

Here we have the testimony of two witnesses taken from the original handwritten document preserved in the archives of the family.

a)

On the 4th August (1841) the saddest day in memory, my beloved wife died. She was the most gentle and affectionate of wives, and I loved her with the greatest tenderness; I shall never cease to miss her until my last breath, and shall pray constantly for her, although I have the greatest confidence that God has crowned her with glory, and I ask Him to grant me a similar death, in spite of the fact that my life has been far from resembling hers.

b)

The respected and beloved father who wrote all the preceding statement, died a holy death on the 20th August, 1843, a Sunday, at about the same hour as, for very many years, he used to prepare to go to Mass in the Parish, during the octave of the Assumption, surrounded by his daughters, Emma, Melanie, Elisabeth, his sons Tonny and Claudius Marie Mayet, undersigned, Marist priest.

I add these words on the 4th May 1881, anniversary of the birth of my brother. *We are the children of saints.*

Gabriel-Claudius-Marie Mayet, s.m.p. Marist.

DOC. II

OF THE VICISSITUDES OF THE THIJVENET FAMILY UP TO THE YFAR 1794. -

From the documents referred to below.

We present here two important documents which confirm the information, unfortunately scarce, that we possess referring to the period corresponding to the childhood and youth of the Servant of God. The serious events which were taking place in Lyon at that time (1789-1802) explain in great part the lack of particulars and the absence of documents.

The beginning and course of the Revolution around Lyon were very stormy, as in the rest of France; political and religious agitation were especially serious in the hilly part of the new department of Rhone-et-Loire;

there were difficulties provoked by recruitment and by requisitioning on the part of the military; there was the siege of Lyon, the time most critical for the city, which brought about its ruin; while the struggle between the revolutionaries and counter-revolutionaries caused a state of general insecurity.

On the 14th March, 1789, the members of the clergy, the nobility and the third estate (delegates from the parishes) met in Lyon in the Church of St. Bonaventure, to nominate the representatives for the Estates General. The news of the fall of the Bastille (14th July) provoked general panic throughout the country, known by the name of "La Grande Peur". It gave rise to disturbances in Dauphine and Maconnais, that is to say on the very frontier of the region of Lyon which was a prey to serious agitation: "Fear reigns everywhere and we have not slept by day or night for several days . . . , Unrest and threats are as widespread as ever, but unfortunately I have not sufficient men to cover the region adequately" (letter of Clapeyron to the sub-delegate Bouche, 13th August 1789: *A. D. Lyon, C, 6*).

During the Revolution, Lyon, the capital of the new department of Rhone-et-Loire, was Girondin; later Chaliier imposed the dictatorship of the Jacobins (1793) and their excesses provoked the revolt of the opposition which seized power for a short time. The establishment of the new regime and above all the civil constitution of the clergy provoked great unrest in the department.

Notwithstanding all this, the most important event of that period was the revolt of Lyon. In September 1792 the Reign of Terror began; Chaliier was overthrown in May 1793 and he was executed on the 16th July. Lyon overwhelmed by the fire of the federalist and monarchist insurrection, was besieged by the army of the Convention (8th August—9th October) and subjected to violent and continuous bombardment. The city was condemned by the Convention to destruction and to the loss of its name which was changed to that of "Ville Affranchie" (12th October 1793), and its administrative jurisdiction was reduced to the present department of Rhone. A revolutionary tribunal formed by Collot d' Herbois and Fouche condemned more than 2,000 citizens of Lyon to death. They were guillotined or shot in the marshes of the Brotteaux.

Towards the end of 1793, Lyon was in ruins; during the period of the Directory it continued to be in a deplorable state as regards housing and health, whilst industry and commerce were languishing and insecurity reigned in the city and the surrounding region (cf. 1 L 382, 1 L 393, *A. D. Lyon*). After the 9th Thermidor (28th July 1794) Lyon resumed its name; then it passed through the "White Terror", the triumph of the monarchists (1796) and through a new republican repression, "Terror under the Directory", after the 18th Fructidor, year V (4th September 1797). The coup d'etat of the 18th Brumaire (9th November 1799) and the new regime of the Consulate were welcomed in Lyon where the city saw relief from ruin and the end of religious

persecution; and although it did not give Catholics complete freedom it gave them a chance to breathe.

During this long and turbulent period, the few facts that we have regarding the Servant of God permit us, nevertheless, to follow her together with her family. In 1790 the eldest of the seven children who made up the Thevenet family was seventeen years old and the youngest was seven. Claudine, the second, was sixteen and was her mother's helper in running the house and looking after her younger brothers and sisters. She was already becoming known for her discretion and humility, as Sister Julie of Jesus testified (cf. Doc. XXIX). The eldest, Louis, had entered the silk business of his maternal grandfather, at whose death it passed to Louis Guyot and Henri Steinman, the uncle and cousin of the Servant of God respectively. Francois worked in a printing firm. When in 1793 the situation in Lyon became serious, Philibert Thevenet took his four younger children to Belley(Ain) with the intention of leaving them at the house of a sister who lived there, and of returning to Lyon. But the events overtook him and it was impossible for him to return to the city until after the siege.

General Precy commanded the besieged army composed of 8,000 men, with very little ammunition and tormented by hunger; whilst the besiegers, commanded first by General Kellermann, then by General Doppet, were 70,000. The young men of Lyon of all walks of life hastened to enrol themselves in the ranks of Precy. Louis and Francois Thevenet were not the last to join the defenders of the city. The Servant of God remained at home, alone with her mother, looking after her, supporting her and seeing to her comfort, sharing with her her own preoccupation for the fate of the city, and especially for the father who was detained in Belley, for her absent brother and sisters, for the two who fought in defence of the city and for her uncle Louis Guyot who had remained in his own property of Massues in territory occupied by the besiegers.

The history of Lyon is rich in details of tragic and heroic deeds of this period; with regard to the Servant of God, some documents present her giving example of an exceptional fortitude for a young girl of nineteen years (cf. Docs. XXV 2 & 3, pp. 485, 491; XXVI, 4, p. 501; XXVII, *Histoire*, p. 533).

The Thevenet family, from 1779 and probably until the end of 1794 (cf. Registers of the Parish of St. Pierre and St. Saturnin, Lyon) lived on the first floor of a house situated on the corner where the rue Royale joined the rue Dauphine, near the Quai de Retz. During the siege the Quai de Retz was the scene of one of the most bloody battles; moreover, at nightfall, when the firing had ceased, in order to allay her own anxiety and that of her mother, the Servant of God went to the place where the battle had been fought in order to look for her brothers among the dead and wounded. The two youths, who had escaped unharmed, succeeded in reaching their own home during the night. Probably this took place on 24th August (cf. J. B. MONTFALCON, *Journal de la ville de Lyon*, II, Lyon 1847, pp. 989-992).

Precy had done all he possibly could to defend the city. He resisted for 62 days against an army much superior to his both in numbers and equipment, and not only did he defend the city, but he even obtained noteworthy advantages in various encounters. But on the 9th October the troops of General Doppet entered the city and the Convention forces took such revenge that it was worse than the siege.

The first to suffer were the soldiers and with them all those who had co-operated in the resistance. Precy succeeded in leaving the city in the middle of the night with two or three thousand men who intended to hide in the mountains of Forez, but they were eagerly followed and the General succeeded in saving only a small number. Louis was taken prisoner while carrying weapons (cf. A. PORTALLIER, *Tableau general des victimes et martyrs de la revolution*. Saint Etienne 1911); Francois was able to get away to safety, but he was denounced soon after, and was imprisoned.

No sooner did the family know the place where the two brothers were imprisoned, than the Servant of God went to visit them and bring them food and clothing, but above all the consolation of her words and affection. The family tried in vain every means to get them freed, as a certificate which is preserved in *A. D. Lyon* testifies, 42 L 87. When she visited the prison the Servant of God also helped two priests who were companions in the cell with the Thevenet brothers and who were guillotined on the same day as the two Thevenet brothers were shot. These two priests heard the last confession of the two brothers (Doc. XXV, 2 & 3, pp. 485-491). They were J. Roux and A. Bruyas, about whom an abundant documentation is preserved in *A. D. Lyon*.

Jacques Roux was born in Lyon on December 10th 1732; he was ordained priest on the 4th July 1757, and was made curate of Saint-Pierre-le-Vieux; then, in 1761 he became vice-superior of the seminary of Lyon and in 1762 "Knight of the Primatial Church of St. Jean". He was arrested on the 19th December 1793.

Antoine Marie Bruyas was born in Lyon in 1742, and was a priest of the Primatial Church of St. Jean. This priest, like Fr. Roux, was not an official functionary, and they believed themselves safe from the revolutionary laws, but they were arrested and handed over to the revolutionary commission and were condemned immediately; they were guillotined on the 5th January 1794 at 13.25 hrs (*A. D. Lyon*, 42 L 27).

On the 29th Frimaire (19th December 1793), Louis Guyot was taken to the "mauvaise cave", from which he was led out on 21st December to his death. He had been arrested on the 3rd Frimaire (23rd Nov. 1793) and taken by a certain Stuche, to the prison of the "Recluses" (*A. D. Lyon*, 31 L 60). Probably Claudine exercised towards her uncle the same charity which she showed to her brothers and their companions in prison, all the more, because Louis Guyot was already a widower and his two children were only thirteen and fourteen years of age. The death sentence of Louis Guyot was not a good

omen. Claudine continued to visit her brothers whenever she could, but on the afternoon of the 16th Nivose (5th January 1794) arriving at the Place de Terreaux, she met a group of 43 condemned men who were being led to the Brotteaux to be shot, and among them she recognized her brothers. She was able to get near them and hear a generous message of pardon, and receive the farewell letters which we reproduce (v. *infra*, 2-3). The Servant of God witnessed the shooting and, filled with terror, she saw the acts of barbarism perpetrated on those who were dying, among whom were Louis and Francois, acts of barbarism which in Lyon reached unheard-of proportions. A. Portallier has rightly noted: "Historians were very much occupied with the revolutionary Tribunal of Paris, and very little with the revolutionary Commissions of Lyon and Feurs. Yet these last had much greater importance for some months. Thus, during a period of six months, Lyon and Feurs had 1,962 condemned to death whilst Paris had only 542. All those condemned in Paris were guillotined, whilst in Lyon and Feurs, 820 persons were guillotined and 1,120 were shot. It was after the suppression of the revolutionary Commissions of Lyon and Feurs that the revolutionary Tribunal of Paris made numerous victims. From Floreal to Thermidor (April to August), in five months, 2,001 persons were condemned to death. But at that time it was the only revolutionary tribunal for the whole of France. The total number of accused who appeared before the revolutionary Tribunal of Paris rose to 5,215 in the space of about two years, whilst for Lyon and Feurs, the number of accused was 4,077 in the short space of seven months" (*op. cit.*, p. XIII).

Before concluding this introduction, we believe it useful to give a list of documents regarding the vicissitudes of the Guyot-Thevenet family during the time of the Terror.

1. *Certificate of the revolutionary committee referring to the Thevenet brothers. 4th January 1794. A. 1). Lyon, 42 L 87.*
2. *Sentence of death. 5th January 1794. A. 1). Lyon, 42 L 27 (v. infra, 1).*
3. *Letter of Louis Thevenet. 5th January 1794. Arch. Family Mayet, Paris. Photocopy in A. G. Roma (v. infra, 2).*
4. *Letter of Francois Thevenet. 5th January 1794. Ibidem (v. infra 3).*
5. *Some documents on the imprisonment and death of Louis Guyot de Pravieux, 1793. A. D. Lyon, 31 L 60; 42 L 27; 42 I. 108; 42 L 154.'*
6. *Self-defence of Louis Guyot 24th November 1793. A. D. Lyon, 42 L 27.*
7. *Condemnation of the priests Antoine Marie Bruvas and Jacques Roux, 1794. A. D. Lyon, 31 L 57.*

(a) Translator's note: Now in A. G. Roma.

1

Judgement of the Revolutionary Commission dated the 16th Nivose which condemned 54 men to death, 11 of whom were to die by guillotine. No. 33. Nivose, (5th January 1794). - From the original preserved in A. D. Lyon, 42, L, 27.

The arrest, imprisonment and execution of the Thevenet brothers are recorded many times in file L of A. D. Lyon. For example, there is a list entitled *List of men who were put in the prison of St. Joseph of Ville Affranchie, who were enrolled in the Chasseurs de la Montagne*. This contains forty-two names, among which are those of Louis Antoine Thevenet and Francois Thevenet (1, L, 1199, A. D. Lyon). This tells us, although not dated, the name of one of the prisons in which they were detained. Another document, dated 27 Brumaire (17th November 1793) which could refer to one of the brothers, says: . . . "citizen Thevenet, before the General Committee to be questioned, as the citizen had been captain during the month of August" (cf. 42. L. 87, A. D. Lyon). But without doubt, the most important of all these documents is the sentence, of which we give the essential part, with only 5 of the 54 names of the condemned. The document tells us the exact date of the execution, the method of procedure of the Revolutionary Commission, and the fact that the Thevenet brothers were imprisoned together with the two priests, and, consequently, the spiritual assistance that they received from them, which was confirmed also by other witnesses.

We have, besides (42, L, 28, A. D. Lyon), a complementary document entitled *Minutes of the 15th Nivose which record the execution of the rebels by shooting*, in which the General in command of the parade ground certified that, in virtue of the instructions of the Revolutionary Commission, he had had the criminals condemned to the said punishment shot on the marshes of the "Brotteaux".

Liberty

Equality

In the name of the French people

Judgement of the Revolutionary Commission pronounced in the presence of the People, in the Place de la Liberte, on the 16th Nivose in the second year of the one indivisible and democratic French Republic.

The Revolutionary Commission established in la Commune Affranchie by the Representatives of the People.

Considering that it is urgent to purge France of rebels against the will of the nation; of those men who convoked and protected by force of arms the Departmental Congress of Rhone and Loire; of those men who bore arms against their country; those who murdered its

defenders; of those men who, accomplices of tyrants, federalised the Republic, following the example of Toulon, in order to deliver it up to its enemies and put it in chains. According to interrogations undergone by those named hereafter, and considering that the Revolutionary Commission is entirely convinced that they have borne arms against their country or have conspired against the people and against liberty and that they are evidently known to be counter-revolutionaries.

The Revolutionary Commission condemns to death:

Edmond Benie, printer, native of la Commune affranchie, living there in rue de la Charite, Section du Rhone . . .
(There follow another twelve names).

Francois Thevenet paper printer, native of the same place, living there in Place St. Pierre, Section, idem.

Louise Antoinc Thevenet, apprentice workman in silk, native of the same and living in rue de l'Arbre Sec, Section, idem.
{There follow another twenty one names}.

Antoine Marie Bruyas former priest, native of la Commune affranchie, living in rue St.-Jean.

Jacques Roux former priest, native of the Caff, and living in rue Tramassac, Section Porte froc . . .
{There follow another sixteen names}.

All the property of the above named is confiscated for the benefit of the Republic. Consequently the Revolutionary Commission charges the Commanding officer of la Commune affranchie to put into execution the present judgement which will be printed and posted everywhere according to need.

Pronounced thus according to the opinion of Pierre Mathieu Parein, President, of Antoine Lafaye senior, of Pierre Aime Bruniere, of Joseph Fernex, and of Andre Corchand, all members of the Commission.

In Commune affranchie the sixteenth Nivose in the second year of the French Republic, one, indivisible and democratic.

Parein, president	Fernex	Lafaye senior
Bruniere	Corchand	

2

Letter of Louis Thevenet, 5th January 1794. - From the original preserved in the Archives of the Mayet family, Paris. Photocopy A. G. Roma.¹

The letter is dated 16th Nivose, year 2 (5th January 1794), at seven in the morning; at the end of it Louis added that they had only four hours to live. The previous document confirms this date. Louis Thevenet, in his farewell letter, did not forget any of his family and friends, but we have taken only that part which refers to the Servant of God. "Oh my poor sister Glady, how we are to be pitied, who are too sensitive!" Such excessive sensitivity contrasts with the strength and fortitude of which Claudine gave proof during her whole life.

16th Nivose 2nd year of the
republic at seven in the morning.

Father, mother, brother, sisters, cousins and friends, goodbye, goodbye. For the last time, goodbye, my dear good father, goodbye. You have done all you could to save us, but to no avail. Our fate was decided. My greatest regret is having involved my young brother; if it had not been for me his age would have saved him. Do not reproach anybody with my death; I alone am guilty, if anyone is. Do not grieve too much. Nor you my poor mother. You carry us in your heart as you once carried us in your womb. Thinking of you brings tears to my eyes, and momentarily shakes that confidence born of innocence. May God console you in your great sorrow. Goodbye my dear sisters, goodbye. Goodbye poor Glady, how we are to be pitied who are too sensitive. Take care of yourself for my sake. Goodbye Fanny, goodbye Louis, remember that from now on you are the only son. Act accordingly and remember that you must look after the family. Do not think that I am forgetting Babet and Eleanor; fortunately they are at Belley. Break the news of our death gently to them. Goodbye dear Aunts and you my worthy and respected cousin, you . . .¹

(a)The original letters are now in A. G. Roma, (translator's note).

¹ The dots repeated for about two lines are in the original.

Oh no, all these sacrifices are so painful that I cannot hold back my tears. Goodbye. I hope that you will soon have a loving wife to help you bear life's burdens. Say 'goodbye' to her and thank her on my behalf.

Goodbye poor cousins, now orphans.

Goodbye citizeness B . . . Goodbye dear friends, citizenesses Billet, mother and daughters. Goodbye all, my friends and relations, all you who take an interest in me. I am not as unfortunate as you are. Goodbye for ever. Be comforted and please comfort my family. Think of us sometimes. I have done all I could for my brother, I . . . } two letters to the Judges. I do not know if they reached them. We have only four hours to live, we shall try to use them well.

Thevenet Senior Thevenet Junior

3

Letter of Francois Thevenet, 5th January 1794. - Ibidem.

Like the previous letter, this one is a moving farewell in which Francois does not forget anyone, and he also refers "to my dear, good, sensitive sister Glady", to whom he dedicates a more extended paragraph. Francois, stresses the religious note more than his brother; perhaps that is why Louis believed he should add at the end of his younger brother's letter "The contents of the letter of my younger brother also express my own feelings." We give the text of the letter with all its grammatical and spelling mistakes and we add at the foot of the page some explanatory notes.

Seven o'clock in the morning.

Before going into God's presence, I must do my duty. Goodbye mother, goodbye father, goodbye forever. You will need all the help that religion can give you to bear bravely the death of two of your sons to whom, until now, you have given maternal and paternal¹ care.

² The word missing is crossed out.

¹ There follows a word which does not link with the preceding phrase.

Goodbye my dear, good, too sensitive sister Glady. It is you my dearest friend who will have the painful task of consoling our mother. I know very well that the news of our death will be a terrible blow for her. Our dearest mother, — comfort her. Yes, dear friend, tell her that she still has five children and that she must look after herself² for their sake.

Alas! we shall be happier than you. Within 4 to 5 hours from now we shall be³ in the presence of God, before our good Father.

Tell her that her son, before he died, renounced all his errors; yes, I feel that religion is a great support⁴ which enables me to face death with indifference and resolution.

Goodbye Louis, goodbye my dear good friend; always walk in the path of⁵ virtue and honour and you will receive your reward . . .⁶ Remember that one day it is you who will have to take care of our mother. You must quickly learn some trade which will enable you to earn something to support our⁷ . . . in their old age.

Goodbye Fanny, goodbye Babet, goodbye Eleanor, I know how upset you will be, that is why I advise you to seek consolation in your religion. Goodbye my dear little ones. We shall be reunited one day.⁸ Goodbye, pray to God for us . . .

Once again, goodbye father, mother, sisters, brother, aunt, uncle and cousin and goodbye to all our neighbours and friends.

We are going to God our good Father whom we have indeed offended but we hope in his mercy.

Goodbye my worthy and respected cousin. Goodbye . . .

Goodbye to the two poor Guyot orphans, our cousins, goodbye.⁹

In three or four hours we are going to execution and we shall go to it with the resolution of a man who has nothing with which to reproach himself.

Francois Thevenet Junior.

² A word was crossed out here.

³ A repetition was crossed out.

⁴ Grammatical error in the French version.

⁵ Crossed out.

⁶ Crossed out.

⁷ A correction which seems to mean "our family and parents".

⁸ Repetition.

⁹ Grammatical error.

I close by telling you that the contents of my younger brother's letter also express my own feelings.

(Thevenet Senior)

DOC. III

TESTIMONY ABOUT THE INSTITUTION CALLED THE "PROVIDENCE" for the education of girls established in the parish of St. Bruno, Lyon, by the Servant of God, 1815-1816.

We have put together here a series of documents which present Claudine Thevenet in the full exercise of her charitable activity among poor and abandoned children and young girls, which would later become a characteristic note of her life.

After the tragic death of Louis Antoine and Francois Marie (cf. Doc. II), the Thevenet family moved from the centre of the city to the Croix-Rousse, a place selected by the well-to-do people of Lyon for their country houses and which only developed into a densely populated working-class district with the growth of the silk industry in the nineteenth century. The widow Antoinette Steinman owned a villa there, which still exists, in rue Masson — now rue du Bon Pasteur, No. 30. It was in this house that the Thevenet lived with the same widow Steinman, who had remained alone after the marriage of her son Henry, and Anne Guyot, who had been obliged to leave the Convent during the Revolution; both of them were maternal aunts of the Servant of God.

At that time the Thevenet family became smaller; Jean Louis had gone, because of his work, to Valence and Macon; Fanny became a religious in the Congregation of St. Thomas of Villanova in Paris; Eleanor entered the then newly-formed Congregation of the Nativity in the diocese of Grenoble; Elisabeth married Jean Baptiste Mayet, settling in L'Isle (Dordogne). Only Claudine remained with her old parents and the two aunts, and the centre of religious attraction for her soon became the near-by church of St. Bruno, already opened for worship before the Concordat of 1802 as a chapel of ease and then as a parish church.

Up to the time of the foundation of the *Providence* in 1815 biographical notes are rather fragmentary and scarce. But here is what we have been able to draw from the registers of the above mentioned parish of St. Bruno and from some other documents in which the Servant of God is mentioned:

in 1795, on the 10th January, in the certificate of marriage of the cousin Henri Steinman:

1802, on the 9th June, in the certificate of marriage of her sister Elisabeth:

1804, 11th June, 1805, 12th August, 1807, 12th August, in the successive certificates of baptism of her nephews and nieces Jean, Emma & Melanie Mayet;

1809, her name figures on the first page of the register of the Confraternity of the Sacred Heart, erected in the parish of St. Bruno, on the 22nd January of that year; again in 1809, on the 11th December she was godmother of her nephew Claude, the future Marist, whom she consecrated to the Blessed Virgin;

1811, 2nd April, Anne Guyot, in her will, named her niece Claudine her sole heiress, leaving everything to her to do what she liked with it. This disposal of her goods in the will of Anne Guyot, which left out her two sisters and her brother-in-law with whom she lived, as also her other nephews and nieces, is an indication of the trust which Claudine inspired in her by her shrewdness in business matters, and, taking into account the pious inclinations of the testatrix, it is a clear proof of the virtues and of the works she had seen her niece practise. On the 5th June of that same year Anne Guyot died, and on the 15th October Claudine executed, before the Civil Tribunal, the legal dispositions relative to the will;

1813, the widow of Antoine Burdet, godfather of the Servant of God, made her will on the 29th January, in which a legacy figured in favour of Claudine; the widow Burdet died on the 8th May. On the 4th May we see the Servant of God assisting, with her mother, and with the eldest of the nieces, at the wedding of their servant, Stephanie Barbaret; on the 23rd at the baptism of her niece Elizabeth, sixth child of the Mayet couple; and on the 16th December at the wedding of a cousin, in the parish of St. Bruno, and later at other ceremonies which followed.

On the 16th March 1815, Claudine's father died and she remained alone with her mother and her mother's sister, the widow Steinman; Elisabeth Thevenet (Mayet) who on the 4th May was to become mother of a seventh child, had joined them at the house in rue Masson. It seems that Claudine desired to see her mother well cared for so that she could devote herself more to her works of charity.

From the beginning of 1815, to the sparse data that we possess, we can add an important group of documents which attest that the Servant of God must already have become well known in the parish because of her charity and her collaboration with the parish priest.

The priests who took care of the parish of St. Bruno, the parish priest and the curate, belonged to the Association of the "Carthusian" Missionaries, so-called because the church and property around had belonged to the "Chartreuse du Lys Saint Esprit". These priests knew the Servant of God and held her in high esteem (cf. *infra*, 4). Thus is explained how Fr. Andre Coindre, missionary, who arrived at the end of 1815, and was still new to the post, had picked up two abandoned children, and, desiring to help them, after returning to the parish priest, went immediately in search of Claudine. From