvin, S.M., *The Centenary of the Society of Mary* (Dayton: The Brothers of Mary, 1917); Peter A. Resch, S.M., *Shadows Cast Before* (Kirkwood, Missouri: Maryhurst Press, 1948).

2 Several letters written by Fr. Chaminade as Business Manager of the Seminary of Mussidan are of significance during these years before the Revolution caused his exile. *The Letters of Father William Joseph Chaminade*, trans. Thomas Poitras, S.M. (Dayton: Marianist Publications, 1963).

he later drew in determining the direction of his future sodalities and religious organizations in education.

### *The French Revolution*

The New Government forced the College of Mussidan to close its doors, and the Chaminade brothers went to Bordeaux. Fr. William Chaminade remained there, disguised as a tinker, all during the perilous days of the Revolution, carrying on the work of the sacred ministry in secret. More than once, as he later declared, the thickness of a board alone separated him from the guillotine as he risked his life for his flock, referring to his escape from the anti clerical forces by his hiding under a large wooden barrel. From 1789 to 1797 the priest Chaminade carried out an effective apostolate by instructing, blessing, absolving and baptizing.<sup>3</sup>

During those long, dark, and dangerous hours, when he saw how philosophers set up the pagan goddesses of Liberty and Reason to replace the true God of Christianity, he developed and refined a concept of education that would restore and strengthen the basic Christian truths and values. All was so different now. Before the Revolution, education stressed the Faith, but now people no longer looked beyond death toward heaven, but worshipped Posterity, the future millennium of worldly happiness, the “heavenly city of the eighteenth century philosophers.”<sup>4</sup>

### *Exile in Saragossa*

During a lull following the initial Reign of Terror, a *coup d'état*, staged by the Jacobins in the spring of 1797, resulted in a stringent decree exiling all priests listed, rightly or wrongly, as *émigrés*. Still in Bordeaux, Fr. Chaminade, taken unaware by this sudden reaction in the political field, was forced to leave his native land and to spend the next three years in exile in Spain. There, with many of his fellow exiles from the Revolution, he found a welcome refuge at Saragossa, within the shadow of the renowned shrine of Our Lady of the Pillar.

In this three-year retreat of study and meditation, which one scholar aptly termed the “Saragossa Revelation,”<sup>5</sup> Fr. Chaminade developed, expanded and clarified his philosophy of education and saw a way of using education to re-christianize and revitalize France and the entire world. The exact details of the extraordinary heavenly manifestations he experienced there are difficult to determine.<sup>6</sup> It is certain,

3 All these are considered today as “the complement of Christian education” according to Article 279 of the *Constitutions of the Society of Mary* (Dayton, 1937), p. 72.

4 Carl L. Becker, *The Heavenly City of the Eighteenth Century Philosophers* (New Haven: The Yale University Press, 1932), pp. 119ff.

5 Norbert Burns, S.M., *Ascetical Formation at the Origin of the Society of Mary* (Pars dissertationis ad Lauream in Facultate S. Theologiae Apud Pontificium Athenaeum “Angelicum” de Urbe Roma, 1955; Dayton: Marianist Press, 1960), p. 25.

6 *Spirit of Our Foundation* (Dayton: St. Mary’s Convent, 1911), I, 4-12. Treats in great detail this supernatural aspect of the Society of Mary along with the testimony of Fr. Chaminade and of his early disciples.

however, that Fr. Chaminade there conceived his future educational apostolate to center around two new religious congregations devoted totally to Mary Immaculate and assuming special forms which would allow a more easy access to all classes of modern society, thus enabling it to adapt itself to the exigencies of time and place until the end of the world.

### *Sodalities*

When Napoleon took control of France near the close of 1799, under a new constitution which insured religious peace for all, Fr. Chaminade returned to Bordeaux. Under this encouraging promise of definite and lasting peace for the Church, he opened an oratory where he celebrated Mass daily and preached on Sundays. Naturally those survivors who remembered him during the Reign of Terror began to attend regularly. It was from this gathering that he initiated the Sodalities for young men and women, beginning with eight members being officially enrolled on the Feast of the Immaculate Conception, 1800. Soon the eight numbered twelve, the twelve became forty, and by the end of the first year the Sodality had exactly one hundred members—all working together to bring a Christian atmosphere back to Bordeaux.

Though Sodalities already existed, these had been formed to prevent their members from being swept away by the current of evil, whereas Chaminade's Sodalities were to inculcate into the members of all classes of society "a dynamic force that makes theirs a steady movement forward"<sup>7</sup>—the militant spirit of Christianity that should set out to control and direct society. They were to Christianize their environment without becoming destroyed by it. *Nova bella elegit Dominus*<sup>8</sup> was their favorite text and for these new wars Fr. Chaminade insisted with his Sodalists that a new spirit was imperative.

Thus it was through the dynamic spirit of the Sodalities that the great work of reconstruction was launched—education through Sodalities was to be the pivot around which Chaminade's life would move, the lever by which he would set into motion the real revolution—one which eventually would encompass the totality of the educational needs of his times enabling him to extend truly Christian influence over the individuals from the "cradle to the grave."<sup>9</sup>

Nor was this ideal a mere theory. Within a decade after his return to France, Fr. Chaminade was able to say that all the best and influential men and women of the city of Bordeaux, the third largest in France at the time, belonged to his Sodalities.<sup>10</sup> He inaugurated and directed such an amazing number of apostolic activities,

7 P. Broutin, "La Modernite de G. J. Chaminade," *Nouvelle Revue Théologique*, LXV (Avril, 1938), Quoted in Edmund Joseph Baumeister, S.M., *Secondary Education of the Society of Mary in America* (Columbus: Graduate School of the Ohio State University, 1939), p. 10.

8 Judges, 5:8.

9 Article 281 of the *Constitutions of the Society of Mary* states this idea more exactly.

10 William J. Kiefer, S.M., "Danger was no Stranger—the Story of Father Chaminade," *Pamphlet-a-Month Guild* (St. Louis: The Queen's Work), p. 15.



all of which today would be considered an expansion of education and all of them stemming from the Sodality, that Cardinal Donnet, Archbishop of Bordeaux, said of him:

Should you trace any apostolic work in Bordeaux to its origin you will find at the beginning of every one the name of Fr. Chaminade.<sup>11</sup>

### *Work of the Sodalities*

We can judge of the success of the Bordeaux sodality by the fact that fifty sodalities in cities close to Bordeaux asked for affiliation with it. Indeed Fr. Chaminade's group of apostles were revitalizing the Christian life of Bordeaux. First there was the diocesan seminary established whose faculty and student body came from the sodality.<sup>12</sup> Then two of the sodalists undertook the education of the wild juvenile delinquents of Bordeaux, the spawn of the revolution. Their work met with such success, that the two sodalists resolved to make teaching their primary work under the aegis of a religious society devoted to teaching. Fr. Chaminade procured for them a copy of the Rule of John Baptist de la Salle and applied to the Provincial of the Christian Brothers at Rome for several experienced Brothers to open a novitiate at Bordeaux. In 1806 he secured two, and with the several candidates drawn from his Sodality they opened the first novitiate of the Christian Brothers in France after the Revolution.<sup>13</sup> Fr. Chaminade lodged them at his suburban residence, the Villa St. Lawrence which had been his hide-out so often during the Reign of Terror, and accepted the appointment as their ecclesiastical superior by Archbishop d'Aviau.

The Sodality furnished candidates for other established religious societies and continued to send its quota to the diocesan seminary. Fr. Chaminade also took the initiative to institute new activities or to put on a permanent basis those that would otherwise have been short-lived. Of the latter principal one was the Misericorde, an undertaking dedicated to the care of wayward girls in the city of Bordeaux.

All these great achievements were far from satisfying Fr. Chaminade, even though at the time he saw in his Marian Sodalities the remedy best adapted to contemporary needs. He often asked himself what would happen to these establishments after he was gone. In his frequent meditations on the spirit of the Sodality, he hit upon the expedient of providing "a man that would never die,"<sup>14</sup> and from the Sodalities was born this immortal man—

11 Henri Rousseau, *William Joseph Chaminade*, trans. John E. Garvin, S.M. (Dayton: Mount St. John Press, 1914), p. 149.

12 Joseph Simler, *Guillaume Joseph Chaminade*, p. 219ff., quoted in Baumeister, p. 13.

13 *Ibid.*, pp. 115-220.

14 Paul Hoffer, S.M., *Pédagogie Marianiste*, trans. Gabriel Rus, S.M., Part I, p. 7 (in possession of the translator).

### *The État.*

It was but natural to find some members of his Sodality who wanted to progress in their generosity and devotedness. In all there were fifteen men and, later, an equal number of women—the most fervent, devout and militant leaders in Bordeaux. Since they wanted to give their entire lives to this special work, Fr. Chaminade gave them special rules and called their group *The État*—“State of Religious Living in the World.” Out of this group came the nucleus of the Marianists—two religious congregations, one for women and the other for men.

### *The Daughters of Mary*<sup>15</sup>

The great step toward permanency was not long delayed. Miss Adele Trenquellion, who was prefect of the Sodality in the provincial town of Agen, expressed to Fr. Chaminade concern for herself and a few other Sodalists in *The État* to bind themselves by religious vows. Shortly after their request, Fr. Chaminade answered with a rule for the Sisters-to-be and the purchase of a house in Agen. On May 25, 1816, Miss Trenquellion and four others went to their new convent home, the first Daughters of Mary Immaculate. Fr. Chaminade said of them:

The religious called Daughters of Mary are simply Sodalists called to fulfill in a most perfect manner the three great duties of devotion towards the Blessed Virgin and above all the last one, the actual imitation of the virtues of Mary.<sup>16</sup>

This little band of missionaries was a joyous group, and their zeal was contagious. Their work spread to Spain and Italy, and later across the oceans to Japan and to the United States where they have establishments in Texas and at the University of Dayton in Ohio.

### *The Society of Mary*

In less than a year after the founding of the Daughters of Mary, Fr. Chaminade was presented with similar initiative from his young men's Sodality in the person of John Baptist Lalanne, who, from the age of twelve, had been guided and formed in the ways of the apostolate. On May 1, 1817, John Baptist Lalanne, a member of *The État*, revealed to him his intention of abandoning his proposed entry into the Society of Jesus and of giving himself entirely to Fr. Chaminade to cooperate with him in the work he was carrying on. Fr. Chaminade was deeply moved:

15 The word *Immaculate* was added on July 14, 1869. Thomas A. Stanley, S.M., *The Mystical Body of Christ according to the Writings of William Joseph Chaminade* (S.T.D. dissertation, Freiburg, Switzerland: Department of Theology, University of Freiburg, 1952), p. 1, f.n.

16 “Projet d'un Institut de Congréganistes Religieuses sous le Titre de Filles de Marie,” Box 38: MS a, no. 1, quoted in Burns, p. 39.

That is what I was waiting for long ago, God be praised! He has manifested His will and the time has come for me to put into execution the plan with which He inspired me, a plan which I have been revolving in my mind these twenty years.<sup>17</sup>

Other members of *The Élat* were approached and, within the next few months, five followed the example of John Lalanne. At their suggestion, Fr. Chaminade permitted them to participate in a private retreat, at the end of which, on October 2, 1817, they put themselves at his disposition with the request that they be permitted to confirm their determination by the profession of religious vows. This occasion is recognized as the official origin of the Society of Mary. Fr. Chaminade said of the newly formed Society of Mary:

And as an Order justly celebrated has taken the name and standard of Jesus Christ, so we have the name and standards of Mary and are ready to hasten wherever she calls us, in order to spread her cult and through it the kingdom of God in souls.<sup>18</sup>

From the very start the little group, which more appropriately called themselves the Family of Mary embodied the democratic spirit of the Sodality, its mother. The first members—two were preparing for the priesthood, one was a college professor, two were business men, two were coopers by trade—continued as Sodalists and at first their task was to train and direct the Sodalists. Thus the priest, the teacher and the manual worker joined hands for a common end—the Glory of God, the honor of Mary and the salvation of souls in the service of the Church.<sup>19</sup>

The Sodality had not only been the origin for the Society of Mary, but it had also been its first end. On a last page of a memoir composed in 1824, as a vindication of the Sodality, Fr. Chaminade had written these significant words:

Experience has taught us that for a Director of the Sodality more is necessary than has already been said: it must be a man not subject to

17 Jean Baptiste Lalanne, "Notice Historique sur la Société de Marie," (Unpublished Manuscript, 1858, Provincial Archives, Mount St. John, Dayton), p. 6.

18 William J. Chaminade, *Circular on the Vow of Stability*, trans. Charles Dreisoerner, S.M. (Kirkwood, Missouri: Maryhurst Press, 1950), p. 10. The first person to initiate Fr. Chaminade into religious life was his brother John Baptist, the former Jesuit, to whom his education had been confided; through him William came to know the Company of Jesus; through him he learned to make mental prayer according to the method of St. Ignatius; and towards the end of his life in his circular on the vow of Stability he modestly compares the apostolic work of his little Society with that of this great society: *Spirit of Our Foundation*, I, 36.

19 Fr. Chaminade considered this purpose so important he incorporated it into the formula of vows; *Constitutions of the Society of Mary*, Article 6.

death, that is, it must be an association of men consecrated to God, whose purpose is to devote themselves to this enterprise, infuse into it the experience gained by age, after having been trained by holy obedience, and then transmit the same spirit and the same means to their successors: these are the causes that have given birth to the Society of Mary.<sup>20</sup>

Here also are the reasons why the Society of Mary was to find its members “in all ranks and classes of society, priests and laymen, men of letters and laboring men.” From the start they were all members by the same right, they all contracted the same obligations, they all shared the offices of superiority according to the nature of the duties or according to the needs of the works.<sup>21</sup> The elements were to be so intimately united in the Society that one could not exist without the other, and each member was to form an essential part, not only one of the principal elements of corporate body, but also of the entire Society itself. “Union without confusion” was the designation of this quality according to Fr. Chaminade who considered this as a further perfection of his principle of universality in the Marian Apostolate.<sup>22</sup> His Society has found in it a continuing source of vitality for its works and efficient cause of growth and development over the almost one hundred and fifty years of its existence.

### *Early Developments*

In agreement with Archbishop d’Aviau, Ordinary of Bordeaux, Fr. Chaminade determined to spend a whole year in working out the details of his new Society. This deliberate pace is amazing, for at the time of its foundation, he was already fifty-six years old. Yet, despite his advanced age and the demands made upon his time as director of the Sodality and its numerous activities and the correspondence which he carried on, he undertook to solve the multitude of problems that are involved in the founding of new religious congregations.

With one great objective in mind, “the propagation of the Faith,”<sup>23</sup> Fr. Chaminade refused to determine any single means that should be the exclusive work of the Society. As usual with him, he waited for Divine Providence to indicate the path.<sup>24</sup>

20 *Spirit of Our Foundation*, III, 94-95.

21 *Constitutions of the Society of Mary*, pp. 92-99.

22 William Ferree, S.M., *Systematic Program of Reading and Study in the Publications of the Society of Mary* (Dayton: University of Dayton, July, 1941), p. 13.

23 *Spirit of Our Foundation*, I, 81-82.

24 Father Lalanne in his Historical Notes wrote the following as quoted in *Spirit of Our Foundation*, III, 3, “People in the world asked themselves what these young men were going to do. Nobody knew; they did not know it definitely themselves; they were at the disposal of Divine Providence.”



*The First Schools*

Before long, however, Fr. Chaminade received his answer regarding the direction of the little Society's energies. Education was a lively topic and one that appealed to the Marianists, considering the nature of the work that had been carried on from the first days of the Sodality.<sup>25</sup> Then, too, several of the Brothers were already engaged in teaching.

It is not surprising, then, to find that opening a college (secondary school) in Bordeaux and an elementary school in Agen a year later (1820) tipped the scales in favor of the Christian education of youth.<sup>26</sup> To understand better the reasons that prompted this decision, we must take into account the particular epoch of history and the status of education that prevailed. In the field of education, as in many other fields, the Revolution, leaving destruction in its wake, was powerless to reconstruct. In 1821, a member of the House of Commons declared in open session that "there are still 25,000 communes (districts), amounting to about two-thirds of all the communes in France, that have no schools, nor has any provision been made for primary education."<sup>27</sup>

Even in places where schools actually existed, conditions were hardly less critical. In an official report issued as late as 1833, the Minister of Public Instruction, referred to the condition of primary education in post-revolutionary times:

Their teachers were not able to write; ignorance was general. The teacher was a tiller of the soil, a maker of wooden shoes, a tavern keeper; he was often considered a beggar in the commune. The teacher's position was generally sought after by cripples, invalids, or persons unfit for other occupations. From the armless teacher to the epileptic, what a series of infirmities!<sup>28</sup>

Where such ignorance prevailed, morality was at its lowest.<sup>29</sup> The Govern-

25 George Ruppel, S.M., *The Marianist Story* (Dayton: Marianist Publications, 1962), p. 7 gives evidence that the entire faculty of the Bordeaux College of Mr. John B. Estebenet was made up of Sodalists.

26 *Spirit of Our Foundation*, III, 32-33 gives an extract from the first approbation of the Society by Archbishop d'Aviau which serves as a pivot in this regard: "Employing the well-known method of the Brothers of Christian Doctrine, perfecting it continually by experience, and joining there to pious Sodalities, the Institute must necessarily attain its end, which is Christian education."

27 Walter Bach, S.M., "The First Hundred Years of Our History" (personal manuscript in possession of the author). p. 5.

28 Gabriel Campayre, *History of Pedagogy*, trans. H. Payne (2nd ed.; Boston: D.C. Heath and Co., 1896), pp. 519-520.

29 During the retreat of 1821, Fr. Chaminade remarked about the spirit of the times: "Oh Lord, what a frightful ignorance, what appalling depravity, what distressing indifference in regard to salvation! In past centuries corruption existed only in the heart. Now, however, the mind as well as the heart has become cankered, and the misled mind is infinitely more dangerous and incurable than the depraved heart." *Spirit of Our Foundation*, I, 95.

ment had reserved for itself all rights concerning secondary education, yet it had not found it an easy matter to establish schools, or to train teachers, with the result that schools were often centers of corruption and infidelity.<sup>30</sup> Divine Providence, through these pitiable conditions, seemed to indicate that instruction of youth was the most pressing need in France.

### *Secondary Education*

Aside from these depressing conditions, a substantial gift toward procuring quarters for a school launched the Society of Mary into secondary education. A boarding school at Rue des Menus was opened and granted the right to offer instruction in the initial years of the French college. The records of the Society tell us that it was an institution of secondary education, containing about 120 pupils, boarders, half-boarders, and day students. All different classes of Latin were taught besides two special courses in French.<sup>31</sup>

Secondary education appealed to the early members because two of the Marianists, Lalanne and Perriere, were trained in this field. Fr. Chaminade had had six years of experience in it at the College of Mussidan before the French Revolution and was quite competent to give wise directives.

However, it was Fr. John Baptist Lalanne who was the outstanding figure in this undertaking, even becoming in later decades the Inspector-General. While he maintained the classics in a prominent place, he stressed the sciences, demonstrating further initiative by giving prominence to modern languages and physical education. From the very first, Lalanne added commercial studies to the secondary curriculum, an innovation that had a special appeal to the youth of Bordeaux. Very soon the institution enjoyed the confidence and respect of all, notwithstanding the active and widespread prejudice against every clerical undertaking.

A letter of Fr. Lalanne, written during the last years of his life, disclose interesting testimony to the Marianist mission of education:

Who was it that launched us in the career of education if not Fr. Chaminade, urged by Bro. David? And I do not say they were wrong. Considering the present condition of the work, there is not, to reform it, a more universal means of education. I desired to devote myself to preaching—such was my inclination—well, I would have profited the Church less

30 Joseph Burnichon, *La Compagnie de Jésus en France: Histoire d'un Siècle* (Paris: Gabriel Beauchesne, 1914), p. 243. An open letter of August 22, 1823, to Msgr. de Frayssinous, the Rector of the University of Paris, denounced this evil in education. So dark was the picture traced in the description that the Archbishop of Paris considered it his duty to address a severe note to blame the author, and the Correctional Tribunal condemned him to a fine and imprisonment. And yet, according to the biographer, the Msgr. admitted: "M. de Lamennais has said much evil against the University; he does not even know it all! By what does he wish to replace this institution which he seeks to destroy? What is to become of the 100,000 children?"

31 *Spirit of Our Foundation*, III, 10.

by my sermons than by my services to education. I now see the fruit of my labors: of all my old pupils, I know but five in a hundred, who might not be Christians of conviction, and the greater number are practical ones. I could say very much more here, for the opinion which I have expressed is that of present-day men who are among the most enlightened and most religious.<sup>32</sup>

### *Primary Education*

Before long Providence seemed to direct the expansion of the work to the elementary schools,<sup>33</sup> wherein the Brothers were to accomplish so much good, especially in the United States. Strange as it may seem, elementary education as a form of the apostolate did not appeal to the minds of the first members.<sup>34</sup>

In the summer of 1820, Fr. Chaminade went to Agen to preside at the annual retreat of the Daughters of Mary. He profited by the occasion to establish the Men's Sodality there with the aid of his secretary, Brother David Monier. The project proved a complete success, although the local police had attempted to suppress it at its very origin in 1816.

The members of the newly officially erected Sodality determined to carry their activities a step further by prevailing upon Fr. Chaminade to introduce the Society of Mary at Agen. They argued that, if the Sodality were directed by the Brothers, like the one at Bordeaux, it would be better able to maintain its original fervor. They further proposed that the Society at the same time might interest itself in the sadly neglected religious and moral education of the children.<sup>35</sup>

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, III, 9.

<sup>33</sup> *Spirit of Our Foundation*, III, 304 states: "The Sodalities of Bordeaux and the secondary schools of the Society would not suffice to change the picture so vividly painted by the Revolution. No matter how influential they were, their action was a work of perseverance in the performance of good, rather than a means for training the very young to overcome the blight of their environment and to fortify them for the struggles of the future."

<sup>34</sup> Fr. Jean Baptist Lalanne wrote in his *Les relations des laïcs avec les prêtres* (quoted in Hoffer, p. 20): "The oldest members pointed out that elementary education was not their apostolate and that it would make the Society deviate still further from its objectives since it was already engaged in secondary education." Fr. Collineau also objected to elementary education: "Let us leave the elementary schools for indigent children to the Christian Brothers and the secondary schools for the children of the wealthy to the Jesuits. We ourselves should adopt an intermediate position and favor the middle class. This large group of middle class children is the one to which our Institute should devote its special attention." *Spirit of Our Foundation*, III, 12.

<sup>35</sup> "At that time in France as elsewhere, neither the municipalities nor the central government were very much concerned with educating the children of the masses. Despite the efforts made during the Empire to improve this situation, incompetent teachers and absurd techniques went hand in hand with inadequate classrooms. Here is how the learned entomologist Henri Fabre (*Souvenirs Entomologiques*, VI, 46-47) describes the school which he himself attended in that era: 'It was a school with practically no windows. The teacher's alcove dominated the room. Beside the fireplace were two boarding student's beds on which chicks and piglets squabbled for space during class time. The teacher was bailiff, barber, bell-ringer, and cantor. What little time he could spare from taking care of his personal needs he used in carrying on correspondence with prominent people. The pupils worked all alone on the letters of the alphabet at their benches. There was scarcely any progress in studies.'" Quoted in Hoffer, p. 27.



Now it had happened some time previously that the Rt. Rev. Jacoupy, Bishop of Agen, had made strenuous efforts to obtain a number of Christian Brothers to take charge of the schools. His plans were frustrated by a liberal faction who based their opposition on the pretext that the costume of the Christian Brothers would not be tolerated. Accordingly, the Sodalists presented the matter to Fr. Chaminade, assuring him that the “gentlemen from Bordeaux,” referring to the Brothers of Mary, who wore no distinctive garb, would certainly be more acceptable to the authorities.<sup>36</sup>

After a favorable reply from Bishop Jacoupy and after consultation with the prefect of the city, Bro. David, always eager to cooperate in any generous project, agreed to use his influence with Fr. Chaminade.

At first the Founder hesitated. Then, after mature deliberation in earnest prayer, he gave his consent to what seemed to him a design of Providence. Three Brothers were sent to Agen in the fall of 1820; and before long their free school was the “wonder of Agen,” so that even people of the better class came for “certificate of indigence” that would enable their children to enjoy the privilege of a primary education at the school of the Brothers. The Principal wrote to Fr. Chaminade in May, 1821:

Several very respectable clergymen have professed to me that they recognized two classes of indigence, the corporal and the spiritual, and that they believed themselves justified in conscience to grant the coveted “certificate” to the one as to the other.<sup>37</sup>

Henceforth, the number of Marianists in primary education grew very rapidly and with such success that the Founder was able to write: “The teaching of whole dioceses is being offered to us.”<sup>38</sup>

The reputation of the Society of Mary soon spread to the remotest provinces of France as a result of its successful endeavors in both secondary and primary education. Several priests, who had founded societies of religious teachers, wrote to Fr. Chaminade for advice and begged him to send his religious for the direction of their novitiates. Some even proposed to amalgamate with his Society. Thus the Society was prevailed upon, within less than six years after its foundation, to enlarge its sphere of apostolic action.

#### *St. Remy—The First Normal School*

In 1823, a community of religious, under the direction of Bro. Clouzet, one of the pioneers, set out for the province of Franche Comté to establish there the important foundation of St. Remy. St. Remy was a large estate of more than three hundred acres, situated among the foothills of the Vosges mountains. The domain proper was

36 Edmund Baumeister, S.M., *Secondary Education of the Society of Mary in America* (Ph.D. dissertation; Columbus: Graduate School of the Ohio State University, 1939), pp. 18-19.

37 Bach, p. 7.

38 *Lettres de M. Chaminade* (Nivelles Belgique; Havaux, 1929), III, 358.



sold by the Marquis of Argenson to the Rev. Bardenet, a missionary of the diocese of Besancon, who offered it to the Society of Mary for the purpose of establishing there some work of the apostolate. However, the precise nature of the work was indicated only after the Society had purchased the Chateau and estate of St. Remy.<sup>39</sup>

Missionary priests, under the direction of the Missionary Apostolic of Besancon, Father Bardenet, having assembled the poorly trained primary teachers of the neighborhood for retreats, tried to make capital of the opportunity by giving them some professional training at the same time. However, the priests' own lack of preparation in the field of education made success impossible.<sup>40</sup> Thus it was that the Sodalities, riding on their wave of success in primary education, eagerly encouraged Fr. Chaminade to accept the invitation to cooperate in this work as a further development of their educational endeavors. His answer was not long in coming:

I dare not hinder the foundation of a Normal School at St. Remy on account of the incalculable amount of good it is able to do for the diocese of Besancon, and because it is easy to foresee that the example given by this diocese, might in a short time be imitated by other dioceses . . . The Government also will not delay to look with favor on an enterprise which, without any trouble to it, lends itself so plainly to the regeneration of the people in our unhappy country.<sup>41</sup>

When the Normal School at St. Remy opened on June 4, 1824, under the direction of Bro. Gaussens twenty were enrolled; but this number soon increased to seventy. That Fr. Chaminade considered this event to be of the utmost importance is evident from the following tract which he himself composed for the schedule of Statutes presented to the Government:

To attain more speedily the great object of its institutions, the Society offers itself more particularly to meet requests of the authorities; the Archbishops and Bishops, to the Academies and Departments, for the establishment of Normal Schools, in the neighborhood of which it contemplates to hold annual retreats for the other teachers . . . These retreats are to be of at least two weeks' duration. The first week devoted specially to the methods of teaching and managing the pupils, and also to the manner of instructing them in practical Christianity.<sup>42</sup>

39 *Spirit of Our Foundation*, III, 35.

40 Baumeister, p. 19.

41 *Lettres*, II, 453.

42 *Spirit of Our Foundation*, III, 38.

To the modern mind, the establishment of normal schools seems both natural and necessary and, with the present emphasis on the forming of the “whole man,” even the double aspect of a retreat does not appear to be revolutionary. But such was not the case in the early nineteenth century. Although the first normal school was founded in 1684 by St. John Baptist de la Salle, it existed only a few years and was not followed by any other until 1829 when they opened their first one after the Revolution.<sup>43</sup>

In 1794, the Convention had voted the creation of normal schools for Paris and the Departments,<sup>44</sup> but

. . . The École normals of 1795 was hardly more than a series of lectures by the greatest scholars and scientists of France to the more ambitious teachers of the new republic, even though it contained the germ of the École normal supérieure which was one of the important forces in the making of modern France.<sup>45</sup>

The idea was later taken up by Napoleon in 1808, and by Louis XVIII in 1818, resulting in the establishment of three normal schools, one at Strasbourg in 1810, another at Hildefange in 1820, and a third at Bar-de-duc in 1823.<sup>46</sup>

For the most part, however, they were merely a provisional expedient, entrusting to the professors of the grade immediately above the preparation of teachers for the grade just below, a plan no different from that in vogue before 1794.<sup>47</sup> Hence, Fr. Chaminade and his Society may be appropriately classed with the leaders of the new teacher-training movement in France.<sup>48</sup>

43 J. Guilbert, *Histoire de S. Jean Baptiste de LaSalle* (2nd ed.; Paris, C. Poussiègue, 1901), p. 138.

44 In this sphere of action the Brothers of the Christian Schools were slow to follow up the initiative of their Founder. In 1821, the Prefect of the Department of the Rhone, permitted Brother Gerbaud to found a Norman School at Lyons for the training of country teachers. The Superior General granted the request but on condition that only those young men recommended by the Prefect should attend it to be trained for the city schools. (*The Mother House of the Brothers*, p. 154). In 1823, the Prefect of the Department of the Seine-Inferieure decided to found a Normal School at Rouen to be conducted by the Brothers of the Christian Schools, but its opening was delayed until 1829. (*The Brothers of the Christian Schools, and Primary Education after the Revolution*, p. 559)—quoted in *Spirit of Our Foundation*, III, 42.

45 Crane Brinton, *A Decade of Revolution, 1789-1799* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1943), p. 154.

46 Baumeister, p. 20.

47 Compayre, p. 387.

48 Georges Goyau, “Chaminade: Ses Activités Religieuses et Scolaires,” *Le Correspondent*, LXXXV (October 10, 1903), pp. 79-85. “Father Chaminade may therefore justly be considered one of the principal pioneers of this institution on account of the energetic and intelligent efforts he put forth for its creation and development.”

*Further Growth*

In the following year, 1825, two hundred teachers sought to profit from contact with the work of the Marianists in the retreat-summer school combination. With the consent of the Rector of the Academy, the Society established a longer course of three months, which was later lengthened to five months and eventually to three years, the latter period considered by Fr. Chaminade to be the minimum for the work.<sup>49</sup>

That Fr. Chaminade was particularly interested in these normal schools is evidenced in his letter to Bro. Clouzet:

But how is the course of Normal Instruction progressing at St. Remy?  
. . . Do not relax your efforts on the point, for, you are aware, that it is one of our principal undertakings, the one which is closest to my heart, and which generally interests me most.<sup>50</sup>

The next year he re-affirmed this same attitude in these words:

Yes, my dear son, I take a real interest in the normal schools and shall not cease to prove it to you, as well as to all those that may take a share in the work.<sup>51</sup>

In fact his correspondence is literally filled with recommendations concerning the good management of this undertaking:

Take all sorts of precautions in order to insure the success of the Normal Schools—Although I believe in our other activities, I regard this one as destined to accomplish the essential work of the Society of Mary.<sup>52</sup>

Planning now began on a large scale, envisaging the possibility of a normal school in “every Rectorate and in every Department.”

Unlike the state-founded normal schools—for example, in Strasbourg and Lorraine—which defeated their purpose by nurturing hot-beds of politics and liberalism, the Marianist Normal Schools were the first to adhere to their original pur-

49 Joseph Simler, S.M., *Guillaume Joseph Chaminade* (Paris: Librairie Victor Lecoffre, 1901), pp. 517-526.

50 *Spirit of Our Foundation*, III, 39-40.

51 *Ibid.*, III, 40.

52 *Ibid.*, III, 39.

pose, the training of better teachers,<sup>53</sup> who, because of their “zeal and devotedness were to make themselves useful to the community at large.” This was Fr. Chaminade’s explicit recommendation:

I desire to form men in the Normal Schools who will be able to regenerate their communes. To effect this it is necessary that they enjoy a certain esteem on account of the knowledge to be imparted to their children and the eagerness displayed in rendering themselves useful to the families of these communes.<sup>54</sup>

Thus education in the normal school was pre-eminently practical for all concerned.<sup>55</sup> To effect this practicality the Founder insisted that teachers become acquainted with knowledge and skills of useful value in the communes themselves. These were not to come from “watering down the courses,” but were to be learned during the recreations. He insisted, also, on special courses essential in explaining certain arts and crafts, certain tools, machines or mechanical devices employed in their respective Communes and Departments.<sup>56</sup>

Although most of the programs for the normal schools were prepared by Fr. Lalanne, the outstanding teacher in the field of Marianist secondary education at the time, Fr. Chaminade kept in close touch with him and offered many valuable suggestions. “It seems to me,” he wrote, “that the Prospectus of the Normal Schools ought to present at a glance what a young man, who has been well trained, should be after three years, not reckoning the months of vacation; in the next place, it should exhibit the means which the Society uses to make him such, and primarily the manner of teaching those branches which he must impart . . .”<sup>57</sup>

53 In the Prospectus Chaminade presented his arguments for normal schools as follows: “It is certain that France will be lost, should it ever emerge victorious from the Revolution which menaces it on all sides, if we do not save the coming generation. Now, what means have we to save the latter since the present generation is almost entirely corrupt? Children imitate their parents and will follow their principles. In default of the parents, by whom could we supplant them? By the parish priests or their vicars? They see the children but rarely, and have scarcely any authority over them. *These children will be lost if they have not good teachers*, and hence follows the unavoidable condition to form a sufficiently large number of school teachers to be able to place one in each commune; hence also, the necessity of increasing the normal schools in each Department. Moreover, the greater number of teachers actively engaged at the present time are either ignorant, do not know how to manage their pupils, or show no interest in their work. Hence the necessity for extended and oft recurring retreats for the teachers, and the employment of gentle and certain means to make them competent, or at least passable, or in the last extremity replace them by those that have been trained.” (*Lettres*, II, 441.)

54 *Ibid.*, II, 453.

55 *Spirit of Our Foundation*, III, 76 presents the first Prospectus of St. Remy regarding “the course of studies which includes: reading, writing, spelling, history, elements of geography and mathematics, politeness, and in general, everything requisite to a good education.”

56 *Ibid.*, III, 42-43.

57 *Lettres*, II, 102.



### *Practical Education*

Fr. Chaminade's genius for adaptation of the normal schools to their clientele extended also to the field of practical education—(Arts and Trade Schools and Co-operative Schools). The practical was evident in the trade schools, which had for object the preparation of the children for the work in which they would most probably engage after leaving school. In the first years at St. Remy, several shops had already been opened for the training of teachers in practical education. In addition, the Founder insisted again with Fr. Lalanne:

Too much stress cannot be laid on certain points of the instruction given, for instance, on the knowledge and usages relative to the performance of the principal duties of civil life; on certain laws that relate to wills, donations made during life; sales, rents, bailments, farm-rents, etc.; on the wording of small contracts given under private seal; on the manner of keeping accounts, invoices, bills of lading, etc.<sup>58</sup>

All these he looked upon as necessary adjuncts and important complementary additions to the ordinary teacher-training program as such. His views are probably best discerned in a comment from his letter of petition to the King:

What distinguishes our schools are the accessory institutions with which we try to associate them everywhere . . . These institutions are the *Écoles d'arts et Métiers* and the Sodalities.<sup>59</sup>

In 1827 the Brothers opened their first school of this kind at Besancon.

### *Vocational Education*<sup>60</sup>

In planning the program of education for his Society, Fr. Chaminade did not limit it merely to secondary, primary, and normal schools. He took a long-range view of the possibilities of these in the general reconstruction of society, always keeping the normal schools in the beacon position. He desired the Society of Mary to “. . . extend its influence over man during his whole life, taking charge of him from his most tender age.”<sup>61</sup> Thus he proposed to reach all ranks of society, with a special pre-

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid.*, II, 453.

<sup>59</sup> “Supplique au Roi Charles X, 7 avril, 1825,” quoted in Baumeister, p. 20.

<sup>60</sup> “Chaminade et la Question Ouvrière,” *L'Apôtre de Marie*, XX (August-September, 1928), p. 126, in which is stated that Chaminade established an apprenticeship similar to that which existed in the guilds before their suppression. (Quoted in Andrew L. Seebold, S.M. *Social-Moral Reconstruction According to the Writings and Works of William Joseph Chaminade*, Ph.D. dissertation; Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America, 1946, p. 102.)

<sup>61</sup> *Constitutions of the Society of Mary*, Article 281.

dilection for the poor, as this was the work which was the most precious in the eyes of the Savior. To this already sufficiently good reason Fr. Chaminade added another:

The real poor are heard in prayer before they move their lips; the good Lord will at all times hear the prayer of the poor. In the world we ask the poor to obtain the grace of God for us . . .<sup>62</sup>

Fr. Chaminade labored to give an integral education in the language of the day to the children of ordinary people, combining the rudiments of knowledge with the practical life. Thus his plan provided not only for the actual in-school period of the child's life and a guidance over his out-school life through the Sodalities and other adjuncts of the school, but it afforded the students who had left school an added means of perfecting themselves in their professions and trades by courses given in vocational schools.

The first, called the Arts and Trade Schools, as we have noted in connection with the normal school training of teachers, imparted a higher, more abstract kind of instruction similar to the technical and polytechnical schools of our present day. However, there was a second and simpler and more popular type associated with the primary schools of a higher trade. It was called Co-operative similar to our present-day vocational schools. The Founder himself gave an interesting description of these Co-operatives in a schedule of Statutes presented to the Government:

To every school giving a higher degree of instruction than the ordinary there is joined a Co-operative School of Arts and Trades. These schools are practical above all; they are to treat in a special manner, the tillage of the fields in general, or that of gardens in particular, of the different kinds of rural economy, and of the arts properly called pastoral, because they pertain to work connected with the fields, or to those who cultivate them.<sup>63</sup>

Fr. Chaminade made it clear that the particular environment was mainly the determinant of these Co-operatives. He insisted that in those places where natural products are more in relation to certain kinds of arts and trades, account must be taken of such conditions, without ignoring in any way the introduction of a new species of growth or tillage or any industry but little known. The Founder encouraged the establishment of these schools in order

. . . to preserve the children of the cities where the Society of Mary had establishments, from corruption after leaving them to become apprentices.<sup>64</sup>

<sup>62</sup> *Spirit of Our Foundation*, III, 500.

<sup>63</sup> *Ibid.*, III, 27.

<sup>64</sup> *Lettres*, III, 28.

Pupils already serving an apprenticeship were admitted by preference, especially in the linear drawing course which was given toward evening, outside of the regular branches. Master artisans and agriculturists who did not belong to the Society of Mary acted as teachers so long as they enjoyed the reputation of good character. Fr. Chaminade stated that such an arrangement was all the more necessary for youth, since they are exposed to certain destruction by entering the different kinds of workshops.<sup>65</sup> Nor was this beginning of night school a mere isolated situation. To afford greater opportunities for self-improvement and advancement for those who had left school, the Founder opened night classes and schools for adults as complements to regular schools at Besancon, Cordes, Kaiserberg, Saint-Mair-aux-Mines, Saint-Die, and Noailles.<sup>66</sup>

With the assistance of Bro. Clouzet, the Founder was able to organize, in connection with the normal school already established at St. Remy, vocational education on a large and comprehensive scale. In 1830, several workshops had been opened, and the formation of a Farm School was projected on a newly acquired property. According to Bro. Clouzet:

Agriculture, an industry that is the foundation of all industries, and on which depends the prosperity of a country will be from now on one of the important activities for the Society of Mary. It is offered to a great number of young men and to a multitude of others who wish to perfect themselves in the art of agriculture . . .<sup>67</sup>

### *More Normal Schools*

With the tremendous success achieved at St. Remy in training teachers for primary and secondary education and “all the related activities there unto appertaining,” planning was now begun on a large scale,<sup>68</sup> envisaging the possibility of a normal school in “every Rectorate and in every Department.”<sup>69</sup> Hence, toward the close of the year 1829, the Normal School of Courtefontaine was founded, and the opening of one at Colmar was set for the autumn of 1830.<sup>70</sup>

Count Alexis de Novailles had agreed with Fr. Chaminade to found a normal school for his section of the country, and negotiations were in progress for the estab-

65 *Spirit of Our Foundation*, III, 30.

66 *Ibid.*, III, 33-34.

67 *Ibid.*, III, 31-32.

68 Joseph J. Panzer, S. M. states that the plan was so comprehensive that even the Daughters of Mary planned to open a normal school for women in the Abbey of Acey. “Educational Traditions of the Society of Mary” (unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, Graduate Department of the School of Education, Fordham, 1954), p. 177.

69 Georges Goyau, *Chaminade, Fondateur des Marianistes, Son Action Religieuse et Scolaire* (Paris: Louis de Soye, 1913), p. 23.

70 *Spirit of Our Foundation*, III, 43.

lishment of others in several dioceses. An appeal was about to be issued to the Bishops and Archbishops on the one hand, and to the Prefects and Rectors on the other, according to the Founder's instructions to Fr. Lalanne under date of July 24, 1830.<sup>71</sup> Finally, the last official act of Fr. Chaminade before retiring in 1845 was to accept the Swiss Normal School connected with the primary institutions of the Canton of Sion in the Valais.

*An Evaluation In retrospect*

The beauty exhibited in the Founder's view of the normal schools in relation to all the other forms and activities of the Sodality undertaken by him through his Society in his lifetime resides in the essential principle of the multiplication of Christians which alone could give permanence and stability to the educational apostolate which he founded. Fr. Chaminade never hesitated to state very emphatically and unreservedly that he considered the work of the normal schools of the greatest magnitude and excellence and, hence, the one which was closest to his heart. Even to Fr. Caillet, his eventual successor as Superior General of the Society of Mary, Fr. Chaminade expressed this conviction with exceptional zeal:

Inform him (the Director of Ecclesiastical Affairs) of the necessity, or at least of the great utility, there would be to increase speedily the number of Normal Schools, and of Retreats for the teachers. I sincerely hope that, with the grace of God, in a few years, and without any unusual inconveniences, there will be as many establishments of this kind as there are Rectories, or better still, as there are Departments, but I have great need that the Government desires it, and desires it urgently. Do not cease in your efforts, my dear son, to press the momentous bearing of this enterprise for the prompt regeneration of France. <sup>72</sup>

Through the graduates of the Marianist Normal Schools, Fr. Chaminade hoped to extend the influence of the Society to all of France as is evidenced in his letter to Monseigneur Donnet:

. . . From the foundation of the Society of Mary, it was ordained that, in view of the impossibility to place the teachers singly, but only in groups of three as the minimum number, the Society would, nevertheless, come to the aid of the Communes that were either too poor or too sparsely inhabited and establish Normal Schools in connection with the Novitiates in which candidates who did not wish to become Marianists, but who desired to devote themselves to the education of youth, would be trained as teachers. <sup>73</sup>

<sup>71</sup> *Ibid.*, III, 43-44.

<sup>72</sup> *Ibid.*, III, 39.

<sup>73</sup> *Lettres*, V, 357.



Fr. Chaminade thus saw the normal schools as the most cherished enterprise of the Society and one of the greatest means of aiding the various dioceses, by assembling the young men who desired to qualify as teachers. The aim was to train these men under experienced Marianist teachers, then after receiving their diplomas as teachers, they would conduct schools according to the Marianist principles in places where the Society of Mary had no establishment, thus extending the Christian influence of the Society throughout France.<sup>74</sup>

Since Fr. Chaminade considered education as one of the “most universal means for the reformation of society,” he of necessity viewed the normal schools as one of the most universal instruments of education for achieving the means—education itself. He exemplified that view in all the schools and supplementary works of instruction which he established, even those of the Sodality which were essentially educational in nature. He promoted the in-school life of the child by the primary, intermediate, and secondary schools, and he prepared the child for a place in the working world by his arts and trades and his co-operative schools, supplemented by Farm Schools and courses in adult education. And to insure the whole field of education, as well as to sustain the various levels of the educational ladder already in existence, he established normal schools. These, along with membership in the Sodality during school life and after, assured continual guidance over all classes in society.

The sound philosophical foundation for this universal as well as apostolic outlook is to be found in the definition of education which has been incorporated into the very Constitutions of the Society of Mary by the Founder himself:

The term education comprises all the means which enable us to sow, cultivate, strengthen and render fruitful the Christian spirit in souls, in order to lead them to a sincere and open profession of true Christianity as an integral part of education.<sup>75</sup>

Thus the Society’s normal school tradition has been preserved. Today as the Marianists approach their sesquicentennial observance they are conducting teacher training institutions in the United States, in South America, in Switzerland, in Austria, and in Puerto Rico.

74 “The two hundred teachers to whom you preach will convey the religious spirit acquired in the retreat to two hundred parishes, and will infuse it into their pupils. I am never able to think of the results of this enterprise without being deeply moved, and without blessing the Lord who inspired it. It is one of the most simple, most direct, and most powerful means for cooperating in the regeneration of France, which is so perverted in its principles and its morals.” *Lettres*, II, 8.

75 *Constitutions of the Society of Mary*, Article 261.