

STUDIES IN SPIRITUALITY - 4

THE SALESIAN
MISSIONARY VISION
1923 - 1967

ROY ANTHONY PARACKAL, SDB

About the Book

The Salesian Missionary Vision 1923 - 1967 is a study of the image of the missions and of the missionary that formed the dynamic motivations of the Salesian Missionaries who launched out into the distant lands in the years 1923 - 1967. The study is based primarily on the Salesian periodical for the young entitled *Gioventù Missionaria*. Moving along the lines of a study of a mentality in the area of Spirituality, the author highlights the elements which formed the core of a Salesian Missionary Spirituality for the years under examination.

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ROY ANTHONY PARACKAL SDB

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FOREWORD

The globalized world of today keeps challenging us every day to live and witness our Christian faith with deeper convictions and an attitude of ever greater openness to dialogue within the multicultural and multi religious societies. Exactly 150 years after our Salesian Society was born, we find ourselves stretched in more than 130 countries around the world. Many are wondering about our dynamic fidelity to the Founder, an Italian priest of the young with a missionary heart: Saint John Bosco.

Since last General Chapter 26 (2008), we are trying to rediscover our roots, our DNA especially in the heart of our Holy Founder.

I am grateful to Fr. Aldo Giraudo (Salesian Pontifical University, Rome) who guided Fr. Roy Anthony in his research about the missionary dynamics which are treasured in hundreds of monthly issues of the youth missionary magazine 'Gioventù Missionaria'. During the 50 years existence of this precious missionary animation tool about 6000 young Salesians, mostly Italians, left the shores of Europe for the *missio ad gentes*.

In our times missionary vocation within the Catholic Church and within our Congregation is challenged in different ways. Returning to Don Bosco – a saint, educator, pastor, communicator and missionary – we need to rediscover the missionary dynamics of the early years of our Congregation that launched the Salesians into all the five continents of the world. The same life motto of the Turin-based priest is eminently missionary "Give me souls and take away all the rest!"

The 'Gioventù Missionaria' shows us the multi-dimensional approach of integral missionary animation. A simple monthly magazine for the animation of missionary groups in our schools, youth centers and parishes! Most of the articles were simply narrations of life experiences of frontline missionaries who just

landed in Latin America, East Asia, India, Africa or Australia. This missionary enthusiasm brought about another ‘virtuous cycle’ of more vocations to consecrated life and to the *missio ad gentes*.

A deeper study of this animation dynamics grown around this simple magazine can inspire us also today in many aspects: rediscover the backbones of missionary spirituality and personal motivations of the Salesian missionaries. Among the original seven language-editions of the periodical, only the Spanish Madrid edition of ‘*Juventud misionera*’ has survived to the present day as a tool of solidarity and education of the adolescents (www.misionessalesianas.org).

I am very grateful to Fr. Roy Anthony Parackal for his research and for his tireless work to make the fruits of his doctoral thesis available to all of us. I hope that many readers especially among the large Salesian Family will be inspired by the early Salesian missionary experiences in order to keep the missionary flame burning. I wish that the experience of many missionary groups connected to this review will be restarted in many of our houses of formation, youth centers, schools and parishes. I certainly pray that the basic conviction about the missionary activity as projected by John Paul II in his missionary encyclical *Redemptoris Missio* “Faith is strengthened when it is given to others” (RM 2) will help us to revitalize faith and Christian identity also today.

Fr. Václav Klement SDB
General Councilor for the Missions
Rome – Salesian Headquarters

PREFACE

The launching out into missionary activity was a defining event for the Salesian Congregation, be it for its identity, be it for its future development. With the first expedition of the Salesians to Latin America (1875), the horizons of the salesian mission opened progressively to the whole world and to all cultures. From that moment, missionary action became an integral part of the salesian charism and rendered it richer and more productive. If we study the history of the Salesian Congregation and compare it with that of the other Congregations founded in those same years in Turin, we can say with certainty that its success and development is due to the inspired and courageous missionary choice of the holy Founder. Without this decision, in all probability, the Society of St. Francis de Sales would have remained a small local reality!

The missionary orientation widened the horizons of the disciples of Don Bosco, put them in touch with other cultures, with the great world religions and their spirituality, with the diverse social systems and their values, and helped them to reflect critically and creatively about its own educative and pastoral method and adapt it to the diverse situations. Doing this, the Salesians were able to develop the full potentiality of the specific spiritual and educative patrimony received from the founder. They also discovered the charismatic fecundity and the inter-cultural adaptability of the spirit and the formative praxis of Don Bosco. Thus, through the action of the salesian missionaries, the charism and educative method of Don Bosco became a gift for the generations of the young of the whole world, an operative resource for the civil societies and nations in which the salesian work was planted and a patrimony for the universal Church. In fact, the centuries old missionary praxis of the Church was enriched by the Oratorian model which the Sons of Don Bosco actualized in the missions. There has been a reciprocal enrichment, and its fruits are evident to all.

Right from the beginning, Don Bosco never ceased to augment the apostolic spirit and the missionary ideal of his disciples. He insisted with them that the goal of all activity was to be the same specific goal of salesian mission: the salvation and formation of the young and of all people, understood in its wider sense, and through it the transformation of the society. He taught that the profound dynamism of missionary action is that which drew inspiration from the pastoral charity of the Good Shepherd who wants to reach every human being in every part of the world. Moreover, through his motto "Give me souls, take away the rest" Don Bosco reminded his Salesians that they should not search for anything other than the generous service of the neighbour, especially the poor and abandoned youth, giving concrete responses to their true needs, through educative action, instruction and professional formation, spiritual accompaniment, moral and civil education, the proclamation of the Gospel and the personal testimony of a joyous and exemplary life. Finally, animating his Sons in missionary vocation, he encouraged them to live to the fullest extent the demands of their religious vocation and their call to be apostles of the young, ready to leave everything"— if required even one's life – to realize the salesian mission in obedience to the mandate of Christ "Go to the whole world and preach the Gospel to every creature" (Mk 16: 15).

The missionary dimension of the salesian vocation has proved to be very efficacious also in the formation of the young. Through sermons, good-night talks, narrations of dreams and projects of foundation, reading and publication of letters of missionaries, Don Bosco communicated to the young his apostolic enthusiasm and his educative ideals. He formed in them the sense of the Church, and encouraged and cultivated their vocation, and exposed them to a vision of the human reality as wide as the world itself. Very many youngsters, listening to the words of Don Bosco, felt in their hearts the birth of that desire to consecrate themselves to the salesian missions, ready to leave their homeland and their dear ones to make of themselves "all things to all men" (1 Cor 9:22) following the style of Don Bosco. Many others, reading the

Salesian Bulletin desired to become active members of the great apostolic family of Don Bosco as Cooperators, sustaining the missionary work with prayer, with money, with propaganda and with various other voluntary activities.

The missionary fervour of the Salesian Family continued to grow in the course of time. The World War I (1914-1918) temporarily slowed the process of expansion. But in the 1920s, thanks to the insistence of Fr. Paul Albera and Fr. Philip Rinaldi, the salesian missionary spirit was reborn with greater vivacity than before, and with a prodigious flowering of vocations and of foundations. Two particular initiatives had a very important impact on the great missionary development of the successive decades: the foundation of the missionary aspirantates and the publication in Italy of the periodical *Gioventù Missionaria* (1923-1967), with editions in Spanish (*Juventud Misionera*), in Portuguese (*Juventude Missionaria*), in French (*Jeunesse et Missions*) and in other languages.

Fr. Roy Anthony Parackal has studied the periodical *Gioventù Missionaria*, placing it in the wider context of the missionary movement in the Catholic Church in the 20th century, connecting it with the salesian youth associations. *Gioventù Missionaria* was an important review, as is testified by many witnesses, be it for the innumerable missionary vocations it aroused among the young, be it for the interest and sympathy for the salesian missions that it diffused, creating a movement of solidarity, which even today, forty years from its closure, continue to bear fruit. The periodical, diffused in the salesian educative institutions, favoured the renewal of the salesian system of youth associations (the old sodalities) and encouraged the foundations of very active missionary groups of the young. This in turn contributed to spread missionary awareness in the families, in the parishes and in the society at large. The young readers of one time, becoming adults, maintained a strong missionary sensibility and continued to sustain the salesian works both economically and spiritually.

In reconstructing the story of *Gioventù Missionaria* and in the analysis of its contents, the fundamental concern of Fr. Roy

has been to discover the image of the mission and of the missionary which emerges from the pages of the periodical. The topic is not of secondary importance. In fact, the articles in *Gioventù Missionaria* were written by salesian missionaries themselves, often very young, and expressed their spiritual motivations, their sensibilities and their vision, their idea of evangelization and of education, their grasp of the local cultures. Today, those who are inspired by the categories of cultural anthropology and by the criteria elaborated by recent missiology would put forward much reserve in regard to that vision. However, those who wish to understand the reasons for the choices which have oriented the life and action of those salesians, the values which have sustained their faith and their enthusiasm, the objectives of their prodigious work need to know their mentality, their cultural sensibility and their motivations. Only in this way it would be possible to discover the profound dynamisms which have given such fecundity to their missionary initiatives and which have effectively left their impact on successive historical events.

In this research study, the author applies a methodology inspired by-“cultural history”. But his fundamental objective, as is evident, is to go beyond the mental or cultural frames and beyond the theology of what has been written in the pages of the review, to access their profound motivations and their spirituality. In this consists the novelty and the interest of this work.

Fr. Aldo Giraudo SDB
Università Pontificia Salesiana
Roma, 31 January 2010

ABBREVIATIONS

- AAS = «Acta Apostolicae Sedis».
- ACS = «Atti del Capitolo Superiore della Pia Società Salesiana».
- AG = VATICAN II, *Ad Gentes*, 7 December 1965, in AAS 58 (1966) 947-990.
- AGM = Associazione Gioventù Missionaria.
- AI = Apostolato dell'Innocenza.
- ASC = Archivio Salesiano Centrale, Direzione Generale Opere Don Bosco, Rome.
- ASG = PIUS XII, *Ad Sinarum Gentes*, 7 October 1954, in AAS 47 (1955) 5-14.
- BS = «Bollettino Salesiano».
- EP = PIUS XII, *Evangelii Praecones*, 2 June 1951, in AAS 43 (1951) 497-528.
- FD = PIUS XII, *Fidei Donum*, 21 April 1957, in AAS 49 (1957) 225-248.
- FMA = Figlie di Maria Ausiliatrice.
- FUCI = Federazione Universitari Cattolici Italiani.
- GM = «Gioventù Missionaria».
- GS = VATICAN II, *Gaudium et Spes*, 7 December 1965, in AAS 58 (1966) 1025-1120.
- LG = VATICAN II, *Lumen Gentium*, 21 November 1964, in AAS 57 (1965) 5-71.
- MI = BENEDICTUS XV, *Maximum Illud*, 30 November 1919, in AAS 11 (1919) 440-455.
- PP = JOHANNES XXIII, *Princeps Pasotrum*, 28 November 1959, in AAS 51 (1959) 833-864.
- RE = PIUS XI, *Rerum Ecclesiae*, 28 February 1926, in AAS 18 (1926) 65-83.
- SDB = Salesiani di Don Bosco.
- SEI = Società Editrice Internazionale, Torino.
- SGCI = Società della Gioventù Cattolica Italiana.
- SP = PIUS XII, *Summi Pont. ficatus*, 20 October 1939, in AAS 31 (1939) 454-480.

INTRODUCTION

At the solemn commissioning of the first group of his missionaries, on 11 November 1875, in the Basilica of Mary Help of Christians in Turin, Don Bosco is reported to have said,

In doing this we are entering upon a mighty undertaking, not because we have any pretensions, or because we believe we can convert the whole world in a few days; yet who knows? This departure, this humble beginning may be the seed that will grow into a mighty tree. It may be like a tiny grain of millet or of a mustard seed that will grow, little by little, and accomplish great things. It may awaken in many hearts a desire to consecrate themselves to God in the Missions, to join forces with us and reinforce our ranks.¹

Don Bosco, at the time of sending out the first missionary expedition, in all probability, could not have imagined the missionary development that his young Congregation would have had. With over 130 official expeditions, the salesian Congregation has sent out over 10,100 Salesians to the various mission fields of the world, and this group has been further supplemented by over 3000 Daughters of Mary Help of Christians.² Today the Salesians are present in over 128 countries.³

Though the above figures are impressive, they do not convey the whole reality. The entire missionary enterprise of the congregation is not limited to these official missionary expeditions. Thousands of Salesians and FMAs who have been and continue

¹ CERIA E., *The Biographical Memoirs of St. John Bosco*, [American Edition], vol 11, New Rochelle, Salesiana Publishers, 1964.

² Cfr. WIRTH M., *Da Don Bosco ai Nostri Giorni*, Roma, LAS, 2000, 519-524.

³ Cfr. *La Società di san Francesco di Sales nel Sessennio 1996-2002. Relazione del Vicario del Rettor Maggiore don Luc van Looy*, Roma, Editrice SDB, 2002, 258.

to be missionaries in their own countries and in their own regions and who have not been channelled through these official expeditions, certainly find their due place in the over all missionary commitment of the congregation.

The number of missionary expeditions, the number of personnel, Salesians and Daughters of Mary Help of Christians, sent out to the missions, the number of youngsters who have joined the Salesian Congregation all over the world, the thousands of persons who have come to know the saving love of God in Jesus Christ through the evangelising activity of the Salesians, and the number of youngsters, boys and girls, who have passed through the salesian educational institutions all over the world and have benefited from the salesian apostolate, would suffice to understand the extent and fruitfulness of the missionary undertaking of the sons and daughters of Don Bosco!

However substantial and impressive these figures may be, one will still have only a limited and partial view of the flowering of that great undertaking, if one limits oneself merely to these numbers. The missionary enterprise of the Church, has a dimension that is documented and historically verifiable, and another that is often not documented and cannot be measured in terms of numbers and figures; so too the salesian missionary undertaking. The verifiable aspect consists of the personnel in the missions, the institutions, the people served, the number of people who embrace the faith, the finances involved etc.: elements that can be evaluated in figures. The less verifiable but which nonetheless is profound and extensive, very often even more extensive than the external aspect, consists of the assimilation of the values, of the models of behaviour, of the new mentality imparted by the missionaries in their work of evangelisation and also in their cultural mediation; the christian animation of the communities served, the spirituality imbibed and lived by the faithful, the diffusion of the missionary spirit, the creation of a missionary ambience in institutions both in the missions and back in the countries of origin of the missionaries themselves, etc. This internal reality does not lend itself easily to study, classification and evaluation. Yet this fact does not make

the study of this dimension of the missionary enterprise less important or less necessary.

From the initial stages of the salesian missionary undertaking, the «*Bollettino Salesiano*» had a definite role to play in making known the various activities of the salesians in the missions, in being an instrument of propaganda for these same works and in economically sustaining the salesian missions, and even in determining, in some way, its future. However, a later but not for that matter less efficacious publication, was considered necessary, to give a missionary dimension to the various associations for the young in the salesian institutes, with the specific scope of promoting priestly and religious vocations.

Therefore, during the period from February 1923 up to December 1967, the Salesians in Italy published a monthly periodical entitled «*Gioventù Missionaria*» for the missionary formation of the boys and girls of their various institutions and for the mobilisation of the same group of young people in favour of the various missionary undertakings. In the unfolding of its history, the periodical proved to be the agent of a visible missionary conscientization and transformation of the salesian institutions, an inspiration for a true flowering of various activities in favour of the missions, a factor that contributed greatly to the increasing number of young people who opted to join the priestly and religious life.

It has been the desire to study this little known or forgotten missionary periodical and the youth missionary movement of which it was the animating centre, that has motivated this research paper. In the process of the study, a choice has been made to focus on the way that the periodical projected the missions and the missionaries, with a particular attention to its projection of the cultural elements of the indigenous people.

The intention of this research paper is, to understand the mentality that was behind this vast salesian missionary literature. It is an effort to try to recapture the concept of the missions and the ideal of the missionary that this channel of communication diffused among the young. It is a study of the formative missionary

spirituality propagated by the periodical. Along the lines of a history of a mentality or of a cultural history, it proposes to study the image of the missions and of the missionary, expressed explicitly or implicitly, consciously or unconsciously, in the review.

The term “image” is not intended as it would commonly be in a journalistic approach to a means of communication. The term applies more to the mentality, the culture, the pattern of thought, the mental picture, the sum total of concepts that together form an overall idea of a reality. So, in concrete, when the term “image of the missions and of the missionary” is used, what is implied is the concept that the readers would form about the missions and the missionary through their reading the various reports of GM. So, as regards the missions, the image would be formed by reports that describe the territory, the physical features of the region, the type of people who live in these lands, their concrete situation, their customs, habits, beliefs, religion etc. The image of the missionary would be constructed from reports that speak of his motivation, his activity, his style of relationships, and his mode of living. Through the various accounts of the heroic feats of the missionaries, the idolising of their personalities, the enthusiastic narrations of their apostolate among the poor and less civilised peoples of the world, and the first hand reports of various countries and the curious traits of their cultures, GM projected to its young readers an image of the missions and held up a model of the missionaries which stirred their imagination and captured their hearts.

Through the vivid reports of various peoples and their culture, beliefs, customs, feasts etc, GM served, for its young readers, as a window to a world so vast and so different from their own. These reports moulded in a great way the image that these young readers acquired of other peoples and cultures. They contributed their share to shape the dreams and aspirations of the young missionaries who left for the missions during this period and also prepared them, in some way at least, for the challenges they would be meeting in their actual field of apostolate. Therefore, this study of the image of the missions and the missionary projected by the review, seeks, in some way even if partially, to understand the missionary

formation of the hundreds of salesian missionaries who left their homelands and ventured into distant mission areas during the period, which would lead to a deeper understanding of their actual action in their various missions fields.

More than being an instrument of propaganda for the Salesian missions, and a means of soliciting financial assistance for them, GM was an instrument of diffusion of a spirituality characteristically missionary. It sought not only to make of its readers future missionaries in foreign lands, but offered guidelines, incentives and models for a missionary spirituality lived in the context of the daily life of a school going boy or girl. It awoke and sustained in the hearts of its young readers, the missionary dimension of their christian life. It deepened in the young the awareness of being "missionaries of the missionaries". Moving along the natural earnings of the young for associations, for activity, the review proposed most valuable and challenging expressions for the same, adapted to their age and concrete situation. Through its various projections of the people in the missions, it served as an instrument of a great solidarity between these same people and the readers of the periodical. In a context where there was a strong temptation to limit the horizons of one's life by feelings of narrow nationalism, GM offered an alternative vision, one that reached out to the whole world, particularly the world of the poor and the needy.

The methodology followed in this research paper, has been primarily historical in character.⁴ Although the study is on the periodical GM, the methodology followed has not been that which is often followed in a journalistic study in the field of social communication, namely the intricate process of content analysis with its emphasis on the quantitative aspect of the problem. The approach of this paper has been a more immediate analysis of the content of the periodical, to highlight those elements which more immediately and empirically bring out the mentality, the sensibilities, the interior motivation of the authors and of the editors.

⁴ Cfr. PELLEZZO J.M. - J.M. Garcia, *Invito alla Ricerca - Metodologia del lavoro scientifico*, Rome, LAS, 1998, 150-160.

This study initiates with a study of the historical context, particularly missionary, in which the review was launched and continued. The second stage of the study is centred on the periodical itself: the motivation behind the project, the scope of the periodical, its internal structure, the key personages responsible for the publication, the contributors of the various reports, and the internal evolution of the review. The third and most important phase of the research consists in the study of the contents of the periodical to draw out the image of the missions and of the missionary that the periodical projected. In the context of the salesian missions, this is an effort to trace out those dynamic elements which help towards a deeper understanding of the mental mechanisms, the interior, motivational and spiritual attitudes which have greatly contributed to sustain the fortunate diffusion of the salesian work in the world. And in this consists the novelty of the research. The last section of the study collects what GM projected as the cultural elements of various major ethnic groups which the Salesians met in their missions.

Obviously, the monthly issues of GM from February 1923 to December 1967 have served as the primary source of the study. The documents of the Church and of the Salesian Congregation, and archival documents kept in the Salesian Generalate in Rome have helped particularly in the reconstruction of the missionary ambience in which GM flowered and the story of the periodical itself. Studies on the history of the Church, and of the history of the missionary expansion of the Church have contributed much again in the reconstruction of the missionary ambience that prevailed in the time of the periodical.

Within a short period of its initiation this monthly periodical was translated into Spanish, French, Polish, and Portuguese. For a considerable period, the same team of editors of the Italian version saw to the translation and printing of the review in these other languages. Except for a passing mention of these various translations, this study is limited to the Italian GM.

Some time after the initiation of the review, the editors published what could be rightly called a supplement to GM, meant

to serve particularly the leaders of the various missionary groups in the salesian institutions. It was normally a four page hand out with practical guidelines for the leaders. Because of absence of a collection of this secondary material, and the vastness of the material already in consideration, this study does not take into consideration this supplementary material.

Gioventù Missionaria was restarted in 1981, published from Ivrea. This later periodical had perspectives evidently different from those of the previous publication. It was divested of that aspect of an undertaking of the Salesian Congregation as such for the missionary animation of the young boys and girls of the whole of Italy. Instead it took on a very local character with a very limited circulation. This publication too was closed definitively in 1985. The present study does not take into consideration the Ivrea editions of the review.

Prior to the present study, there has not been a direct research study on GM. According to information available, this study would be the first of its kind on the periodical itself. Eugenio Valentini in his *Bibliografia Generale delle Missioni Salesiane*⁵ has undertaken the classification of the articles of GM according to the various missionary regions. It is probable that the contents of periodical have also been used in writing the histories of various salesian missions.

It is with a sense of humble gratitude that I present the fruit of my study to the general public, and particularly to my Salesian confreres and members of the great family of Don Bosco. It gives me great joy to unveil a part of our proud heritage, which perhaps has remained unknown so far. In the process of the research work, when the going got really hard and I was tempted to discouragement, it was Fr. Aldo Giraudo, my guide, who told me, "We do this for the love of the Congregation." It has been a simple

⁵ VALENTINI E. (Ed.), *Bibliografia Generale delle Missioni Salesiane*, Roma, LAS, 1975.

filial love for the Salesian Congregation which has been my home ever since 1964, that has inspired, sustained and brought to a happy conclusion this work. I do hope the joy one experiences in our heritage will inspire a greater fidelity in the heart of every reader, and God-willing, a deeper missionary enthusiasm, so much characteristic of our Father and Founder, and of the Congregation.

As I offer the fruit of my research study I am deeply grateful to the Salesian Province of Guwahati that freed me to dedicate time to my study in Spirituality. I owe a great debt of gratitude particularly to Archbishop Dominic Jala, the then provincial Superior who sent me to Rome. Sincere thanks to Fr. Philip Barjo the previous Provincial who encouraged me and supported me so much in my studies.

This work would not have been possible without the constant guidance of Fr. Aldo Giraud. Right from the initial stages of the work, up to the very end, he has been a true source of inspiration, encouragement, a wise guide and a true brother. Thank you Fr. Giraud. I express my sincere gratitude to Fr. Giuseppe Costa who encouraged me in this task, corrected my writing, opened my vision to new realities and contributed in every way to enrich the final paper. Thanks too to Fr. Gianfranco Coffele for his very valuable corrections and suggestions. A big thank you to Fr. Juan Picca, Librarian of Università Pontificia Salesiana and former Director of the Institute of Spirituality, under whose guidance I had the privilege of doing my licentiate thesis. His goodness in making available the issues of GM reduced considerably the difficulty involved in this present study. A sincere word of thanks to the Salesians in charge of the Central Salesian Archives in the Generalate for allowing me access to the documents related to GM.

I thank all the Professors of the Institute of Spirituality of Università Pontificia Salesiana. I acknowledge with gratitude the support and encouragement that I have received from the community of Don Bosco at the University to which I belonged during the years of study. Thanks to all my friends and dear ones who have lovingly accompanied me in this long process.

It was the great interest shown by Fr. Klement Václav the present General Councillor for the Missions that sustained me in the revision of the original thesis presented in the Università Pontificia Salesiana. In fact he even made a reference to the work in one of his letters. With all that, I could not but get down to the work of getting the material ready for publication. Sincere thanks for the finance that he readily made available for the publication of this work.

God bless you all.

Fr. Roy Anthony SDB

CHAPTER 1

MISSIONARY EXPANSION 1915'– 1960

The monthly periodical “Gioventù Missionaria”, instrument of salesian missionary animation of the young, had its initiation and its flowering in the years between the two World Wars, a period that marked the history of the Catholic Church with its great missionary ferment.¹

The salesian vision of the missions and of the missionary 1923-1967 finds its proper place in the missionary movement of the same period. GM definitely reflects the patterns of thought of this period. As this monthly periodical is the instrument that is used in this study to arrive at an understanding of the salesian missionary vision 1923-1967, this chapter seeks to situate the

¹ Many missionary features characterised the period between the two world wars. The Popes of the era gave a missionary tone to their pontificates, making the expansion of the Church one of their chief concerns. A few landmark missionary encyclicals were issued in this period. The prevalent concept of the church as the only means of eternal salvation played an effective role in the maintenance of missionary enthusiasm. The continuing trend of western colonisation of Africa and Asia furthered, in its own way, the cause of the missions. The rising current of nationalism in the various parts of the world during this period between the two wars, contributed to highlight the great urgency of evangelisation of peoples. The Pontifical Missionary Societies, patronised and encouraged by the Holy See, played a major role in the missionary information and formation of various sections of the people. Spurred on by the call of the Popes, the various religious congregations stepped up their missionary activities in the distant lands. Many of the religious congregations initiated missionary periodicals, often with the motive of propaganda for their own institutes and their missions. These missionary periodicals contributed to create and sustain the interest of the general public in the missions and create an ambience that was markedly missionary. Missionary Groups and associations sprouted up in the Catholic nations, further deepening the missionary consciousness of the general public.

periodical in its historical settings. Throwing light on the background of the missionary thought and activity of the Church during this period, this first step of the study leads the reader to an understanding of the motives of the appropriation of particular perspectives of mission and of the missionary by the Salesians.

The period between the two World Wars, in spite of all the social and political upheavals in various corners of the world, was one of great growth in the missionary activity of the Church. The daring missionary undertaking of the Church, initiated in the closing decades of the 19th century, continued into the 20th century with even greater enthusiasm, with a temporary halt during the World War I.

This section of the study will examine in brief the missionary ambience that prevailed in the post World War I period and the actual missionary undertaking of the Church in the same period. As quite a few of the factors that played an important role in the missionary activity of the Church had their origin in the 19th century, an examination of the missionary ambience of the 19th century precedes that of the later period.

The factors that contributed to the reawakening of the missions in the 19th century

The French revolution combined with the rule of Napoleon and the socio-political upheavals which marked the closing decades of the 18th and the initial decades of the 19th centuries, brought about a temporary paralysis of the Church's missionary expansion. But these very events which had such negative effects on the missionary expansion of the Church, proved to be agents of a necessary purification and of an authentic renewal of the same Church. The spirit of Romanticism that swept over Europe after the Congress of Vienna (1815) created a new spiritual vibrancy in the continent. K.S. Latourette opines that "this surge of vitality was the primary cause of the daring vision, the comprehensive plans and the offering of life and money which sent missionaries to all quarters of the globe."²

² LATOURETTE K. S., *A History of the Expansion of Christianity*, vol 4, Exeter. The Pater Noster Press, 1971, 45-46.

Besides the general religious reawakening, many other factors contributed to the making of the period from 1815 to World War I into one of the greatest eras of missionary expansion. The Popes of the period demonstrated a personal interest in the promotion of the evangelising activity of the Church. Thus Pius VII (1800-1823) reorganised the Sacred Congregation for the Propagation of the Faith and made it the centre of all future missionary expansions. Gregory XVI (1831-1846) made an all out effort to free the missionary activity of the Church from the system of *Padroado* and introduced the system of *ius commissionis*.³ He encouraged the establishment of the local churches with native clergy. The canonisation and beatification of the Japanese martyrs during the pontificate of Pius IX (1846-1878), together with the celebration of the Vatican Council I was a convincing witness of the universality of the Church, and a great exposure of the reality of the missions to the European (especially Italian) Church. Leo XIII (1878-1903) continued the trend set by his predecessors of liberating the missionary activity of the Church from the power of the secular powers, and reasserted the fundamentally spiritual and evangelical character of the missions, and separated it from all political and commercial activities of the various Catholic nations. Pope Pius X (1903-1914) reorganised the Propaganda Fide. For a greater effectiveness of the Sacred Congregation, he took England, Ireland, Luxembourg, Holland, USA and Canada out of its jurisdiction.

³ At the beginning of the era of evangelization of non-European nations in the 19th century, the Popes partitioned and entrusted these lands to the then leading Catholic European nations, mainly Spain and Portugal. The sovereigns of these kingdoms, along with colonizing these lands, were also to Christianize the population and educate them in the western ways. These rulers had a big say in the choosing of the personnel that was sent to the missions, and even in the appointment of the ecclesiastical authorities. This model of operation of evangelization was known as the "*Padroado*" system. It had more disadvantages than advantages, and sooner than later the Popes realized the need for a change in this respect. And gradually they introduced what came to be called the *ius commissionis* by which particular regions in the mission territories were no more entrusted to Catholic states and their rulers, instead to the various religious congregations or missionary orders.

The suppression of religious congregations and a consequent general lowering of appreciation of religious life were two of the major causes for a slowing down of the missionary expansion in the last decades of the 18th and the first decades of 19th centuries. Conversely then, the re-flowering of religious life in the 19th century, contributed in a major way to the relaunching of the missionary activity of the Church. The period between 1815 and 1915 saw the birth of more religious congregations of both men and women than any other period of equal duration. The vast majority of these new religious families had a specifically missionary character.

A factor that had a great impact on the missionary activity of the Church in this period was no doubt the founding of four major missionary Institutes in Italy in the second half of the 19th century. *Pontificio Istituto Missioni Estere di Milano (PIME)* was founded by Mons. Angelo Ramazzotti, Bishop of Pavia in 1850. The *Figli del Sacro Cuore di Gesù* or commonly called *Camboniani*, was founded by Mons. Daniele Comboni, Vicar Apostolic of Central Africa in 1867. The *Pia Società di S. Francesco Saverio* or called *Saveriani* was founded by Mons. Guido M. Conforti, Bishop of Parma in 1895. The *Istituto Missioni della Consolata*, was founded in Turin by Canon Giuseppe Allamano in 1901.⁴

A specific characteristic of the missionary movement of the 19th century was its popular basis. The missions interested not only the hierarchy, the priests and the religious. Numerous groups of lay missionary associations sprung up in different parts of Europe, often connected with some specific mission territory of particular religious institutes, to support them with prayer and with finance. Often these groups were sustained by periodicals initiated by the religious congregations, or by the founders of the same missionary groups. G. Schmidlin notes that a total of more than 300 missionary periodicals were published in the period from 1860 to 1920.⁵ They

⁴ Cfr. ERBA A. M., *Storia della Chiesa Missionaria*, in AA.VV., *Missiologia Oggi*, Roma, Pontificia Università Urbaniana, 1985, 139.

⁵ Cfr. SCHMIDLIN G., *Manuale di Storia delle Missioni Cattoliche*, vol 3, Milano, Pontificio Istituto Missioni Estere, 1929, 14.

served to inform the readers about the events in the missions, keep alive the missionary enthusiasm of the various associations and sustain their generosity. Thus missions became a point of interest of the common lay man through the missionary associations and their periodicals.⁶

The great missionary movement of the 19th century and the first half of the 20th century cannot be attributed only to religious reasons. Factors other than religious contributed their share to the missionary expansion of the period in discussion. New scientific discoveries especially the use of vapour power for navigation, and the consequent discovery of railways facilitated travels. The opening of the Suez Canal in 1869 reduced the fatigue of the journey to the East. The improved postal systems provided quicker communication between the missionaries and their supporting centres in the West, and this in turn facilitated the raising of funds and dissemination of information among the people.⁷

Yet another factor that contributed towards the missionary expansion was the increased commerce of the European nations with hitherto unknown parts of the world, and the steady colonisation by western powers of the newly explored lands and peoples. K.S. Latourette remarks that by the end of the 19th century, European nations explored and subjugated Africa, conquered India and Ceylon, opened the doors of China, induced Japan to admit their merchants, diplomats, missionaries; and mastered the Pacific Islands. They built new nations in Australia and New Zealand, and completed the occupation of the Americas. By 1914 much of the land surface of the world was politically subjected to the European nations. Those not under direct subjection were touched by European commerce.⁸ The colonising powers often opened the way

⁶ These missionary associations which were born in this period and their periodicals will be studied in a later section as they not only continued into the period after the World War I, but also had a major effectiveness in the missionary animation of all sections of the people in the period.

⁷ Cfr. BIHLMAYER K., *Church History*, vol 3, Westminster, The Newman Press, 1966, 351; LATOURETTE K. S., *A History of the Expansion of Christianity*, vol 4, 18; METZLER J. (Ed.), *Storia della Chiesa*, vol 24, Milano, Edizioni Paoline, 1990, 26.

⁸ Cfr. LATOURETTE K. S., *A History of the Expansion of Christianity*, vol 4, 13-14.

for the Missionaries, and at times both soldiers and missionaries formed part of just one group for the colonisation, evangelisation and civilisation of the indigenous people.⁹

A brief resume of the missionary movement towards new lands in the 19th century

For the major part of the earlier decades of the 19th century, mission territories included only the European nations that had embraced Protestantism, the North African nations and the new world of the Americas. The East remained closed to the missionaries, so too the vast region of Africa south of the Sahara desert. However, in the closing decades of the century there was a definite movement towards these latter regions.

Exploration of Central and Southern Africa was done mainly in the last three decades of the 19th century. Colonial conquests followed the exploration of these regions. The exploration and the colonization of these regions preceded the missionary work and in some way paved the way for it. The European colonisers divided the explored regions among themselves and invited missionaries from their respective countries for evangelising and civilising the indigenous people.¹⁰

India was by no means a new area to missionary activity in the 19th century. However, during this period it presented a peculiarly difficult and urgent situation which called for greater missionary involvement. At the beginning of the 19th century, the Catholic Church in India found itself in a knotty situation. The vast majority of the dioceses of Portuguese Padroado were without Bishops. Pope Gregory XVI tried to remedy this situation created by the negligence of the Spanish throne. In 1834 he created 5

⁹ For further details of these factors for the missionary reawakening of the 19th century cfr. LATOURETTE K. S., *A History of the Expansion of Christianity*, vol 4, 13-49; COMBY J., *Due Mila Anni di Evangelizzazione*, Torino, Societa Editrice Internazionale, 1992, 212-260; METZLER J. (Ed.), *Storia della Chiesa*, vol 24, 25-48, GRÜNDEH H., *Christian Mission and Colonial Expansion – Historical and Structural Connections*, in «Mission Studies» 12 (1995) 1, 18-29.

¹⁰ Cfr. COMBY J., *Due Mila Anni di Evangelizzazione*, 264-267.

Vicariates Apostolic. With the bull of 1838, *Multa Praeclare*, he reorganised the Church in India. He suppressed four of the five dioceses of Padroado, to the advantage of the Vicariates Apostolic. Only Goa was left under the Padroado. However, this gave rise to the Goan Schism which lasted up to 1886.

The East Indian Company prevented evangelisation in the regions it colonised. In 1858 the British parliament assumed government of the colony and gave missionaries greater liberty of action, but the Protestant British government in loco discriminated against the Catholic missionaries and their activities. The division among the clergy brought about by the Goan Schism, absence of missionaries, combined with the missionary activity of the Protestants, signalled reduction in the Catholic numbers and the great growth of the Protestants. All these factors helped to highlight the urgency of new missionary forces for the evangelisation of India. Besides, the vast Indian peninsula with its numerous ethnic groups still untouched by Christianity, presented a challenging field to the daring missionaries of the period.¹¹

In Sri Lanka two Vicariates Apostolic were established in 1845, one at Colombo and the other at Jaffna. In the second half of the century, many religious congregations undertook missionary work in this great island, and by the end of 1870 the Catholic population had already reached the 200,000 mark.

In Burma, however, the work progressed at a slower pace. The Oblates of Turin started the evangelisation of the region. In 1856 they were substituted by the Foreign Missions of Paris. In 1868 these were further re-enforced by the Foreign Missions of Milan. In 1866 three Vicariates were created in Burma.¹²

The Spanish colonisers occupied the Philippines in the 16th century and the process of colonisation went hand in hand with

¹¹ Cf. COMBY J., *Due Mila Anni di Evangelizzazione*, 228-229; BIHLMAYER K., *Church History*, vol 3, 434; GORREE G. – G. CHAUVEL, *La Chiesa e la sua Missione*, Torino. Edizioni Missioni Consolata, 1966, 140-142.

¹² Cf. GORREE G. – G. CHAUVEL, *La Chiesa e la sua Missione*, 141-142.

evangelisation of the people. However, the catholic missions in Philippines suffered a set back as a result of the Spanish-American war and the annexation of the island state by USA in 1898. By this time about 90% of the Filipinos were Catholics. The Americans expelled the Spanish priests and there were not enough native priests to replace the foreign missionaries. Various Protestant sects invaded the country. The Church also suffered from the schism brought about by a certain Gregorio Aglipay who founded a national Filipino Church in 1902. But the movement slowly faded out and peace was restored to the Church.¹³

During the period of European colonisation, Indonesia became a Dutch colony, and the Dutch missionaries took up earnestly the work of evangelisation of the Indonesian people. In 1913 there was a total of 82,286 Catholics in the Dutch East Indies and this population kept on growing steadily. During World War I, because of the German invasion of Netherlands, the Dutch authority interned or expelled the German missionaries who were in Indonesia and consequently missionary activity suffered a set back in these islands.¹⁴

Evangelisation of China had received the attention of various groups of missionaries in the preceding centuries. Difficulties of diverse characters obstructed the evangelisation of this land, not least among them being the fatigue of the voyage. When sea routes were gradually opened during this period of exploration, China became one of the major attractions of missionary institutes. However, there was stiff opposition from the monarchy against all proselytising activities. Christianity was considered the religion of the foreigner. It was only after the second Opium War (1857-1860) that the Chinese monarchy was forced to grant freedom of religion and allow the establishment of Catholic missions. Though China

¹³ Cfr. COMBY J., *Due Mila Anni di Evangelizzazione*, 278; BIHLMAYER K., *Church History*, vol 3, 435; LATOURETTE K. S., *Christianity in a Revolutionary Age. A history of Christianity in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries*, vol 5, Grand Rapids, Zondervan Publishing House, 1969, 361-366.

¹⁴ Cfr. LATOURETTE K. S., *Christianity in a Revolutionary Age*. vol 5, 353-357

was not a colony of any European power at that time, it was under the yoke of the European powers which exploited and humiliated it. France had exercised a protectorate over Roman Catholic Missions in China right from the treaty of Tientsin of 1858. In June 1900 the Boxers revolt broke out, with the pronounced motive of purifying China from all foreign elements. Many foreigners and Christians were put to death. However, in August, Peking was retaken by the Europeans. The Catholic missions flourished under the French protectorate. The overthrow of the Manchu dynasty and proclamation of the Republic in 1911 created great turmoil and almost ceaseless political disturbances. The constitution of the republic tried to do away with the cult of Confucius. The period was noted by increasing civil wars, revolts of ambitious army officers, widespread banditry, floods, famines etc. However, the first two decades of the 20th century were decades of great missionary work in China, no doubt, connected to the activities of the colonial powers.¹⁵

The work of evangelisation of Indochina was started in the first decades of the 19th century. However it met with recurring persecutions from the part of the emperors. Notable among the persecutions were the ones initiated in 1833 by emperor Minh-Mang, and that which took place in the period between 1844 and 1848. It was the gradual French colonisation of Indochina that put an end to the persecutions and opened the region to the missionaries. However, the region would have to wait for the end of the World War I to see a real flowering of missionary work. During the period of colonisation, Malaysia too came under the influence of the missionaries, though restricted to Malacca and Singapore.¹⁶

After a blockade of more than 200 years, Japan opened her ports to the Westerners in 1856 by various treaties with America,

¹⁵ Cf. BIHLMAYER K., *Church History*, vol 3, 435-436; COMBY J., *Due Mila Anni di Evangelizzazione*, 262-264; LATOURETTE K. S., *Christianity in a Revolutionary Age*, vol 5, 372-380.

¹⁶ Cf. BIHLMAYER K., *Church History*, vol 3, 435; COMBY J., *Due Mila Anni di Evangelizzazione*, 262; GORREE G. – G. CHAUVEL, *La Chiesa e la sua Missione*, 138-139.

France and England. Christian missionaries grasped the opportunity to relaunch a serious drive for the evangelisation of the island nation. There were anti-Christian persecutions in 1867-1870. But in 1873 and 1876 the government repealed the anti-Christian laws. The New constitution of 1889 gave full religious liberty. However, missionary expansion was slow in the region.¹⁷

Catholic faith entered Korea in the 1780s through the missionary work of a few Koreans who came in contact with the Catholic missionaries in China. In 1830 a Vicariate Apostolic was established in Korea, entrusted to the Foreign Missions of Paris. The faith progressed at a steady pace in the region, though checked by recurring persecutions. Only in 1886, through a treaty between France and Korea, the Catholic faith was officially recognised in the country. Korea was occupied by Japan in 1904 and annexed in 1910. However, during the Japanese occupation Christianity was given freedom of operation.¹⁸

The Missionary expansion in the period between the two World Wars

World War I put a break on the increasing momentum of the missionary enterprise of the Church in the 20th century. The War disrupted communications between the missionaries and their headquarters in Europe. The missionary institutes experienced great difficulty in reaching reinforcement of personnel and financial assistance to the far flung mission lands. Many of the missionaries, especially the Germans, in many areas were imprisoned or expelled. Often the place of the expelled missionaries was taken by English or American Protestant ministers. To add to this, the system of compulsory military service adopted by some of the European nations reduced the number of missionary personnel.¹⁹

¹⁷ Cfr. BIHLMAYER K., *Church History*, vol 3, 436.

¹⁸ Cfr. BIHLMAYER K., *Church History*, vol 3, 436-437; LATOURETTE K. S., *Christianity in a Revolutionary Age*, vol 5, 413-423; GORREE G. – G. CHAUVEL, *La Chiesa e la sua Missione*, 136-137.

¹⁹ Cfr. LATOURETTE K. S., *A history of the Expansion of Christianity*, vol 7, Exeter, The Pater Noster Press, 1971, 11-14; COMBY J., *Due Mila Anni di Evangelizzazione*, 269-270; BIHLMAYER K., *Church History*, vol 3, 531.

The political currents of the times of Nazism in Germany, Fascism in Italy and Communism in Russia had adverse effects on the activities of the Church. In the East, Shintoism that formed the core of Japanese nationalism left no place for Christianity. The laissez faire system that was in vogue in the pre-war period had encouraged individual creativity and left the missionaries unobstructed in their zeal. The enhanced power of the state in the period after World War I had adverse effects on missionary activity.²⁰

The development of science and the consequent mastery by man of his physical environment became more prominent after the World War I. Machinery began to play a greater role in the life of man. Inventions became more numerous. Nations took giant strides in the direction of industrialisation. Invention of air travel and radio helped to bring the world together. The new scientific discoveries combined with the greater knowledge and accompanying control of the elements of nature often called in question the age old beliefs of the Church and ushered in a period of greater scepticism and secularism.²¹

The currents of democracy and self-rule which had their origins even in the pre-French Revolution period and which had swept over Europe during the 19th century, gradually reached also the colonies, often to the embarrassment of the colonising powers. Democracy that had marked the 19th century carried on into the post World War I period. Often this political tendency finished in narrow nationalism and racial frictions. Cultural revolutions among the non-European people intensified during this period especially in Africa south of the Sahara, Turkey, Iran, India, China, and Japan. “Self determination” and “democracy” which were the slogans of World

²⁰ The absolute monarchies of Europe of the 16th, 17th, and 18th centuries were generally friendly to the Church and aided it at home and in the colonies, though often for their own advancement. The situation dramatically changed in the 20th century. The leading totalitarian states were openly or covertly hostile to the Church, and most of the States, even those more democratic, deprived the Church of some of its traditional functions. Cfr. LATOURETTE K. S., *A history of the Expansion of Christianity*, vol 7, 11-14.

²¹ Cfr. LATOURETTE K. S., *A history of the Expansion of Christianity*, vol 7, 5-11.

War I paved the way for demand for the same rights by people so far subjected to the European powers. Even the young Churches in the mission lands underwent a slow and gradual change of attitude towards foreign missionaries and the missionary Church.²²

In this period between 1914 and 1945, when the previous patterns of culture were gradually broken or reshaped, and society increasingly became secular, one would naturally expect Christianity to experience a set back. In a period that saw the greatest extension of the colonial powers as well as a gradual breakdown of the same with the rising tide of nationalism taking deeper roots in the colonies, human calculations would predict the end of all missionary activity, more so, because of its connection with the colonial activities. Contrary to all such calculations, precisely during this period the missions made great gains in Africa, India, China, Japan and Korea and on a lesser scale also in the other Asian nations. It was in this period that Christianity became a world religion and succeeded in divesting itself of purely occidental character. This period between the two Wars, proved to be one of the greatest eras for Catholic missionary expansion, for the number of personnel dedicated to the missions, for the quality and quantity of assistance for the missions, for the abundance of specialised literature on the missions, and for the over all increase in the number of the faithful.²³

One of the major factors which formed the basis of the great missionary expansion of the period between the two Wars was precisely the missionary leadership of the Popes of the period.

Immediately at the close of the World War I, Benedict XV turned his attention to the state of the missions. He created the Sacred Congregation for the Oriental Churches to look after the matters of these Churches, and freed the Propaganda Fide of

²² Cfr. LATOURETTE K. S., *A history of the Expansion of Christianity*, vol 7, 5-11; COMBY J., *Due Mila Anni di Evangelizzazione*, 270.

²³ Cfr. COMBY J., *Due Mila Anni di Evangelizzazione*, 276; LATOURETTE K. S., *A history of the Expansion of Christianity*, vol 7, 409-411; LATOURETTE K. S., *Christianity in a Revolutionary Age*, vol 5, 263-264.

preoccupations with thorny problems relating to the customs and usages of the East. The Propaganda Fide was to interest itself in the evangelisation of peoples. In 1919 the same Pontiff brought out the encyclical *Maximum Illud*,²⁴ which signalled a true turning point in the work of evangelisation and served as the magna carta of all future missionary activity. The true relaunching of the missionary enterprise after the World War I could be identified with the promulgation of this important papal document. The Holy Father, besides, insisted on the formation of the missionaries in sacred as well as secular disciplines and wanted the introduction of the course of missiology in the Ateneo of the Propaganda Fide. This was however realised only in 1932.²⁵

Pope Pius XI (1922-1939) set himself to the missionary task from the start of his papacy. He considered the evangelisation of peoples as the chief task of his papacy. In May 1922 he re-organised the method of collecting and distributing assistance to the missions and transferred to Rome the headquarters of *L'Oeuvre de la propagation de la foi*, and placed it under the authority of the Sacred Congregation for the Propagation of the Faith. He encouraged the missionary animation of the faithful by the *L'Unione Missionario del Clero*. The same year the International Catholic Mission Congress was held to mark the 300th anniversary of the foundation of the Sacred Congregation for the Propagation of the Faith. On the Feast of the Pentecost of 1922, he made known his missionary plan. He insisted that evangelisation of peoples was the task of every baptised person. He emphasised the urgency to evangelise Asia and Africa. The same year, he sent Mons. Celso Costantini as apostolic delegate to China. Costantini worked towards the indigenisation of the Church in China – a project so dear to the heart of Pius XI. 1923 was marked by the recognition of the various eastern rites: Malabar, Malankara, Coptic; and the

²⁴ A more detailed study of this papal document will be done in a later section of this paper.

²⁵ Cf. BIHLMAYER K., *Church History*, vol 3, 531; COMBY J., *Due Mila Anni di Evangelizzazione*, 271; SEMERARO C., *Le Missioni Cattoliche Nell'Epoca Contemporanea*, in DAL COVOLO E. – A. TRIACCA (Eds.), *La Missione del Redentore*, Torino, Elledici, 1992, 166-168.

appointment of their own Bishops. Pius XI wanted the holy year celebrations of 1925 to have a character specifically missionary. He charged the Prefect of the Propaganda Fide to organise a Missionary Exhibition on the occasion which would be kept open to the public for the whole year. This missionary exhibition, with exhibits from the missions all over the world, and realised with such attention to artistic fineness and fidelity to the actual situation of the people of the mission, served as a virtual journey to the various missions for the thousands of visitors. It was a great exposure to the reality of the missions. In 1927 the same missionary exhibition found a permanent place in the Lateran campus to become a permanent Mission Museum. In 1926 Pius XI published the encyclical *Rerum Ecclesia*, one among the more important missionary encyclicals of the period.²⁶ The same year he instituted the 3rd Sunday of October as Mission Sunday, a day of prayer and offerings for the missions. On 18th October 1926 Pius XI consecrated the first six Chinese Bishops, and he followed this up later by the consecration of Japanese and Vietnamese Bishops. In 1927 he proclaimed St. Theresa of Child Jesus as the patron of the missions, pointing to the saint's zeal for salvation of souls as the true motive of missions, and prayer and sacrifice as an effective and necessary means for the true spread of the Gospel. The Pope encouraged the faithful to join in the apostolate of prayer for the missions, proposing specific intentions for prayer and sacrifice each month. In 1931 Pius XI inaugurated the Collegio Urbano de Propaganda Fide for the missionary qualification of clergy from all over the world. In 1933 he was instrumental for the founding of the institute for missiological studies in this university. During the reign of Pius XI almost 200 mission dioceses and circumscriptions were created and of these 40 were entrusted to the pastoral care of native Bishops. In this great undertaking in favour of the mission, he was greatly helped by Willem van Rossum, the Prefect of the Propaganda Fide.²⁷

²⁶ This papal document will be studied in further details in a later section.

²⁷ Cfr. BIHLMAYER K., *Church History*, vol 3, 532-533; COMBY J., *Due Mila Anni di Evangelizzazione*, 271.

Although already in 1911 a missionary institute was founded in Münster by Joseph Schmidlin (1876-1844) and Robert Streit (1875-1930), it was during the papacy of Pius XI that the idea of the specific study of the science of the missions gradually took root in the Catholic universities. In France the first lessons in Missiology were held in the Institut Catholique by M. Goyan. In 1927 a chair of missiology was established here. Also at Lovanio, Goyan got a chair approved in 1924. In the same period, Mons. Alfons Mülder inaugurated the first chair of missiology at Nimega in Netherlands. In Austria, J.Thauern conducted missiological seminars in the University of Vienna from 1933 onwards. An institute of missiology was created in the Swiss university of Friburgo in 1944. A chair of Science of the Missions was instituted at Coimbra in Portugal in 1946, and another in Spain in the University of Comillas, while at Burgos the annual week of study on the missions gained popularity and importance.²⁸

The actual missionary expansion in the period between the two World Wars

The three decades after 1914 saw an unexpected increase in the number of foreign missionaries in China, not so much for some special urgings of Rome, but for a general appreciation of the opportunity presented by the fluidity in the Chinese society. China was the seat of an ancient and highly developed civilisation. However, its exposure to the west, initiated by the gradual French domination of the nation in the second half of the 19th century, gradually set in motion a revolution that affected every phase of its life. The apparent superiority of the western traders, created a hunger among the people for western education. With the introduction of the western system of education, Confucianism gradually came to be discredited and almost totally abandoned. With the great openness to the West and its modes of thought and life, there was in many quarters a great openness to Christianity. This social transformation had begun in the closing decades of the 19th century and was well under way by 1914. After this period,

²⁸ Cfr. SEMERARO C., *Le Missioni Cattoliche Nell'Epoca Contemporanea*, 166-167; COMBY J., *Due Mila Anni di Evangelizzazione*, 260.

however, it proceeded at an accelerated pace. Christianity, that had made little progress among the Chinese until the onset of this socio-cultural disintegration, seemed poised for a great harvest in this ancient empire in the second decade of the 20th century. Religious and missionary institutes which had established themselves already in the region, together with new missionary institutes, sought to take advantage of this period of transition in the history of this great nation.²⁹

Even though the Church in China experienced rapid growth in the first three decades of the 20th century, there was also in this period a current of Chinese Renaissance gradually gathering force. It combined religious scepticism and secularism. It expressed itself as an anti-Christian movement. It presented Christianity as a tool of imperialism and capitalism, and denounced missionaries as agents of Western colonisation. This ambiguous situation in China after the World War I required the Church to free itself from all forms of French protectorate and project its image as an indigenous and Chinese Church. In 1918 Rome tried to establish direct diplomatic relationship with Peking. But this effort was foiled by the French blockade. Only in 1922 did Rome succeed to establish an apostolic delegate in China. Efforts were made by the Propaganda Fide to entrust the local church to the indigenous clergy. In 1924 the Prefecture Apostolic of Puchi was entrusted to the Chinese Franciscans. In the same year, the Vicariate Apostolic of Celi was divided and one part entrusted to the Chinese Lazzarists.³⁰

The Japanese occupation of China imposed further difficulties for the work of the missions. The heroism of the missionaries maintained the pace of growth though reduced in some way. The defeat of the Japanese in 1945, gave hope for a greater missionary undertaking. In 1946, Pius XI established local hierarchy in China furthering the process of indigenisation of the Church. In 1949

²⁹ Cfr. LATOURETTE K. S., *A history of the Expansion of Christianity*, vol 7, 376-377; COMBY J., *Due Mila Anni di Evangelizzazione*, 276-277.

³⁰ Cfr. METZLER J. (Ed.), *Storia della Chiesa. Dalle Missioni alle Chiese Locali*, vol 24, 94-95. LATOURETTE K. S., *Christianity in a Revolutionary Age*, vol 5, 372-397.

Mao Tse Tung with his communist army, proclaimed the popular Republic and in 1950 completed the capture of the main land. Religious liberty was granted to Christians, but they were required to break with all connections with all foreign powers including that of the Holy See. Foreign missionaries were either expelled or imprisoned. Mao declared a triple autonomy of the Church: as regards finance, personnel and government.³¹ This gave birth to the National Patriotic Church of China.³²

Japan too in this period experienced a steady sustained growth in numbers. Here the apostolate was more of an intellectual nature. In other Asian countries, Christianity appeared during this period between the two wars as a foreign religion, with close connection to the colonial powers. Japan, though it maintained commerce with the West, was never properly a colony of any western nation. After the defeat of the World War I, a strong sentiment of patriotism swept over Japan. This Japanese renaissance took on a strong religious character, with a determined return to Shintoism. However, Catholic missions survived due to its accommodation to the sensitivity of the people, and the strong movement for inculturation of the Church and the indigenisation of the clergy.³³

By 1930, the Christian population of India was about 6 million, mainly concentrated in the southern part of the peninsula. But after this period there was a flowering of conversion in the Chota Nagpur plateau where the Jesuits worked and in the region of North East India entrusted to the Salesians of Don Bosco. Missionary work in India went hand in hand with education, and schools served as a great agent of evangelisation.³⁴

³¹ By the so-called triple autonomy the Church was to receive no more funds from outside, it was to raise the necessary funds from its members in China. It was to bring in no more foreign missionaries, instead look after the faithful with the Chinese clergy. It was not to accept any direction from any foreign power including the Pope and the Vatican, instead it would take its orders from the Chinese State authorities alone.

³² Cfr. LATOURETTE K. S., *Christianity in a Revolutionary Age*, vol 5, 372-397; COMBY J., *Due Mila Anni di Evangelizzazione*, 314-315.

³³ Cfr. COMBY J., *Due Mila Anni di Evangelizzazione*, 277-278; BIHLMAYER K., *Church History*, vol 3, 538.

³⁴ Cfr. COMBY J., *Due Mila Anni di Evangelizzazione*, 278.

As noted earlier, Dutch missionaries worked in the Indonesian islands before the outbreak of the War. However, the Japanese occupation of the East Indies and the consequent internment of the Dutch missionaries brought to a temporary halt the progress of the Church. At the end of the war, missionary activity revived but with growing difficulties.³⁵

It was in the period between 1914 and 1937 that missionaries were directed specifically and in substantial numbers to Korea. This influx of the missionaries bore ample fruits. Few specific factors contributed to the rapid growth of the Church in Korea. None of the other religions in the region had really entered into the physiognomy of the Korean society. Buddhism was on the decline during the period and just a small minority owed allegiance to this philosophy. Confucianism held sway over the elite, but not the general masses. Besides, the eclipse of Confucianism in China during this period had its repercussions on the people of Korea. Among the majority, religion was a kind of animism which could not withstand the onslaughts of the revolutionary period.³⁶

This period between the two World Wars, was one of great growth of all the Christian denominations in the African continent. Evangelisation found in education one of its greatest means. The church's involvement in health care gained for it the general sympathy of the population. The anti-slave trade movement was further intensified, and expressed in the opposition to even other forms of slavery, like forced labour, inequality of women, polygamy etc. This period in Africa was one of movement of masses of people towards the Christian faith. However, the multiplication of Churches, profetism and messianism which had started in the 19th century, also gained greater momentum in Africa in the 20th century.³⁷

Areas of greater missionary engagement in the African continent during the period in consideration were West Africa,

³⁵ Cfr. LATOURETTE K. S., *Christianity in a Revolutionary Age*, vol 5, 353-357.

³⁶ Cfr. LATOURETTE K. S., *Christianity in a Revolutionary Age*, vol 5, 413-423.

³⁷ Cfr. COMBY J., *Due Mila Anni di Evangelizzazione*, 279-281.

Cameroon, French Congo, and Belgian Congo. There was considerable growth of Catholics also in the South of the continent, and in the islands of Mauritius and Madagascar.³⁸

The Post World War II period

World War II had diverse effects in different regions as far as the missions were concerned. The Italian defeat in Ethiopia signalled the independence of the region and of the Church in the region. Foreign missionaries who were expelled earlier by the Italian government could now return to the region. The concordat between the Holy See and Portugal (1940-1941) provided for a greater freedom to the missionaries.³⁹

The fifteen years immediately after the World War II, was a period of great growth of the Church in Africa. In fact the Christian population of 23 million in 1950 doubled to 46 million in 1960. The growth was felt particularly in the Belgian colonies of Congo, Rwanda, and Burundi. However, there were also negative signs. The independence of Sudan in 1956 was followed by the expulsion of 360 foreign missionaries and the forced Islamization of the state. The Mau-Mau insurrection (1952-1954) in Kenya instilled fear into the local Christians as the movement was based on the traditional religion of the region.⁴⁰

In the East, the effects of World War II were more negative than positive, especially as far as the numerical growth of the Church was concerned. The years that followed the World War II, saw the gradual, steady and total disappearance of western rule in the East. In 1962 all that remained of the colonies were Portuguese Timor and British Borneo. The period after the war, was one of mounting nationalism. Many colonised nations witnessed a growing struggle for independence. The Christian missions which up to this period had appeared to be in close collaboration with the colonisers, had

³⁸ Cfr. GOORREE G. – G. CHAUVEL, *La Chiesa e la sua Missione*, 154-157.

³⁹ Cfr. COMBY J., *Due Mila Anni di Evangelizzazione*, 310.

⁴⁰ Cfr. COMBY J., *Due Mila Anni di Evangelizzazione*, 316-317.

to clarify their allegiances. In many countries this revival of nationalism was combined with a revival of the local religions, as opposed to Christianity which came to be considered as a foreign religion. Foreign missionaries in many regions came to be looked upon with suspicion.⁴¹

Political conditions in China remained favourable to the mission work for a long time after World War I. However all Christian activity came to a halt with the proclamation of the Peoples' Republic in 1949 and the institution of the national Church.⁴²

Korea was divided into North and South in 1945. Occupation of the Northern State by communist Russia meant the closure of all missions in that region. The Russians over-ran South Korea also in 1950 after the Americans had withdrawn. The Korean war of 1950-1953 turned out to be a period of violent persecution against Christians. Many were martyred. However, the period after this War was one of great expansion of the Church in South Korea.⁴³

As in other nations under the colonial powers, so in Vietnam, after the World War II during which the region was occupied by the Japanese, there was a strong mounting up of national feeling. In 1946 the Communists managed to set up a Vietnam Republic which was opposed by the French. This gave rise to a prolonged war which ended in armistice in 1954 which divided the region into South and North Vietnam. The North had a communist government and the South a democratic one. Catholic missionaries of the Foreign Missions of Paris had entered the region in the 17th century. These were later joined by the Spanish Dominicans. After the division, thousands of Catholics fled from the Communist North to the South. Many missionaries were expelled. The communist government, like

⁴¹ Cfr. LATOURETTE K. S., *Christianity in a Revolutionary Age*, vol 5, 332-333; BIHLMAYER K., *Church History*, vol 3, 533; COMBY J., *Due Mila Anni di Evangelizzazione*, 310-311.

⁴² Cfr. BIHLMAYER K., *Church History*, vol 3, 537-538.

⁴³ Cfr. BIHLMAYER K., *Church History*, vol 3, 539; COMBY J., *Due Mila Anni di Evangelizzazione*, 315.

in China, tried to set up a Church of Independent Catholics. The Church continued to grow in the democratic South Vietnam.⁴⁴

Thailand was never a colony of any European power. It remained neutral in World War II. It was however over-run by the Japanese forces. Religiously it was more solidly Buddhist than Ceylon and Burma. The religion of the hill tribes was a type of primitive animism. Catholic Missionaries had entered Thailand in the 16th century. The mission progressed especially through education. The Japanese occupation of the country forced the missionaries out of the region. However, they returned to their posts after the defeat of the Japanese.⁴⁵

In India religious liberty was declared as one of the fundamental rights of every citizen. However, the government limited the entry of the foreign missionaries, and the mission work slowly passed to local missionaries. In independent India, the constitution guaranteed religious liberty. However, nationalistic movement tended to consider Christianity as a foreign religion.⁴⁶

Burma withdrew from British Common wealth in 1948. The uprisings of the communists and national minorities, affected adversely the missionary activity of the Church in the region during the period. However, the Church continued to experience a slow growth in this period.⁴⁷

Indonesia was occupied by the Japanese in 1942 and the missionaries interned. The fundamentalist Muslims joined the Japanese in a struggle against the Europeans, and this had adverse effects on the missions.⁴⁸

⁴⁴ Cfr. LATOURETTE K. S., *Christianity in a Revolutionary Age*, vol 5, 351-353; COMBY J., *Due Mila Anni di Evangelizzazione*, 315; BIHLMAYER K., *Church History*, vol 3, 537.

⁴⁵ Cfr. LATOURETTE K. S., *Christianity in a Revolutionary Age*, vol 5, 343-345.

⁴⁶ Cfr. COMBY J., *Due Mila Anni di Evangelizzazione*, 316; BIHLMAYER K., *Church History*, vol 3, 536.

⁴⁷ Cfr. BIHLMAYER K., *Church History*, vol 3, 536; COMBY J., *Due Mila Anni di Evangelizzazione*, 316.

⁴⁸ Cfr. BIHLMAYER K., *Church History*, vol 3, 536-537.

Conclusion

Mission has been the dynamic life principle of the Church right from its inception. The church lived for the missions, and the missions kept the Church alive! Reaching the furthest ends of the world with the proclamation of the Good News remained the goal of every one who took Christ and his Gospel seriously.

While every significant change in human society challenged the Church to greater relevance, it also opened up new vistas for the evangelizing mission. Situations which according to human considerations should have even brought the end of all Church activities were instead catalysts for a further renewal and renewed dynamic activity in the front lines. The vision, courage and daring of a few were contagious, and drew with them, in some way or other, the whole body of the Church. The attraction of the missions was far too forceful as not to leave some impact on every one who claimed to be a Christian.

Centuries old religious congregations found a new lease of dynamism in frontier missionary activities. Their lines were once more swelled up by generous adventurous young men and women. Some of the younger religious groups were born with a missionary slant. Others quickly adopted missions as one of their primary concerns to their own great advantage.

By the end of World War I, the Salesians of Don Bosco had come of age, completing over 50 years since its foundation. Missionary work in the front lines had attracted Don Bosco from his early years. He made it a character of the congregation that he founded with the initiation of the first missionary expedition to South America in 1875, and which he himself followed up with various other such expeditions sending some of his best sons to overseas missions. As he himself announced at the commissioning of the first group of his missionaries in the Basilica of Mary Help of Christians, Turin, it was only the humble beginning of a mighty work whose effects no one at that initial stage was in a situation to gauge. Certainly the seed planted that day was destined to grow into a mighty tree!

CHAPTER 2

THE SALESIAN MISSIONS IN THE 20TH CENTURY

The evangelical daring, the putting out into the deep to reach so far unreached corners of the world in search of souls to save, the vast input of personnel and resource the initiation and maintenance of large scale evangelisation work in various mission lands by the Salesian Congregation come to be viewed in the general missionary ambience that prevailed in the 19th and the first half of the 20th centuries. However, it would not be correct to consider the missionary commitment of the Congregation as a mere supplying of personnel and resource for a common project of the Universal Church. Missionary dynamism was part of the legacy left by Don Bosco. Moreover, as every other congregation, the Salesians carried into their missionary undertaking, a spirit and a method properly their own.

At the death of Don Bosco, the Salesian institutions numbered 64, spread out in Italy, France, Spain, Argentina, Uruguay, Chile, Brazil and Ecuador. Properly speaking, the missions among the indigenous tribes were only those of Patagonia and Terra del Fuoco. The 22 years rectorate of Michael Rua was a period of prodigious growth in the number of salesian institutions. At the close of his term in office, the salesian institutions counted 341. By 1910 the Salesians had extended their presence to Colombia, Palestine, Mexico, Venezuela, Peru, Bolivia, Egypt, Paraguay, Turkey, India, China, Mozambique, Costa Rica, Honduras and Panama.¹

¹ Cf. CERIA E., *Annali della Società Salesiana*, vol 3, Roma, Editrice SDB, 1945, 845

Expansion of Salesian missions in the time of Don Albera

In South America there was little increase to the number of Salesian houses in the time of Don Albera. In Peru, Bolivia and Chile the number of houses remained unchanged. In Colombia, the Oratory of San Giovanni Bosco was started in Bogota in 1911. In the same year, an agricultural school was started at Ibague. The Salesian work in Medellin was also started in the same year. In 1917 the leper colony of Cano de Loro was inaugurated. In 1920 the salesians took charge also of the Church of Madonna del Suffragio in Medellin. In Venezuela just one new foundation was started during the rectorate of Don Albera at Taribo in the state of Tachira. In Ecuador, Don Rua had in 1908 given the permission for the construction of a hostel at Guayaquil. It was finished in 1911.²

In Uruguay, in 1917 there were already three houses at Montevideo. But a fourth was added that year, a festive oratory in a region of the periphery that was predominantly Italian. In 1919 three other parishes were started in the region of Montevideo. In 1920, the parish of Salto had its beginning.³

Salesian presence in Brazil reached a stage of great consolidation during the time of Don Albera. In 1914 the Salesians accepted the offer of the Archbishop of San Paolo and started a parish at Bom Retiro. Soon they also started the house of formation especially for the aspirants at Laurinhas in the state of San Paolo, in 1916 the noviciate and philosophate was shifted to the same place and in 1920 also the theologate. In 1914 the Propaganda Fide separated the region of the Prelature of Registro di Araguaia from the diocese of Cuiaba and entrusted the new region again to the Salesians to give greater attention to the Bororos. In the same year the mission of Rio Negro too was entrusted to the Salesians. In 1916 the Salesians started their mission in the region of Ascurra in the state of Santa Caterina. 1921 saw the starting of the Collegio Don Bosco at Manaus in the district of Amazon. And this proved to be the key to the mission of Rio Negro.⁴

² Cfr. CERIA E., *Annali della Società Salesiana*, vol 4, Roma, Editrice SDB, 1945, 178-185.

³ Cfr. CERIA E., *Annali*, vol 4, 185-190.

⁴ Cfr. CERIA E., *Annali*, vol 4, 194-208, 340-341.

Four new houses were started in Argentina in the time of Don Albera. The first was at Salta. Mons Matteo Linares had requested the Salesians to open a house at Salta right from 1898. However, the Salesians could go there only in 1911. In 1916 at the insistence of the Governor Ernesto Padiglia, the Salesians started their work at Tucumán. A certain doctor Antonio Piran donated a large terrain to the Salesians for an agricultural school in General Pirán, 318 kms from Buenos Aires in the diocese of La Plata. The Salesians could reach there only in 1921. The same year a second presence was started at Buenos Aires itself, the sanctuary of St. Anthony of Padua.⁵

Three new foundations were realised in Central America during the rectorate of Albera. Comayagua in the republic of Honduras in 1911, Granada in the republic of Nicaragua in 1912, and a formation house in the republic of Salvador in Central America in 1917.⁶

Salesian presence in Cuba started in 1920. The Salesians went there on the invitation of Mons Felice Guerra SDB of Santiago. The work started with a small press and binding shop. Later the Salesian opened a station at Camagüey. In 1922 the Salesians reached the capital Avana.⁷

During Fr. Albera's rectorship the Salesians also reached the United States of America. At the pressing invitation of Cardinal Farley, the archbishop of New York, the Salesians reached Port Chester in 1912, again mainly for the care of the Italian immigrants. In 1914 the Salesians started an institution in Philadelphia which, however, was closed in 1922. In 1915 the aspirantate of Ramsey was inaugurated, and in 1918 the noviciate of New Rochelle, which later on developed to include the aspirantate and also the studentate for clerics. In 1921 an orphanage was started at Watsonville in San Francisco.⁸

⁵ Cfr. CERIA E., *Annali*, vol 4, 210-220.

⁶ Cfr. CERIA E., *Annali*, vol 4, 168-171.

⁷ Cfr. CERIA E., *Annali*, vol 4, 163-168.

⁸ Cfr. CERIA E., *Annali*, vol 4, 173-177.

The first proposal for starting a mission in Congo by the Salesians for the Italian immigrants, was made by the Ministero degli Esteri Italiano in 1909. But the invitation had to be turned down due to acute shortage of personnel. The following year, the initiative was taken by the Belgian Government. The death of Don Rua slowed down the progress of this negotiation. Don Albera gave attention to the request of the Belgian government soon after his election. The request of the government was for the founding of a school at Lakafu, which was the administrative centre of Katanga, with the possibility of expanding to other regions later on. The Salesians reached Congo in 1911 and started their centre at Elisabethville. In 1914 another station was started at Kiniamo.⁹

The Salesians had reached Macao in China, a Portuguese colony, in 1906 and started their work with the care of an orphanage. The works developed well at Macao. However, the Portuguese revolution had its repercussions also in the colonies. The Salesians had to leave Macao and take refuge in Hong Kong in 1911 as guests of the Vicar Apostolic Domenico Pozzoni and Padri della Missione Italiana. The exiles did not have to stay long in Hong Kong. The Bishop of Macao in 1911 itself entrusted the whole district of Heung Shan in the Chinese empire between Canton and Macao to the Salesians. After the return of peace in Portugal, the Salesians could also return to take up their work in Macao.¹⁰ 1912 was the year of the Chinese revolution that threw down the monarchy and installed the republic. The Salesians stayed on in their missions and continued their work though with added difficulties because of the turbulent political and social conditions. A year after their taking charge of the mission of Heung Shang, the salesians started the construction of the mission station at Sekki. In 1914 they started the missions of Tai Wong Po, Po Fong, Katon, San wan, Wantsai. In 1915 they took up the care of the lepers in the island of Mong Chiau, and started the new residences at San Fow, Nam Loung, Pan Mi Sha. The following year, the residences of Tsin Shan and Pak Shan, Hong

⁹ Cfr. CERIA E., *Annali*, vol 4, 356-365; NERIGAR, *La Missione nel Katanga*, in *Le Missioni Salesiane*, Torino, SEI, 1925, 74-75.

¹⁰ Cfr. CERIA E., *Annali*, vol 3, 562-568; vol 4, 370-375.

Wan and Ma Toui were constructed. In 1917 the missionary residence of Tau Moon, and in 1918 that of Kou Po were completed. This vigorous work of expansion of the mission centres brought in much harvest of souls.¹¹

In 1917 Propaganda Fide asked the Vicar Apostolic of Canton to assign a part of his region to the Salesian missionaries. Mons Giovanni Battista de Guebriand of Missioni Estere di Parigi happily agreed with this invitation of the Holy See and assigned the Northern region of Kwang Tung to the Salesians. The first salesians established themselves at Nam Young and Chi Heng in 1918. In 1919 Luigi Versiglia acquired a vast plot of land at Shiu Chow for the future mission there. In 1920 this region was officially made into a Vicariate Apostolic and separated from Canton. Mons. Luigi Versiglia became its first Bishop and Vicar Apostolic.¹²

The prefecture apostolic of Assam was erected in 1889 and entrusted to the Salvatorian Fathers. At the outbreak of World War I, the German missionaries had to leave the region. The Jesuits of the Calcutta region temporarily looked after the mission of Assam. Propaganda Fide looked to the Salesians to take up this vast mission. Don Albera with his council sought to be relieved from this commitment, pleading shortage of personnel especially due to the recent war, and the urgent need of the other missions especially of China, Rio Negro, Ciaco Paraguay and Congo. However, the Holy See insisted. The superiors finally accepted the mission in 1921 and the first group of missionaries reached Assam in 1922.¹³

GM itself, giving a summary of the salesian missionary situation at the time of its starting, enlists the following salesian works only as proper missions: the Vicariate Apostolic of La Pampa

¹¹ Cfr. CERIA E., *Annali*, vol 3, 562-568; vol 4, 370-380; GARNERI D., La Missione dell'Heung Shan, in *Le Missioni Salesiane*, Torino, SEI, 1925, 59-60.

¹² Cfr.—CERIA E., *Annali*, vol 4, 382-387; NERIGAR, Il Vicariato di Shiu Show, in *Le Missioni Salesiane*, Torino, SEI, 1925, 60-61; BERTINI C., *Cenni Storici sulle Missioni Salesiane del Ven. Don Bosco*, Torino, SEI, 1925, 222-246.

¹³ Cfr. CERIA E., *Annali*, vol 4, 418-422; NERIGAR, La Prefettura Apostolica dell'Assam, in *Le Missioni Salesiane*, Torino, SEI, 1925, 90-91; BERTINI C., *Cenni Storici sulle Missioni Salesiane*, 247-279.

and Northern Patagonia; the Prefecture Apostolic of Southern Patagonia and Terra del Fuoco; the Vicariate Apostolic of Magellano; the Vicariate apostolic of Mendez and Gualaquiza in Ecuador; the prefecture Apostolic of Matto Grosso for the Bororos in Brazil; the Prefecture Apostolic of Rio Negro in Brazil, the mission of Ciaco Paraguayo, the mission of Tanjore in South India; the mission of Heung Shan, and the Vicariate Apostolic of Shiu Chow in China; the mission of Elisabethville in Belgian Congo; the Prefecture Apostolic of Assam and the Vicariate Apostolic of Kimberly in West Australia.¹⁴

The expansion of the Salesian missions during the life time of GM

The salesians continued to accept new missions in new regions, and expanded the existing ones also in the period of the rectorates of Rinaldi, Ricaldone and Ziggiotti. In fact, the growth of the missions was so great during this period that Eugenio Valentini calls this period after the World War I as the golden period of the salesian missionary expansion.¹⁵ Morand Wirth speaking of the whole period, including that of the rectorate of Don Albera has this to say:

The period between 1910 and 1965 can be considered as the classical period of salesian missionary expansion. The missionary ideal, which had never ceased to animate the Salesian family, experienced a particularly profound vitality between 1923 and 1965.¹⁶

In Latin America, the salesians in 1926 accepted the mission of Porto Velho in Brazil. When in 1961 the Prelature of Humaita was separated from Porto Velho, the Salesians were entrusted with the new Prelature too. In Venezuela the Salesians accepted charge of the Prefecture Apostolic of Orinoco, with the centre at Puerto

¹⁴ Cfr. *Quali sono le Missioni Salesiane*, in GM 1(1923)1,3-4.

¹⁵ Cfr. VALENTINI E. (Ed.), *Prefigli di Missionari Salesiani e Figlie di Maria Ausiliatrice*, Roma, LAS, 1975, 355.

¹⁶ WIRTH M., *Da Don Bosco ai Nostri Giorni*, 378.

Ayacucho in 1933. In 1935 the salesians started their work of evangelisation among the Kekchis in the North of Gautemala. In Mexico they arrived in the region of the Mixes in 1962 and started the first mission centre of Tlahuitoltepec. In Colombia the prefecture Apostolic of Ariari was created in 1964 and entrusted to the Salesians with the centre at Granada.¹⁷

The Salesian work expanded greatly in the Antilles during this period. They had started their work in Cuba in 1917, and in 1921 arrived at Santiago. In 1934 they started a work at the capital, Avana. The same year they came to Santo Domingo, the capital of the Dominican Republic to start a school. In 1940 they inaugurated an agricultural school at Moca. In 1945 they got a plot of land at Jarabacoa to start an aspirantate for local vocations. In this movement of missionary expansion they also reached the island nation of Haiti in 1935, and started a school at Port of Prince. In 1947 they initiated a parish, an oratory and an elementary school at Santurce in Porto Rico.¹⁸

The Salesian work in the French colonies of North Africa received a set back in the beginning of the 20th century due to the suppression of the religious congregations in France. But in the 1920s the salesians could relaunch their work in the region. In 1926 a delegation was created for the region of Tunisia and the same year a presence was started at Casablanca in Marocco.¹⁹

The first missionary presence of the salesians in Central Africa was that of Katanga in 1911. From here they spread out to the near by regions. Gradually the missionaries entered Rwanda and Burundi, and in 1959 a new salesian province was created with about 20 institutions. The French Salesians started a professional school at Pointe-Noire in Congo-Brazzaville in 1959. In the mean time the English and the Irish Salesians had initiated their work in South Africa. They transformed the salesian institution at Cape

¹⁷ Cfr. WIRTH M., *Da Don Bosco ai Nostri Giorni*, 367-369.

¹⁸ Cfr. WIRTH M., *Da Don Bosco ai Nostri Giorni*, 369-370.

¹⁹ Cfr. WIRTH M., *Da Don Bosco ai Nostri Giorni*, 370.

Town into good a professional school for the region. They expanded their presence further by opening schools at Lansdowne in 1932, at Daleside in 1949 and at Johannesburg in 1952. Besides these they ventured into Swaziland to open a school for the Africans at Bremersdorp.²⁰

The Salesian work experienced rapid growth also in the Middle east during this period. In 1925 they started a school in Cairo in Egypt, in 1937 in Teheran in Iran, in 1948 in Aleppo in Syria, and in 1957 in El Houssoun in Lebanon. Many of the works at the initial stages were in favour of the children of the Italian immigrants, but there was a slow steady opening up to the local population.²¹

The salesian work in India experienced great growth during this period. The arrival of the salesians to Assam, marked the initiation of an energetic and sustained evangelisation of the whole region and a phenomenal growth of the church in North East India. The missionaries spread out to evangelise the various tribal groups of the whole region, starting the first catholic communities in many regions. In 1934 the Prefecture Apostolic of Assam was made into a diocese with Mons. Mathias as its first Bishop. In 1951 Dibrugarh in the Assam plains was made into a diocese. In the mean time, at the invitation of the Archbishop of Calcutta Mons. Perier SJ, the salesians started their work in the metropolis of Calcutta. In 1927 at the bifurcation of the then existing diocese of Krishnagar, the Fathers of the Milan mission were entrusted with the new diocese of Dinajpur and the Salesians were entrusted with the diocese of Krishnagar. In the west, the salesians started their apostolate in Bombay in 1928. In the mean time, the work in the region of South too flourished. The growth of salesian work in India during this time gave rise to the creation of three salesian provinces: that

²⁰ Cfr. WIRTH M., *Da Don Bosco ai Nostri Giorni*, 370-371.

²¹ Cfr. WIRTH M., *Da Don Bosco ai Nostri Giorni*, 371.

of Calcutta in 1926 for the whole of the north and north eastern region, that of Madras for the south and west in 1934 and that of Guwahati in 1959 for only the north-eastern region. In 1937 the Salesians of the Calcutta province opened an orphanage and school at Mandalay in Burma and in 1960 the Madras province started a technical school at Negombo in Sri Lanka.²²

In spite of the adverse effects of the World War I and the political turbulence of the early decades of the 20th century in China, the Mission of Shiu Chow entrusted to the Salesians in 1917 experienced a steady and rapid growth. The period between 1937 and 1945 proved to be a very difficult time for the missions because of the China-Japan war. When the war was over, the work was taken up with renewed earnestness. In 1946 the Salesians reached Peking, a real land mark in the history of the salesian missions in the region. However the establishment of the communist regime in 1949 signalled the end not only of all salesian missionary work in China, but also that of all other religious institutes.²³

The expulsion of the salesian missionaries from China was the cause of the initiation of the missions in Philippines and Vietnam. Part of the Salesian personnel employed in the various salesian missions in China retired to Hong Kong. A group crossed over to the Philippines. In 1951 they took charge of the St. John Bosco Academy in Tarlac. In the following year at the invitation of the president of Victorias Milling Company, a Boys' centre was started for the children of the company's workers. Gradually this work grew into a professional school, offering a well diversified training to these young boys. In 1953 at the invitation of the Bishop of Manila, the salesians started a youth centre in the campus of

²² Cfr. WIRTH M., *Da Don Bosco ai Nostri Giorni*, 373-374; TRAGELLA G. B., *Italia Missionaria*, Milano, Pontificio Istituto di Missione Estere, 1939, 44-45.

²³ Cfr. WIRTH M., *Da Don Bosco ai Nostri Giorni*, 374-375.

the old San Carlos Seminary in Mandaluyong – a work that grew into a very important centre of activity for the salesians. In 1954 the foundation stone was laid for the Don Bosco Technical Institute in Makati in a plot of land offered by the Ayala family. The same year at the request of the civil and religious authorities of Cebu, the salesians opened a Boys' town for street children near the Cebu Cathedral. In 1958 the salesians took charge of the St. Ferdinand Academy in Pampanga. A year later they received a gift of a plot of land and started the construction of the Don Bosco Pampanga.²⁴

Another group of salesians expelled from the Chinese empire, entered North Vietnam and started their work there. However, they had to leave the region due to the communist take over of the region, and at the division of the country in 1954, go to South Vietnam.²⁵

During this period the Salesians also reached Timor. They started a kind of a professional school in Dili in 1927. However, after a short time, they had to leave the region. They returned to Dili in 1946.²⁶

The first group of Salesians reached Thailand in 1927. Two years later the Holy See entrusted to the salesians, the mission of Ratburi. The work in this region grew at a rapid pace; so much so that in 1937 there were 90 salesians in the region, of whom 12 were Thais. During the World War II, because of the Japanese occupation of the country and the consequent persecutions, the work was arrested. However at the close of the war, the mission was relaunched with renewed vigour. In 1947 a great technical school was started in Bangkok.²⁷

²⁴ Cfr. WIRTH M., *Da Don Bosco ai Nostri Giorni*, 375; *The Changing Face of the Filipino. A Salesian Tribute to the Youth of the Philippines*, Makati, Salesian Society of Don Bosco, 2002, 20.

²⁵ Cfr. WIRTH M., *Da Don Bosco ai Nostri Giorni*, 375.

²⁶ Cfr. WIRTH M., *Da Don Bosco ai Nostri Giorni*, 376.

²⁷ Cfr. WIRTH M., *Da Don Bosco ai Nostri Giorni*, 376-377.

It was during the rectorate of Don Rinaldi, that the Salesians started their mission in Japan. The first group, under the able leadership of Vincenzo Cimatti, reached Miyazaki in 1926. From there, they slowly spread to Nakatsu and Oita. In 1933 they started an institution in Tokyo, and in 1949 at Osaka. The Salesians entered Korea in 1955 and established a school at Kwang-Ju.²⁸

The Vicariate of Kimberley in Australia, was erected in 1887. The Benedictine Fathers worked there first. In 1890, it was entrusted to the Trappists who established the mission at Beagle Bay. After 10 years they had to abandon it. And the Pallottine Fathers took up the region in 1900. With the outbreak of the World War I, they being Germans ran the risk of being expelled from the region. The Holy See entrusted the region to the Salesians and appointed Mons Ernesto Coppo as the Vicar Apostolic. The first group of Salesians reached the region in 1923. The Salesians administered this vicariate up to 1927. The school at Sunbury was started in 1927. In 1940 the salesians reached Melbourne, in 1943 in Adelaide and in 1952 in Engadine.²⁹

Conclusion

Such prodigious growth! The salesians, coming of age, had imbibed in depth the apostolic zeal of the founder well expressed in his motto: *da mihi animas!* And the mission territories provided a wonderful field for the flowering of this persevering, tireless search for souls. One seems to be gazing in wonderment at the advancement of a fiery army of men and women with such a thirst for souls that nothing seems to stop them. A new center opened, a new people contacted, serves only as an outpost from where they keep on gazing at others yet to be reached, with an unsatiable passion!

²⁸ Cfr. WIRTH M., *Da Don Bosco ai Nostri Giorni*, 377-378.

²⁹ Cfr. NERIGAR, *Cenni sul Vicariato del Kimberley*, in *Le Missioni Salesiane*, 108-109; BERTINI C., *Cenni Storici sulle Missioni Salesiane*, 291-293; WIRTH M., *Da Don Bosco ai Nostri Giorni*, 378.

And the missions provided the field for the greatest expression of the human soul. Not every salesian who worked in the mission in this period will find a place in the list of the canonized saints of the Church. But certainly the life and activity of every one in the missions called for a greater stretching out to that profound and only sustaining source of missionary activity: a deep love of God. And equally it demanded from the missionary a greater capacity to self-abnegation, to live constantly for the realization of the one goal: the salvation of souls. What profound love for one's fellow human being! And the missionaries responded generously to these demands of the mission. The missions produced men of extra ordinary calibre. The missions produced saints! Not mere material expansion of works, but growth in sanctity! Every mission boasts of its heroes and heroines, but greater is the number of the unsung persons who in their ordinary commitment to the extraordinary demands of the missions lived their lives to the full, reaching depths of holiness known only to God.

It was not only in the actual missions of South America, Asia, and Africa that this missionary dynamism was lived and bore fruit. It was so also in the schools and hostels of Italy, Spain, France, Germany and all other European nations. In fact these served as the nurseries of great missionaries. A movement that captured the whole congregation, purified it further, revitalized it, and set it more definitively on the path of the founder: *da mihi animas!*

CHAPTER 3

MISSIONARY ANIMATION BY BENEDICT XV, PIUS XI, PIUS XII AND JOHN XXIII

The missionary movement and its expansion particularly to the East has been the focus of the previous sections. Various factors that contributed to this missionary expansion have been enumerated, and some of them examined in detail. Mention has been made in passing about the influence of the Popes of the period on the missionary activity of the Church. Though the impact of the Papacy cannot be limited to its teaching office, it was through the exercise of this ministry that the Popes of the period sustained and augmented the missionary commitment of the Church. The present section of the study will focus on the major official teachings of the Popes of the period between World War I and the Vatican Council II, regarding missionary activity.

Maximum Illud of Benedict XV

World War I, as noted earlier, had practically brought the missionary activity of the Church to a temporary halt. Immediately after the War, urgent need was felt to relaunch this primary activity of the Church. For this purpose Pope Benedict XV brought out his encyclical *Maximum Illud* on 30 November 1919.

In the encyclical, the Pope retraces the initiation of the missionary activity of the church to the command of her Master: "Go out to the whole world, proclaim the good News to all creation" (Mk 16:15). Any activity in favour of spreading the good news, is to be viewed primarily in the context of obedience to this command of Jesus. The Church needs to continue this obedience to this command. And this obedience to the command of Christ appears all the more urgent in the face of the over 1000 million people to whom the Gospel has not yet been preached. Besides

obedience to Christ, it is a sense of compassion for this so numerous portion of humanity, and the eager desire to do everything possible to make them participate in the redemption brought about by Christ, that urges the Pope to write this encyclical. What the Pope wants is to see an enthusiastic and energetic relaunching of the missionary activity, in favour of the non-believing nations and a reflowering of missionary fervour in the whole Church (MI 1-4).

Well aware of the fact that the success or failure of a mission depends on a large part on those who guide it and are responsible for it, the Pope turns his attention first of all to the Bishops, the Vicars Apostolic and Prefects Apostolic and the other Superiors in the missions. He requests that all pastoral activity of this group of people, often wrought with so much sacrifice, be ordered to the sole goal of saving souls.¹ These superiors are to think of themselves as those primarily responsible for the salvation of every person who lives in the region entrusted to them. No sacrifice is to be considered as too great when it is the question of saving souls! A true passion for the salvation of souls is to be the primary guide of all the activities of the mission superiors. This pastoral letter warns the Mission Superiors against being motivated in their ministry by considerations of some advantages for particular groups or congregations, and much worse by preoccupations with the interests of one's own country of origin (MI 5-7).

One of the major merits of the encyclical would be the clear and precise directives which it gives regarding promotion and cultivation of indigenous vocations to the priesthood and religious life in the various mission lands. The Pope insists that the Mission Superiors consider as one of their primary duties, the adequate formation of the indigenous clergy, in whom the church places its hopes for its future. Their roots in the indigenous society, give the local clergy an efficacy in the ministry which is not normally

¹ It was the accepted belief that everyone who was not baptized ran the risk of eternal damnation. *Extra ecclesia nulla salus* was the general principle unquestionably accepted. One would think that this contributed significantly to missionary enthusiasm. Later on when this principle was abandoned, one notices also a proportionate weakening of missionary undertaking.

attainable by a foreign missionary. The encyclical insists that cultivation of local vocations is not an act of condescension on the part of the foreign missionaries. The indigenous clergy is not to be considered as a second class type of priests and missionaries. The universality of the call to baptism, and the consequent universality of the Church itself, imply the universality of the vocation to the priesthood. While calling for due attention in the selection of the local candidates, the Pope insists adamantly that no group of people is to be considered unworthy of such a lofty vocation (MI 8).

According to MI, the dignity of the missionary vocation consists in the call to collaborate in the work of redemption of mankind. The Pope insists that mission is something wholly divine and above all human considerations. The missionary's task is to bring the light of the Gospel to those who grope in the darkness of ignorance, superstition and sin, and throw open the doors of heaven to people who march towards eternal damnation. The missionary's concern is not to augment the number of the citizens of some particular terrestrial nation, instead, to multiply the citizens of the heavenly city (MI 9).

The encyclical stresses the need for an adequate preparation of the missionaries. Although virtue and sanctity of life are the first requirements for every true missionary, these alone do not suffice. The missionary needs to be scientifically prepared for the missions. No missionary can dispense himself from acquiring an adequate knowledge of the language, customs, beliefs, traditions of the people to be evangelised (MI 12-15).²

² None of the official teachings of the Church has been supportive of a cultural colonization of the indigenous people. Yet because of the thought so much in vogue particularly in Europe about the cultural superiority of the white race, evangelization in some parts of the world has gone hand in hand with the destruction of all that can be called indigenous, and the forceful planting of the European ways, very often justifying this strategy with the excuse of bringing in civilization. Often enough anything that did not have its origin in the "Christian" culture was considered evil. In this context, appreciable indeed is a kind of departure from previous thought patterns that is noticed in the direction to acquire sufficient knowledge of local customs, traditions, beliefs of people to be evangelized. Certainly it was not only knowledge that was required, but an appreciation.

Although the team of front line missionaries is usually formed of priests and religious, the Pope emphasises that missionary activity is the responsibility of every baptised person. It is Christian charity that forms the basic motive of the missionary enterprise of the Church. The first duty of the believer as regards evangelisation is that of praying for the missions. The encyclical therefore warmly recommends the “Apostolate of Prayer” for the missions. Benedict XV points out a second way to be involved in the work of the missions: collaborating in the promotion of missionary vocations, particularly urgent in the context of a dearth of personnel in the missions after World War I. The encyclical also speaks of a third way of involvement in the mission: contributing financial help towards the maintenance of the missions. The encyclical, appreciative of the impact of the pontifical missionary societies on the missions, encourages membership in these societies (MI 17-22).

Pope Benedict XV ends this encyclical with a passionate call for a renewed and more extensive commitment to the mission of saving souls. The repetition of the command of Jesus to Peter: “*Duc in altum*” acquires a significance all its own in the period immediately after the World War I (MI 24).

The missionary teachings of Pius XI

As noted in the previous section on the missionary movement in the post World War I period, the evangelisation of peoples was one of the main concerns of the papacy of Pius XI. Besides the various initiatives in favour of the missions encouraged by the Pontiff, listed in the previous section, Pope Pius XI, at various occasions, through his public speeches and magisterial writings promoted the cause of the missions.

Romanorum Pontificum

By the motu-proprio «*Romanorum Pontificum*», Pius XI in 1922 transferred the head quarters of Opera della Propagazione della Fede to Rome and brought this missionary association under the direct supervision of the Sacred Congregation for the Propagation of the Faith, thereby making it a Pontifical Society. Though the document does not have much dogmatic content, it bears witness to the actuality of the re-flowering of missionary

enthusiasm that followed the publication of the encyclical *Maximum Illud*. The document states clearly that the publication of *Maximum Illud* has created among the faithful a fervour for the missions, unparalleled in any other previous period.³

Sermon of Pius XI on the feast of the Pentecost of 1922

The third centenary of the foundation of the Sacred Congregation for the Propagation of the faith which occurred on the feast of Pentecost 1922, presented to Pius XI a beautiful occasion to speak about the missions and urge the faithful to a greater commitment in this field.

The Pope started his homily with praising the contribution of the Sacred Congregation in the missionary expansion of the Church. He recognised in it the fruit of the maturing of the missionary experience of the church from its beginning to his times. He proceeded to show his great appreciation of the martyrs and confessors in the various mission areas, in different times, who courageously witnessed to the Gospel and spent their lives for the salvation of souls. The greatness of their work, the Pope insisted, consisted precisely in its spiritual significance. The Pope asserted that through their work and sacrifice the missionaries down the ages have delivered millions from error and the aberrations of barbarity. Millions of souls have been made participants in the redemption brought by Jesus Christ.⁴

Pius XI expressed great joy at the great success of the work of evangelisation and its present pace of progress. However, immediately he called the attention of his audience to what remained to be done. He said:

How many souls are still lost! How many for whom the blood of the Redeemer is shed in vain? [...] The number of workers is insufficient and they lack the means for their work! [...] There should be none who allows this solemn moment of such

³ Cfr. Pius XI, *Romanorum Pontificum*, 3 May 1922, in AAS 14 (1922) 320-326.

⁴ Cfr. Pius XI, *Omelia di Pentecoste 1922*, in *I Più Recenti Documenti Pontifici sulle Missioni*, Roma, Unione Missionaria del Clero, [s.d.], 50-53

great hope for a greater diffusion of saving grace to pass by in vain! That just one soul is lost for reason of our slowness, for our lack of generosity; that just one missionary needs to stop his work because of the lack of means which we could have reached him, is a great responsibility about which perhaps we have not given sufficient thought in the course of our life. [...] For the faith that we have received from God, let us cooperate with him to give the same to other souls.⁵

No doubt the wide circulation that this sermon received through the agency of the various missionary organisations of the day, helped to carry the profound concern of the Holy Father for the missions, and to fan into a great flame the zeal of the priests, religious and the lay people.

Discourse of Pius XI at the closure of the Missionary Exhibition

The Missionary exhibition in connection with the celebration of the jubilee year 1925 was a great means of missionary animation. Pius XI made use of the moment of the closure of the exhibition to further encourage missionary vocations and involve the whole church in this its vital activity. He expressed his great joy at the success of the exhibition, and thanked the Propaganda Fide and its personnel and all others who co-operated to realise the exhibition. He noted that more than the mere material success, it was a great exposure to the vastness and the variety of the Catholic missions. He noted with joy that the exhibition had already started to bear fruit in the increase in the financial assistance for the missions, and a noted rise in missionary vocations! The Pope affirmed that health care, education of the children and of the young, and the formation of the indigenous clergy were the three more efficacious and permanent channels of evangelisation.⁶

⁵ Omelia di S.S. Pio XI (Pentecoste 1922), in *I Più Recenti Documenti Pontifici sulle Missioni*, 53-56.

⁶ Cfr. PIUS XI, Discorso di S.S. per la Chiusura dell'Esposizione Missionaria Vaticana, 10 gennaio 1926, in *I Più Recenti Documenti Pontifici sulle Missioni*, 62-65.

Rerum Ecclesiae

Pius XI was decided that the missionary expansion of the Church would be his primary concern. Therefore, this encyclical right at the start manifests the Pope's desire to do everything possible to extend further the light of the Gospel, and facilitate the entry of non-believing nations into the way of salvation. While he was aware with great satisfaction of the multiplication of efforts on the part of various religious institutes to preach the Gospel in regions as yet not evangelised, and the consoling fruits of these undertakings, the Pope felt awed by the still impressive number of non-Christians in the world. And this numerous groups of non-evangelised nations convinced him of the need for still further efforts from the part of every believer. Once again, Pius XI projected the supreme law of charity as that which demanded this all-out effort to offer to every one the means for one's salvation. Instructing one's neighbour in the true faith surpassed all other types of good works. Besides, a correct appreciation of the gift of faith received gratuitously, according to the Pope, implied the duty not only to live it personally but also that of testifying to it and spreading it. These fundamental considerations formed the basis of all missionary activity, and consequently, no believer was to consider himself exempt from missionary commitment (RE 1-6).

In this encyclical Pius XI exhorts the pastors and religious superiors to extend the custom of praying for the missions where it already exists, and to introduce it where it was non-existent. The Pope specifically requires from these superiors to make the children to pray for the missions. Besides the fact of a special divine condescension to the prayers of the innocent, this practice was to serve towards sowing in the receptive hearts of many of these young boys and girls, the seeds of priestly and religious vocations (RE 8).

In the context of the harm that the World War I caused to the missions all over the world, especially the reduction of personnel and financial assistance, the encyclical calls for a deeper commitment of every one in this field. The Pope commends the great missionary fervour brought about by the pontifical missionary societies and encouraged the faithful to form part of these societies (RE 9-12).

The encyclical insists again with the Superiors in the missions to do every thing possible for the promotion of numerous and well formed native clergy (RE 19-22). The various political and social currents of the period, obviously points to validity of this insistence from the part of the Pope (RE 19-22).

The Pope in this particular encyclical, encourages a type of missionary daring in founding new stations, even if they are not actually manned by the missionaries, but which would serve as chapels and meeting places when the missionary visits the region (RE 29). The motive behind seems to be that of encouraging the missionaries to keep on pushing ahead the frontiers of their work.

In the context of the practice of entrusting regions to particular missionary institutes, the encyclical discourages all unhealthy competition among the various groups. Instead it calls for greater mutual openness and co-operation among them. It insists that the religious superiors who had the responsibility for a particular region, should do everything possible to provide sufficient and qualified personnel for the particular mission (RE 31).

Apostolic letter of Pius XI to the Superiors of the Missions in China

The Holy Father opens his letter restating his great concern for the development of the missions among people not yet evangelised. And he says that among these people, those of the extreme East, especially the Chinese people, occupy a place of particular interest.⁷

To give foundation for a greater harvest of souls in this vast country, the Pope feels it of paramount importance to remove totally from the minds of the Chinese people, the prejudice that the missionary work is also politically motivated, and consequently, contrary to the political independence of the Chinese people. This prejudice, the Pope admits, has had a certain basis in the practical realisation of the missionary undertaking in the past. However, the

⁷ Cfr. PIUS XI, *Apostolic Letter to the Mission Superiors of China*, 15 June 1926, in AAS 18 (1926) 303-304.

functional connection is not to lead to a confusion of missionary work with the political, commercial activities of the colonial powers. The Church, because it is “Catholic” is universal, non-exclusive and not limited by national boundaries. The missionary commission does not come from the government, but from Christ himself and from the Church.⁸

The Church is opposed to any contamination of its missionary apostolate by nationalistic spirit. The cultivation of the indigenous clergy is one factor that points clearly to the Church’s true interests, namely, that of indigenization of the Church. And the presence of a sufficient and well formed native clergy only can be indicative of the true establishment of the Church in any region.⁹

The Pope stresses the importance of brotherly collaboration among the local clergy and the foreign missionaries. He calls for sincere efforts to remove from the mind of the common people, the false idea that the good of the country is opposed to the good of the Church. He asserts that the only mission of the Church is that of preaching the Gospel, and that without any political motive. The letter does not intend to deny the assistance that various governments had offered to the work of the missions in the past in various regions. However, this assistance, often in the form of protection of the missionaries, cannot be bound to a unquestioning support on the part of the missionaries of the political ambitions of these governments in these lands.¹⁰

The missionary teachings of Pius XII

Pius XII came to the chair of Peter when the world was already on the verge of the World War II. The first decade of his pontificate would rightly be marked by his concern for world peace. However, the missionary ideal was never lost sight of. And at the end of the war it was relaunched with great enthusiasm, taking into consideration the rising tide of nationalism in the new nations.

⁸ Cfr. PIUS XI, *Apostolic Letter to the Mission Superiors of China*, 304-305.

⁹ Cfr. PIUS XI, *Apostolic Letter to the Mission Superiors of China*, 305-306.

¹⁰ Cfr. PIUS XI, *Apostolic Letter to the Mission Superiors of China*, 306-307.

Summi Pontificatus (1939)

This encyclical of Pius XII is not strictly missionary in character. The main theme dealt with by the Pope is the unity of the human society. However, there are certain references that have a missionary content. The Holy Father asserts that the greatest and the most urgent duty of every believer is to preach Christ. The increasing number of Christ's enemies makes the missionary activity of the Church all the more urgent (SP 6-7).

The encyclical notes that missionaries of all centuries were attentive to the diverse cultures of the lands that they sought to evangelise. All that was good and profitable in these various cultures were accepted and adopted in the process of Christianisation of these people. Only customs and practices which were inseparably bound to religious errors were rejected. And this continues to be the missionary practice of the church in every period (SP 46).

The Holy Father insists also in this encyclical, on the dignity and equality of every believer whatever be one's nationality. Every baptised person has the same rights and the same duties, as children of the same Father. And in this context, admission to the priesthood or to the religious state is open to all groups of people. In fact, the great care that the Church manifests in the formation of the native clergy is precisely one of the clearest signs of the appreciation of the Church of the above stated principles (SP 47.48).

Evangelii Praecones (1951)

This document was published on the 25th anniversary of the encyclical *Rerum Ecclesiae* of Pius XI, a true missionary pastoral letter. Right at the start the Pope expresses his great satisfaction at the great progress made in the work of the missions. In fact, he notes that the missionary movement in the Catholic Church at the period of writing the letter had acquired a momentum never witnessed so far in the history of the missions (EP 1).

In the context of the rising tide of nationalism, particularly in the various colonised groups in Asia and Africa, the Pope insists that the missionary apostolate be not hampered by national frontiers, and be a true testimony to the universality of the Church (EP 3).

He highlights the impressive growth in the missionary awareness in the Church, and the consequent commitment of all

groups to the missions. Among factors that have contributed to this missionary awareness the Pope makes special note of the growth of the Missionary Union of the Clergy, the establishment of the “Fides” missionary news agency, the mushrooming of missionary periodicals, and the celebrations of the missionary congresses (EP 6). With great joy, the Holy Father speaks of the great growth in the number of missionary vocations, and sees in this growth, the hope for greater missionary undertakings in the future. He invites every one to pray for the continuation of this growth (EP 10). However, he reminded the faithful that though the personnel and the resources employed in the missions seemed to be really impressive, in front of the multitude of people still to be evangelised, they are still far from sufficient (EP 16).

The present encyclical re-echoes the teaching of Maximum Illud of Benedict XV. The greatness of the missionary vocation consists in its close connection with the saving mission of Christ. The missionary is one who works with Christ to save souls! Among the works of charity, the one work that had the greatest value, is offering the faith and through it salvation, to the non-believers (EP 20).

The Holy Father recommends that the missionary who leaves his country and spends his life in evangelising the people of another country, should consider this country of adoption as his second fatherland and promote the true interests of this his new fatherland. He is not to seek the earthly advantages of his own country of origin, and not even of his own religious institute, instead only that which furthers the salvation of souls! In every activity, the interests of the Church are to receive priority of place. No advantage to the particular religious order or to the missionary’s fatherland, that is detrimental to the good of the Church and to the salvation of souls is even to be considered as a true advantage (EP 20).

The encyclical takes up the question of indigenous clergy and reasserts the importance of a solid formation of the same. Here again Pius XII re-echoes the teachings of his predecessors and insists that the Church can be considered as truly planted and rooted among any group of people only when it has a native clergy to look after its pastoral needs, a native hierarchy to govern it, though assisted by foreign missionaries (EP 22).

Pius XII recognises the value and importance of various associations of men, women, students, workers, artists, athletes etc. in the mission territories, and those in favour of the missions. He desires that such associations be encouraged and spread among the faithful. He adds a word of appreciation especially for Catholic Action. He requests that in the constitution of these associations connected with the missions, importance be laid on the formation of the members and not merely on numerical growth (EP 38).

Taking up a theme treated by his predecessors, the Holy Father again calls for a proper professional training and qualification of the missionaries before they leave for the various missions. The missionary needs to be sufficiently acquainted with the culture of the indigenous people of the mission (EP 47).

The fact that the Propaganda Fide entrusts specific regions to particular religious families, is not to lead to a kind of exclusiveness that would be harmful to the spread of the Gospel in the region. The urgency of preaching the Gospel and saving souls are to guide the missionary and especially the mission superiors in all their undertakings. When the resources of particular religious groups are inadequate to the demands of the region, they are to invite other religious groups to collaborate with the mission work in the region so that the opportunities that the times offer will not be wasted (EP 55).

This encyclical of Pius XII makes special mention again of the need to respect local cultures and traditions. The introduction of the Gospel to any group of people does not mean the destruction of the local cultures and practices. What the missionary finds as naturally good and beautiful among the people he evangelises, were not only to be just recognized, instead were to be honestly cultivated and nourished. The reckless cutting down or uprooting of a thriving forest is not to be the image of missionary action. The Missionary is essentially an apostle and a herald of the Gospel. This Gospel is not tied to any single culture. The Pope states categorically that the missionary who thinks it his duty to plant the European civilisation and culture in a foreign land, does a disservice to his primary commission. Catholics of all lands, besides being citizens of the Kingdom of God, are and have to be honest and loyal citizens of the countries to which they belong. They do

not become foreigners in their own lands just because of their baptism. And they retain their own culture and traditions of their ancestors (EP 56-60).

In the closing section of the encyclical, the Pope expresses his appreciation for the work done by the four Pontifical Missionary Societies and encourages the faithful to membership and support of these associations. Like his predecessor, he emphasised the vocational value of membership in the pontifical Society of the Holy Childhood. Besides promoting the cause of the pontifical missionary societies, the Pope invites all the faithful to a determined effort to support the missions financially and spiritually. If through their timely and generous assistance they can bring about the baptism of a single person, they are contributing to release a divine energy which will keep on gathering momentum in the course of time. So too every one who contributes to the maintenance of a priestly vocation will have a perennial share in the merits of his future apostolate and sanctity (EP 65-71).

Ad Sinarum Gentes (1954.)

This document was given in a time in which the Church was going through difficult times in China. The Holy Father himself enumerates some of these difficulties in this pastoral letter: increase in the false accusations and calumnies against the Holy See itself and all those who are faithful to it, the expulsion of the Apostolic Nuncio, concerted effort to deceive those less instructed in the faith and make them apostate. Although in the list of the difficulties the Pope does not mention directly the triple autonomy proclaimed by the government for the Chinese Church, the response that the encyclical gives to these presupposes this very thorny problem for the Chinese Church (ASG 2). Pius XII notes with great joy that in the context of the Communist persecution the majority of the Catholics have remained loyal to the true faith. But he notes with sorrow that there is a sizeable minority that has abandoned the true faith to join the new national Chinese Church (ASG 3).

The encyclical proceeds step by step to answer some of the false accusations advanced by the Communists in China against Catholics still loyal to the Pope. Against the accusation that Catholics are not loyal citizens of China as their loyalty is to a

foreign power, the Holy Father affirms that the one does not rule out the other, instead true Catholics are also true and patriotic citizens of their own nations (ASG 6-7).

Against the effort of the regime to present the Holy See as a foreign political power disinterested in the Chinese people and their affairs, the Holy Father reaffirms the great appreciation that he himself has for the Chinese people. The creation of the local hierarchy and the promotion of indigenous clergy are evident signs of this appreciation of the whole Church, and in a special way of the missionaries, for the people of China. As in all other countries, so too in China, the pioneering work of evangelisation has been done by foreign missionaries. He cautioned the Chinese Church against the autonomy of government proposed by the communist regime. Acceptance of the supremacy of the Supreme Pontiff as the Vicar of Jesus Christ on earth, and honest adherence to his magisterium is required of the Chinese Christians, as was required of any other people, as a *sine qua non* condition for membership in the Catholic Church (ASG 8-11).

The encyclical then proceeds to respond to the financial autonomy of the Chinese Church as advocated by the communist regime. The Pope invites the Chinese people not to look upon the assistance that the Holy See sends to them as means of control that was politically motivated. The assistance from the part of the Holy See is nothing but an expression of Christian charity that embraces not only the Chinese people, but also the whole world (ASG 14).

Finally the Holy Father responds also the autonomy of doctrine as proposed by the communist government of China. While there is diversity in the manner of preaching and teaching the faith, accommodating it to the various cultures and traditions, the Church teaches every where, at all times and to all people the same revealed truths. The missionaries are not the inventors or the composers of the Gospel, but only its authorised custodians and divinely constituted heralds. And in this context, no believer can proclaim himself autonomous from the doctrine taught by the Church and yet remain a member of the same Church (ASG 18).

In conclusion the Holy Father warns the Chinese Catholics against the creation of a national Church that is not united to the Universal Church. He categorically states that this movement for

the creation of the national Church would result in a definitive break of the faithful from the Catholic Church (ASG 22).

Fidei Donum (21 April 1957)

It was the political, social and religious situation of the various nations in Africa that prompted Pope Pius XII to write this encyclical. Much has been done for the evangelisation of Africa. The growth of the Church in this vast continent is a cause of joy for the Holy See. The creation of the numerous new ecclesiastical circumscriptions, the institution of the local hierarchy, and the elevation of the natives themselves to the post of Bishops are all signs of the appreciation of the Holy See for the Church in this vast region. The progress of the missionary work in the continent is due to the sacrificing labour of all groups of people: religious, priests, laity. Still much remains to be done. Certain situations in the African society make the work of evangelisation all the more urgent. The major part of the continent is presently undergoing a period of evolution in the social, economical and political field. Many groups are in the process of the struggle for independence. Forces of materialism and division try to take deeper roots among the people. Added to this there is the threat of the Protestant missionaries. There is a search for new structures and a new civilisation. Another situation that requires immediate attention is the shortage of missionary personnel and resources in the whole continent. These problems do not seem to be just the ones restricted to particular regions of the continent, which can be resolved in the course of time. They require an answer from the universal Church (FD 4-14).

By way of offering some solutions to the problems faced by the African Church, the Pope addresses his concern first and foremost to the ministry of the Bishops. They, as eminent members of the mystical body of Christ, have a particular concern not only for the region entrusted to their pastoral care, but for the whole church as such. It is their attention to the needs of the universal church that manifests the true universality of the Church itself. And this becomes true for every Catholic. And here the Holy Father asserts very strongly, that the missionary spirit and the Catholic spirit are one and the same thing. Universality is an essential note of the true Church, so much so that a Christian is not truly attached

and devoted to the Church if he is not equally attached and devoted to her universality, desiring that she be planted and nurtured in all the nations of the world. It is the universality of the Church that requires every believer to be interested in the growth of the missions all over the world (FD 15-17).

The encyclical repeats a three fold appeal to the believers in favour of the missions: to prayer, to generosity, to gift of self (limited to a few) (FD 18). The Holy Father appeals to the Bishops to sustain among the priests and the faithful an incessant prayer for the missions. Special periods and feasts of the Liturgical year are to be made use of for augmenting this prayer for the missions (FD 19). He requests a real multiplication of Masses celebrated for the missions (FD 20).

The encyclical notes that sincere prayer for the missions will be accompanied by a generosity according to each one's possibility. The financial help made available to the missions fall far short of the needs of these same missions. This is particularly felt in the field of cultivating local vocations (FD 23-24). In the face of the apparent poverty of the Non-European Nations and the relative wealth of the people of Europe, the Holy Father calls for greater solidarity and collaboration, particularly in the field of missionary work. He reminds the faithful that the development of the missionary work will depend on the liberality of the believers (FD 24).

The Church in the missions suffers a great shortage of apostles. The Pope invites the faithful to do everything possible for the promotion of vocations: priestly and religious (F 25). The pastors are invited to create an ambience among the faithful that is open and sensitive to the universal pre-occupations of the Church that would naturally create apostles and missionaries. A new breath of the missionary spirit would be the sign of a true renewal of the diocese and of the church. He added in very clear terms that a community that gives its sons and daughters to the Church cannot die. And if it is true that spiritual life is a life of charity that grows with the gift of self, the vitality of the catholic life of a nation is proportionate to the sacrifices it makes in favour of the missionary cause (FD 26). The Holy Father appeals to dioceses with many vocations and even those with fewer vocations to listen to the call of the missions. He notes that concerted effort is needed to promote

priestly and religious vocations, and especially missionary vocations. In connection with vocations, he encouraged further the propagation of the missionary Union of the Clergy (FD 27-28).

In conclusion the Pope affirms that though the particular situation of Africa has been the occasion of the encyclical, he has the whole missionary enterprise of the Church in mind, particularly in the Far East. To the Pastors of these missions the Pope assures support, spiritual and material. He encourages the missionaries to persevere with confidence in the work they have undertaken, proud of serving the Church, attentive to her voice, always more penetrated by her spirit, united by bonds of fraternal charity. The encyclical closes with the appeal to all the faithful to put out into the deep and renew their commitment to hasten the day when the Gospel will be preached to the very ends of the earth (FD 35).

The missionary encyclical of John XXIII

John XXIII was no stranger to the missionary movement of the period after World War I. However, certain conditions that prevailed in the period immediately after the War and that favoured the expansion of the Church had changed when he came to the papacy. The colonial supremacy of the European nations had gradually faded out. Numerous independent nations saw the light of the day in the period following the World War II. The spread of narrow nationalistic tendencies was often accompanied by a consequent effort to return to primitive religions. The threat of atheistic communism had to be addressed. The process of secularisation brought about by progressive scientific inventions, started to undermine the foundations of a society that so far seemed to have had a vision permeated by faith. The gradual distancing of the secular society from the Church sent tremors of serious pre-occupation among the pastors of the Church. Even the situations in the various mission lands presented new problems.

Princeps Pastorum (John XXIII) November 28, 1959.

In the changing ambience of the Church and of the society, John XXIII offered to the world his missionary encyclical on the occasion of the 40th anniversary of *Maximum Illud*. The Pope starts this encyclical with a very personal note. He manifests his own

personal, continuous and solicitous interest in the work of evangelisation. He remembers that even as a priest he was called, immediately after the conclusion of World War I, by Benedict XV, to work in the Sacred Congregation for the Propagation of the Faith, and ever since had a keen interest in the missions (PP 1-2).

The Pope notes with great joy the flowering of missionary spirit brought about by the encyclical of Benedict XV. He bears witness to the abundant fruits brought about by the missionary commitment of the Church in the previous decades, and highlights among these, the establishment of local hierarchy and the increase in the number of indigenous clergy as worthy of special praise (PP 4-7).

While appreciating the need for further commitment in the promotion of local indigenous clergy, the Holy Father calls on the Catholics in all mission territories to value the work of the foreign missionaries. No true missionary who leaves his own fatherland to work in a distant land is to be considered as a foreigner among his own flock. He is a native among the natives and a true father to the people for whom he works and sacrifices himself (PP 12).

The Holy Father insists on the priority of personal sanctity of the missionaries for a truly efficacious ministry among the people. Mission is a divine work and its chief sustaining and fructifying force has to be divine. This personal sanctity is equally necessary for foreign as well as native missionaries (PP 14).

The Pope advocates that the seminarians who opt for the missions be formed in the mission territory itself to acclimatise them, to acquaint them with the culture of the people, to facilitate the learning of the local language, to habituate them to the missionary methods. He encourages the study of missiology for those who intend to work in the missions (PP 16-17).

The Pope asserts that it has been the longstanding practice of the Church to appreciate and cultivate all that is good in the various cultures. He insists that the Church be not identified with any one particular culture or civilisation, even if it be the European. The Church recognises and assimilates elements of all cultures that are true and valid expressions of the human mind (PP 19).

The work of evangelisation is not restricted to the proclamation of the Gospel and the spiritual care of the faithful.

Evangelisation and social upliftment of people have always gone hand in hand. In the context of the poverty in the mission lands, the missionary's involvement in projects of social development is not only healthy, but also a necessary manifestation of the love of the Church for these people (PP 22). Although the interests and concerns of the indigenous clergy are for their local Churches, they are not to confine their vision and activity to their local communities only. The encyclical warns against a possible narrow clannish mentality among the native clergy and invites them to acquaint themselves with the events and developments of the Universal Church. Although their field of work is their community, their charity is to embrace all groups of people. In the context of growing nationalism among the various groups, the Catholics and especially the indigenous clergy are not to be carried off by a spirit of ultra-nationalism that could be detrimental to the spread of the Church and to its universality. The local Churches in all the different countries of the world together form the one universal Church. Currents of thought and behaviour that fan the fires of a nationalism that is exclusive, and arouse enmity between the various nations, spilling it over into the sphere of the Church are not only unhealthy, but contrary to the spirit of true charity which is the basis of the communion among all believers (PP 23-26).

The Pope emphasises the need and importance of the involvement of the laity in the work of the missions and urges all to a still greater collaboration in this primary task of the Church. He points out that only a strong and lively apostolic fervour can make meaningful the individual's profession of the faith (PP 28, 32). The encyclical praises the work of the Catechists in the mission territories and calls for their proper formation. In the work of evangelisation they occupy a very important place as teachers of the faith, and often as substitutes of the priests. The Pope invites the faithful to support and sustain the work of the catechists in the missions (PP 42).

The Pope highlighted the importance of schools in the context of the missions. He indicates that catholic schools should also give sufficient attention to the christian formation of the students, especially of the catholic students (PP 47).

In the context of the speedy changes in social, economic and political life of many countries, the Holy Father invites the Catholics, as a part of the universal mission of the Church, to be involved in the process of finding correct and just solutions to the various problems facing the world (PP 48).

The encyclical ends with an invitation to all the faithful to collaborate in the promotion of missionary vocations and to increase their already substantial contribution to the work of evangelisation of the peoples in the mission territories (PP 56).

Conclusion

The power of motivation is universally accepted today. When one finds meaning and purpose in what one does, he or she also finds the means of doing it. One of the greatest contributions of great leaders is to inspire and motivate the followers. The Popes of this period of the study were truly great leaders. The times in which they lived did not allow them to move out of the Vatican. But they reached the four corners of the world through their teachings. They motivated, inspired, encouraged, showed the way, and did all in their power to remove obstacles. Those in the frontlines were further energized in their tireless efforts to bring the faith to those not yet reached by the Gospel. And the teachings of the Popes served as wake up calls for those in “Christian” countries. They surely fired the imagination of hundreds of young men and women to dare the call of the missions.

Missions needed missionaries, but they needed equally “visionaries”. Difficulties of daily commitments can be overcome only with right vision. While perhaps all can claim to have the energy for the work, not all can equally claim to have the vision needed for the work. And here is the role of the leader: have a vision, and transmit that vision. It was not a question of just keeping alive the fire, but constantly fanning it into greater flames.

CHAPTER 4

MISSIONARY ASSOCIATIONS AND PERIODICALS

It is true that the missionary expansion of the 19th century and its relaunching in the period after the World War I depended much on missionary leadership of the Popes of the period. It is also true that the Sacred Congregation for the Propagation of the Faith played a major role in this missionary movement. No one would deny that the brunt of the missionary enterprise was borne by the missionary orders and institutes, and therefore the renewal of the old religious orders and the foundation of new ones during this period had a great impact on the actual missions. Yet, one of the specific characteristics of the renewal of the missionary undertaking of the church in the 19th century and which continued into the 20th was precisely its popular character.

Missionary Associations at the initiation of AGM

Associations and clubs of various types for various motives have marked human societies from very early stages. Young people in particular love to club together for various purposes. Groups and movements play many roles in the lives of individuals. But one thing is certain; these associations inflame their members with certain goals and ideals, and in their combined strength bring about a sense of achievement.

Associations for youngsters have formed part of the history of Salesian Congregation right from its initial stages. In the context of the missionary flowering of the 20th century the Salesians introduced into their institutions a missionary association of young people called Associazione Gioventù Missionaria.

However, this missionary association had its predecessors, and it would not be wrong to say that the salesian missionary

association for the young modelled itself upon these other already existing movements among the young. This section of the study deals in short with some of the major associations, to situate the salesian missionary youth movement in its context.

The Pontifical Missionary Societies

Among the various types of missionary associations that sprouted up in the 19th century, the Pontifical Missionary Societies hold primacy of place, because of their primacy of initiation, their greater universality and the greater patronage they enjoyed from the part of the Holy See. Though as individual, independent missionary societies they catered to particular sections of the society, in their over all totality, they served to conscientise every age group, and every section of society. Though at the initiation of some particular group, the field of interest may have been some particular mission area, soon they embraced all the mission territories in all the continents, maintaining at the same time their specific scope of activity.

The Pontifical Society for the Propagation of the Faith

The missionary activities of the various religious orders and institutes gave birth to numerous missionary groups, connected with them, which helped to propagate the missionary ideal among the common people and obtain much needed spiritual and financial assistance for the work of the missionaries. Such groups sprouted up in France towards the end of the 18th century particularly connected with the Foreign Missions of Paris, precisely to pray for and help financially the foreign missions. These groups in the beginning had no particular name and organisation. Some of these missionary groups survived the revolution while others disappeared. Other such missionary groups were born after the revolution with the same scope of praying for the missions and sending financial assistance to the missionaries. These and the others that survived from the pre-revolution era sought particularly to interest the vast public to augment their collection of financial help for the missionaries.¹

¹ Cfr. LATOURETTE K. S., *A History of the Expansion of Christianity*, vol 4, 48-49; METZLER J. (Ed.), *Storia della Chiesa*, vol 24, 30-31; SEMERARO C., *Le Missioni Cattoliche nell'Epoca Contemporanea*, 162.

Philéas Jaricot and her sister Marie Pauline Jaricot were members of one such pious missionary sodality associated with the Foreign Missions of Paris. They were children of a rich merchant of Lyons. Pauline Jaricot sought to organise a systematic method of collecting the offerings for the missions and in the process gave birth to the “*L’Oeuvre de la propagation de la Foi*” in 1822, extending the scope of the original missionary groups to help not only the missions of the Foreign Missions of Paris, but missions all over the world. The association received ecclesiastical approval from the archbishop of Lyons. In 1823, special indulgences were granted to its members. The organization spread fast to the principal cities of France. In 1824 it was started in Piedmont, in 1825 in Sardinia and by 1834 it had spread to the whole of the Italian peninsula. During the same period it was founded in Belgium, Germany, Bavaria and Austria. The association had its headquarters at Lyons till 1922, when as noted earlier Pius XI transferred the headquarters to Rome. The movement was strongly advocated and supported by the Sacred Congregation for the Propagation of the Faith and with the transfer of the headquarters to Rome, the Sacred Congregation assumed direct charge of this association, making it at the same time pontifical.

Gradually this missionary society took on a very stable organisation. It had its operative groups in the parishes. These various groups were co-ordinated at the level of the diocese by a diocesan director. In every country there was a National Council which in turn kept in touch with the diocesan directors. The General Council in Rome regulated and co-ordinated the activities of all the national councils. All baptised Catholics above the age of 12 could become members of the association. The obligation that every member took upon oneself was to contribute financially to the missions and pray for the missions. However, more than the material contribution, this group became a great agent in the missionary animation of the Church in Europe.²

² Cfr. METZLER J. (Ed.), *Storia della Chiesa*, vol 24, 32; COMBY J., *Due Mila Anni di Evangelizzazione*, 211; DA NEMBRO M., *Missionologia*, Roma, Pontificia Universitas Lateranensis, 1961, 358-359.

The Pontifical Society of Holy Childhood

An association that contributed greatly to the creation of a missionary ambience in the second half of the 19th century and the first half of the 20th was “*L’Oeuvre de la Sainte Enfance*” founded in 1843. Its ardent promoter was Mons. Charles Auguste de Forbin Janson, Bishop of Nancy and Toul. It was his preoccupation with the thousands of children in China who were left to die soon after their birth for various reasons that inspired the origin of this association for children. In this work he was assisted by Pauline Jaricot. Young boys and girls below 12 years of age were grouped together in their local units and formed into some kind of loose association with the pronounced goal of redemption of the Chinese children. The obligation of these youngsters consisted in praying for the children of China and making a small financial contribution of a penny a month, for helping the children of China. By 1844 this missionary movement had taken roots in 65 dioceses in France and in a short time it spread all over the Catholic Countries of Europe. From 1849 on, the attention of this movement shifted to the redemption of African children from slavery. From 1855 on, the association extended its area of concern to the whole world, not so much in terms of “redemption” but of helping the under-privileged children. Various Popes imparted their special blessing to the association and endowed special spiritual favours on the members. In 1929 Pius XI raised it to the status of a Pontifical Society.

The scope of the association was to collaborate in procuring the baptism of the non-Christian children of China and of other countries, their redemption and their eventual education. Membership was open to all Catholic children below the age of 12. Those above this age could continue to be associated members. Members were divided into three groups: ordinary, special and perpetual. The Ordinary members made the prescribed monthly contributions. The special members gave a contribution six times the ordinary. The Perpetual members offered an amount still higher as prescribed by the regulations. Besides these

financial obligations, the members recited a Hail Mary with a specific short prayer for the children of the mission lands.³

The Pontifical Society of St. Peter for indigenous Clergy

In 1889 Stephanie Cottin Bigard and her daughter Jeanne Alessandrina founded the “*Opus a Sancto Pietro pro Clero indigeno*” at Caen in France, to sensitise the Catholics about the formation of the local clergy in the mission lands and to ask financial and spiritual contributions for this purpose. From a letter of the Vicar apostolic of Nagasaki, these ladies became aware of the need to help financially to open a local seminary. They set themselves to ask for aid door to door, and their zeal spread to others and a missionary association came into being. In 1920 it was brought under the authority of Propaganda Fide which approved its statutes, and in 1929 it was made into a Pontifical Society. Like the other missionary associations, this too was favoured by the various Popes who granted special spiritual favours to its members.

Membership to this association was open to all Catholics. The members were divided into three groups: *founders* who contributed the total amount needed for the expenses of the studies of a candidate for the priesthood; *benefactors* who contributed just what is necessary for the same but for one year; and the *associates* who contribute an amount fixed by the Regulations to be an ordinary member. Besides, all the members recited daily one Our Father and a Hail Mary and a specified prayer for the intentions of the association.⁴

The Missionary Union of the Clergy

“*Unione Missionaria del Clero*” was founded by Padre Paolo Manna of *Pontificio Istituto Missioni Estere di Milano*, in Italy.

³ Cfr. METZLER J. (Ed.), *Storia della Chiesa*, vol 24, 33-34; SEMERARO C., *Le Missioni Cattoliche nell'Epoca Contemporanea*, 164; DA NEMBRO M., *Missionologia*, 361-362.

⁴ Cfr. METZLER J. (Ed.), *Storia della Chiesa*, vol 24, 34; COSTANTINI C., *Le Missioni Cattoliche*, Milan, Casa Editrice Valentino Bompiani, 1949, 56; DA NEMBRO M., *Missionologia*, 363-364.

Its scope was the missionary formation and information of priests and seminarians. Manna nurtured the idea of a missionary association for the clergy from 1908 and slowly worked towards the realisation of it. In his book *Cperarii autem pauci* he expressed his idea of forming a missionary association for the Clergy. He suggested the institution of missionary circles in the seminaries to pray for the missions and the promotion of a priestly association in favour of the missions. Already in 1912 at the initiative of Joseph Schmidlin missionary unions of priests were formed in many of the dioceses of Germany. Practically the same time the *Lega Apostolica*, a missionary union of Jesuits was born in Turin, to which the archbishop of Turin in 1915 gave his approval. This union of Jesuits spread to other dioceses, but mostly confined to the Jesuit circles. In 1915 together with the Bishop of Parma, Paolo Manna traced out a concrete plan for the association. This initial project received the approval of Benedict XV, and of the Propaganda Fide in 1916. With this approval, Manna committed himself to the spread of the union, and within the period of just one year got 1254 priests enrolled in the association. Maximum Illud of Benedict XV helped towards the spread of the union in the universal church. The union had a rapid growth during the papacy of Pius XI, who himself was an active member of the union prior to his election to the papacy. Like all other Pontifical Missionary Societies, the Union of Priests for the Missions also received various spiritual favours from the Popes and endowments of special indulgences.

The establishment of a general Secretariat of the union in Rome in 1936 brought about a unification of the various national unions that had so far worked in an autonomous manner. In 1937 a new statute was framed for the Union. Membership in the union was open to all priests, diocesan and religious and to the students of theology. Members were divided into 4 groups according to the type of financial contribution that they made to the Union. According to a special concession made by Pius XII in 1949 even lay brothers and women religious were allowed membership in the Union.

The Scope of the Union of Clergy for the Missions was precisely to inflame the priests with zeal for the salvation of souls. The priests of the Union undertook various activities in favour of

the missions. They diffused the missionary idea among fellow priests and the faithful. They propagated missionary publications. They helped the missions with public and private prayer. They organised missionary congresses for the various groups of the faithful. They supported and encouraged the missionary associations, especially the Pontifical Societies. They made collections for the missions.⁵

Other Missionary Associations of the period

Besides the above four major associations which in the course of their history acquired the status of Pontifical Works, innumerable other missionary associations mushroomed all over the Catholic Europe. Some of these associations had some specific missionary scope. Various other missionary associations were born in connection with the missionary activities of particular religious orders and institutes of both men and women. Other missionary groups were initiated with the scope of providing specific services to the personnel in the missions, or to the missions themselves.

Associations with specific scope

Opera Apostolica was started in France in 1838 by Maria Zoè Duchesne of the diocese of Meaux. Hearing of the sacrificing work of the missionaries in distant lands and about the invasion of protestant missionaries in various regions, the young girl wanted to help the missionaries with useful equipments, sacred vestments and materials for schools etc. Other generous souls joined her in her apostolate and gradually an association was born. In 1848 it had its headquarters at Orleans, under the patronage of Mons. Dupanloup. Later on, the headquarters were transferred to Paris. In 1855 its statutes were approved and the association was granted special spiritual favours by Pius IX. In 1870 it was brought under the control of the Propaganda Fide, though not made into a Pontifical Society. Its scope was to pray for the missions and to provide the missionary with useful materials needed for their apostolate.⁶

⁵ Cfr. METZLER J. (Ed.), *Storia della Chiesa*, vol 24, 35; DA NEMBRO M., *Missionologia*, 373-379.

⁶ Cfr. DA NEMBRO M., *Missionologia*, 366.

The *Colletta antischivista* was known under various other names. It was Pope Leo XIII with his encyclical *Catholicae Ecclesiae* of 1890 who originated the idea. The faithful in various catholic nations responded to this call of the Pope and formed themselves into groups for the specific purpose of liberating the people of Africa from slavery and leading them to the Gospel. As the name itself signifies, the main purpose of the association was to collect funds to redeem slaves. The activities of these various groups were coordinated by the Propaganda Fide.⁷

Maria Teresa Ledochowska founded the *Sodalizio di S. Pietro Claver* to assist the African missions dependant on the Propaganda Fide. It was officially recognised in 1894 by Leo XIII. This sodality was an association dependant on the Sisters of St. Pietro Claver, who though they did not work in the African missions, sought to help these missions in various ways.⁸

Associations connected with the missionary religious orders and institutes

Almost every religious missionary institute or Order initiated some kind of association with the chief purpose of making propaganda for their particular missions and soliciting spiritual and especially financial assistance for them. These missionary associations served also the purpose of promoting vocations to these orders and institutes. Latourette mentions that about 160 such associations were founded between 1815 and 1914 and adds: "These represented a movement of unprecedented proportions for the financial support of the spread of the Roman Catholic Christianity by popular subscription."⁹ Bernard Arens in *Manuel des missions catholiques* gives a 66 pages long list of such missionary associations.¹⁰

⁷ Cfr. DA NEMBRO M., *Missionologia*, 366-367.

⁸ Cfr. DA NEMBRO M., *Missionologia*, 367.

⁹ LATOURETTE K. S., *A History of the Expansion of Christianity*, vol 4, 59.

¹⁰ Cfr. ARENS B., *Manuel des Missions Catholiques*, Lovanio, Editions du Museum Lessianum, 1925, 286-351.

Some of these associations connected with the missionary religious groups had greater extension and membership particularly in Italy. Among these, worthy of mention are: *Lega Apostolica* of the Jesuits, *Unione missionaria Francescana* of the Franciscan Minors, *Cori Mariani* of the Carmelites, the *Opera del Rosario in favore delle missioni* of the Dominicans, the *Opera Seráfica delle sante Messe* of the Capuchins, the *Opera delle Collette* of the Marists, the *Associazione Mariale in favore delle missioni* of the Oblates of Mary Immaculate, the *Piccola Opera del S. Cuore* of the Missionaries of the Sacred Heart, the *Amici delle missioni* of the Foreign missions of Milan, the *In Omnibus Christus* of the Saverians of Parma.¹¹

Associations with special nature

Missionary groups came up also for assisting the missionaries in particular fields of interest. Some groups sought to help them intellectually, in the field of theory of the missions and general theology related to problems in the mission. Others helped the missionaries in the field of health care of the native people. Others tried to help the missionaries in other technical aspects. These varied groups testified to the general interest of the faithful in the missionary activity and their ready collaboration in the various aspects of it.

Among the groups interested in the intellectual field there was *Conferenza Africana* founded by Fr. Enrico Dubois, mainly for the purpose of explaining theological themes of direct interest to the missionaries, and helping them to solve practical theological and moral problems in their apostolate. Another association of similar nature was founded in Paris in December 1923 called *Amis des Missions*. The aim of this group was to make known the value of missionary apostolate and to defend it from criticism.¹²

Among the missionary associations connected to health care, scopes varied from instruction of the missionaries, to preparing

¹¹ Cfr. DA NEMBRO M., *Missionologia*, 370.

¹² Cfr. DA NEMBRO M., *Missionologia*, 370.

medical personnel for the missions, to providing the missions with medicines and medical equipments.

The associations of the technical nature sought to help the missionaries with their various construction projects, vehicles, journeys etc. These are of a later origin. In fact the *Dutch Bureau voor technische adviezen aan de Missie*, one of the major such associations, was founded as late as in 1936.¹³

Student Missionary Associations

It is actually the Protestants who have the credit of starting the first student missionary associations. The first of this type was the Students Voluntary Movement for the Missions started in 1888 in the USA. Gradually this movement spread to the other countries and in 1895 it became the World Federation of Christian Students for the Missions. A corresponding Catholic association, Catholic Students Mission Crusade was born only in 1918 at the initiative of Clifford King.

In the Catholic circles, in 1910 Joseph Schmidlin started the first official circle of University Students at Münster in favour of the missions. This example was followed by other Universities. In 1920 the various missionary circles of the university students were united to form a federation called *Missionsbund*. In Germany the students of the Middle Schools too organised their missionary association under the name of *Missionskreuzzug der Studierenden Jungen*.

In Belgium the missionary league for the Students *Pro Apostolis* was started by the Jesuits of Thunhout in 1912. And in 1925 was initiated the University students' missionary association called *Associatio Universitaria Catholicas adiuvens Missiones (AUCAM)* in Lovanio with the scope of ensuring intellectual assistance to the mission countries.

Student associations with similar missionary scope were born also in Switzerland and Holland. One of the more numerous groups

¹³ Cfr. DA NEMBRO M., *Missionologia*, 370-372.

of Switzerland was the Missionary Academic Association founded in 1919 at Friburg. In France missionary associations of Students properly so called, started only in 1929 with the *Ligue Missionnaire des Etudiants* founded at the Jesuit institute of Lilla. In Spain *La Cruzada Missional de Jovenes* came up in 1923 with the same scope and purpose. Missionary Association of students in Italy *Lega Missionaria Studenti (LMS)* was started only in 1927 among the students of the Jesuit Istituto Massimo of Rome.¹⁴

Youth Associations in Italy in the post World War I period

In concluding this section on youth missionary associations, a general examination of the panorama of youth associations in the ecclesial and political fields in the post World War I Italy will help complete the general picture of youth associations. Evidently these associations do not enter the group of missionary associations. However, the missionary groups carried on their activities in the wider context of the youth associations in the national political and ecclesial field.

The Catholic Italian Youth Associations

Though there were various associations for Catholic youth, catering to specific aspects of their life in the over all Italian national panorama, there were some of them which slowly acquired a national character and enjoyed a greater patronage of the Church, and even tended to absorb the other groups. These larger groups though not specifically missionary in character, were totally Catholic in their origin, their scope and activities.

The Società della Gioventù Cattolica Italiana

A loose association of Catholic young people existed in Italy even before the World War I. But it was after World War I that

¹⁴ Cfr. DA NEMBRO M., *Missionologia*, 370-371. It would appear a little strange that the author is not aware of the salesian missionary association of the young, AGM. Probably the fact that especially in the early years the association was confined to the salesian institutions accounts for this oversight. D. Garneri also speaks about these various student organisation in GM. Cfr. GARNERI D., *Le Associazioni Studentesche in favore delle missioni*, in GM 10 (1932) 5, 82.

Paolo Pericoli relaunched the activities of the association under a definite nomenclature: *Società della Gioventù Cattolica Italiana* (SGCI). According to the intentions of Pericoli this association was to serve as the one principle point of reference for all Catholic young boys and girls of Italy. Immediately after the War, Pericoli campaigned for a greater diffusion of the groups of the Society in all the parishes and oratories.

At the end of World War I, in January 1919 was also born the *Partito Popolare Italiano* of Don Luigi Sturzo who also tried to absorb the young people in his new party. In the face of this turn of events, the SGCI distanced itself from this political party, not wanting any direct involvement of its members in politics. However, through a process of dialogue between the leadership of the two organisations, a certain working understanding was reached. The SGCI was to care for the Christian and social formation of the youth. Its scope would be to give Italy truly Christian citizens who would be capable of leading the nation. Political culture was also accepted as one of the points of study and discussion in the circles of the society.

The real challenge for the SGCI came from the Fascist youth groups initiated in the post war period. From 1919 to 1922 when Fascism was on the ascent in the whole peninsula, the SGCI distanced itself from a political manifesto that openly propagated the use of violence for the achievement of its goals. However, this was not the one single line of thought among the leadership of the group. A small group, even at that initial period, saw in the same Fascism an agent that would put a break on the growth of the revolutionary leftist forces and a possible ally to defend the rights of the Church. This group, however, formed the minority. In line with the open non-collaboration with the Fascist groups, there were open conflicts among the two groups. And the need to defend themselves against the even physical attacks of the Fascist youth groups gave rise to the formation of paramilitary groups of the SGCI.

The growth in the number of the circles of the association in the years immediately after the War bore out the fact that it was generally recognised in the Catholic ambience as the one

association for the youth. In 1919 there were about 1900 circles, while in 1922 the circles counted 4500.

The SGCI was to be a school of true Christian formation. It aimed at preparing its members for the battles of life. The society had a spiritual, cultural and relational character. It sought to form the young in the school of prayer, apostolate and sacrifice, with great emphasis laid on sacramental life, on meditation, and activities in favour of conquering souls for Christ. The emphasis was on the formation of a convinced and decided Christian personality. The final objective was to build up a youth that would be evangelically militant; capable of testifying to Christian values every where, with courage and coherence of life. In the course of years it included also activities in the field of sports and recreation. The instrument of animation and information of the members of the society was the monthly periodical «Gioventù Italica».¹⁵

Gioventù Femminile

Another important development in the field of Catholic youth association in Italy was the birth of the *Gioventù Femminile* in 1918-1919, through the initiative of Armida Barelli of Milan, with the encouragement of Card. Andrea Carlo Ferrari of Milan. Soon the group drew the attention of Benedict XV, who blessed the undertaking and encouraged the spread of the association in the whole of the peninsula. By October 1919 over 50,000 young girls had enrolled in the association!

The scope of *Gioventù Femminile* was the formation of an apostolic personality, dedicated to the Christian restoration of the society. Following along the lines of the SGCI, it traced out a programme of action based on the Eucharist, apostolate, and heroism. It would have a character that was Catholic, feminine and Italian. Right from the start, like the SGCI, it distanced itself from the Fascist youth groups. In the beginning membership was limited to young girls having a minimum of 16 years of age. But

¹⁵ Cfr. CAIMI L., *Modelli Educativi dell'Associazione Giovanile Cattolica nel Primo Dopoguerra (1919-1935)*, in PAZZAGLIA L. (Ed.), *Chiesa, Cultura e Educazione in Italia tra le Due Guerre*, Brescia, Editrice La Scuola, 2003, 217-224.

the association soon realised the need to embrace the lower age groups and to prepare them for membership in the senior group. In 1920 the new group of *Aspiranti* was launched for girls between 10 and 16 years of age and in 1923 the association of *Beniamine* was started for the still lower age group of those between 6 to 10 years old. In 1923 a section entitled *Forza e Grazia* was begun for catering to sports and other related recreational activities.

In January 1921 *Gioventù Femminile* started its review «Squilli di Risurrezione», initially a monthly, later on a fortnightly. Around the same period another periodical was initiated by the same association entitled «Fiamma Viva».¹⁶

Federazione Universitari Cattolici Italiani (FUCI)

Besides these two Catholic associations for the general youth, there were also the two Federations of Catholic Italian University Students, (*Federazione Universitari Cattolici Italiani – FUCI*) one section for boys and the other for girls. These Federations had difficulties in re-establishing themselves in the immediate after War period. The spirit of independence that characterised the group made it difficult even for the Church authorities to accept it fully. However, in the early 1920s the federation managed to consolidate its position. The scope of this association was the Christian and cultural formation of the members. A pastoral of culture, the overcoming of the distance between the Church and modern world, the formation of a solid Christian conscience in the students were some of the main areas of concern of the federation. The association sought to help the members to overcome the fragmentation in society and in the modes of thought and arrive at a certain unity between thought and life, faith and reason, gospel and culture. In 1927 this association of University Students started a monthly periodical «Studium» for the purpose of animation and information of the FUCI. 1928 saw the beginning of yet another fortnightly review «Azione Fucina» by the same organization.¹⁷

¹⁶ Cfr. CAIMI L., *Modelli Educativi dell'Associazionismo Giovanile Cattolico*, 227-232.

¹⁷ Cfr. CAIMI L., *Modelli Educativi dell'Associazionismo Giovanile Cattolico*, 239-245.

Catholic Action

An important event in the life of these above mentioned organisations was their aggregation to Catholic Action. In the changing political climate of Italy, and the steady growth of forces seemingly opposed to the Church and its traditions, need was felt to offer the enemy a united front. The Statutes of Catholic Action were consequently revised and the new version was approved by Pius XI in 1923. The revised Statutes envisaged an aggregation of all six Catholic Organisations to form the bigger body of Catholic Action. The six organisations were: *Società della Gioventù Cattolica*, *La Federazione Universitaria degli Cattolici Italiana*, *La Federazione Italiana degli Uomini Cattolici*, *Gioventù Femminile*, *L'Unione fra le Donne Cattoliche d'Italia* and *Le Universitarie Cattoliche*.

The united force of the Catholic Action was to be characterised by a close unity of the various component groups, a hierarchical structure with the consequent insistence on discipline and obedience, and a co-ordination of the diverse constituents. The revised Statutes aimed to form a strong force of the laity, made of various strata of society that would collaborate with dedication in the mission and uphold the true interests of the Church. With this re-organisation of Catholic Action, the laity was given the official mandate to participate in the apostolic labours of the hierarchy. The primary scope of the organization was to be the establishment of the kingship of Christ in the Society. The plan of action envisaged for the members included participation in the life and activity of the parish communities, diffusion of good literature, initiatives in favour of the missions, etc.¹⁸

The Fascist Italian Youth Associations

It was not only the Church that had its eyes on the youth. The Society too looked to the same group for enlarging its own foundation and assuring a vigorous continuation of the trends set

¹⁸ Cfr. CAIMI L., *Modelli Educativi dell'Associazione Giovanile Cattolica*, 232-233.

in motion. This was particularly the case with the arrival of the Fascists in the period immediately after the World War I.

In the autumn of 1921 at the first Congress of the Fascist Party, Mussolini put forward the ambitious programme of making Italy a totally fascist nation, in such a way that "Fascist" would become a synonym of "Italian". The themes recurrent in the propaganda of the Fascists in the period immediately after World War I were: the myth of revolution, the affirmation of the supreme value of the nation, eulogy of the youth as the instrument of a moral and political revolution, the exaltation of courage, audacity and determination. Violence was publicly adopted as the one instrument necessary for the good of the nation.

In this process of converting Italy into a Fascist nation, it was the field of education that occupied primary attention. The introduction of a single text in the various levels, the introduction of various fascist liturgies and rites, the institution of a formation to politics and the gradual transformation of the teachers were some of the means adopted to reach the goal.

Besides touching the field of education, the Fascists recognised the immediate need to work at the level of associations for the youth. At the end of 1920 a Fascist student vanguard was formed. However, this group proved to be over independent and autonomous, and so the leadership proceeded to the formation of a nation wide net work of a youth association, including in its membership all grades of youngsters. So in 1921 the Fascist youth vanguard was constituted for students and other youth between 14 and 18 years of age. At the end of 1922 the first groups of *Balilla* were formed for youngsters between 8 to 14 years of age. The *Gruppi Universitari Fascisti* were formed in 1923 for the university students. In 1926 the Fascists united the direction and organization of the Fascist youth Vanguard and the *Balilla* under the common institution of *Opera Nazionale Balilla*.

As noted earlier in reference to the Catholic Associations of the youth in Italy, these State youth Organisations conflicted with the Catholic associations, and strove might and main to bring into

its fold the members of the Catholic groups. In November 1926 the Fascist council of Ministers passed the legislation suppressing all other political parties and all associations opposed to the Fascist party. Only the direct intervention of the Holy See saved the Catholic Action with its various constituent associations from being disbanded. However, the State support of the Fascist groups and the evident continued efforts at suppressing all other associations of youth required from the Catholic associations certain limitation of their activities, extra tact at manoeuvring their movements, and additional attention to the political changes in society.

In 1929 the *Opera Nazionale Balilla* passed from the direction of the Fascist Party to that of the Ministry of Education in the Government, increasing further its hold on the youth in the national level. By the end of the 1920s various groups of youth, Fascists or sympathetic to Fascism, belonging to the *Opera Nazionale Balilla* were regrouped together under the title of *Fasci Giovanili*. Its membership was open to all youngsters between 18 and 21 years old.

The wide spread net work of these groups made abstaining from membership in these groups very difficult. Parents were required to register their children as members of these groups, and those who refused to comply with this directive, were discriminated against. The use of a uniform for the group, frequent gatherings and para-military training which formed part of the organisation, served to catch the imagination of the young. Thus in the period between 1920 and 1930 the Fascist regime succeeded to establish an impressive structure of organisation for the youth.¹⁹

The Missionary Periodicals at the time of initiation of GM

In the period under consideration, it appears that every association initiated a periodical for the purpose of information and formation of its members. At least in the beginning, these

¹⁹ Cfr. PAZZAGLIA L., *La Formazione dell'Uomo Nuovo nella Strategia Pedagogica del Fascismo*, in PAZZAGLIA L. (Ed.), *Chiesa, Cultura e Educazione in Italia tra le Due Guerre*, 107-139.

periodicals were addressed to the general public, particularly the grown ups. It was only after quite a few years of experience with the periodicals for the elderly, that the various editorials attempted to reach out specifically to the young.

The periodicals for the young in the Italian Peninsula

Domenico Volpi traces back the beginnings of the periodicals for the young, to the origin of the illustrated comics in the United States of America towards the end of the 19th century. Because of their great popularity they spread to the rest of the world and also to Italy. Besides importing these American productions, and their translations in the local language, various cartoonists brought out their own local productions. Volpi notes that these illustrated comics were received with mixed reactions by various sections of the society. Many of the pedagogists condemned it right from the start. The educators looked at them with suspicion. Some other section accepted them as a lesser evil in comparison with the literature of a purely commercial nature that was starting to invade the society. However, the reaction of the young people to whom it was addressed was almost always and everywhere the same: they loved these comics and devoured them.²⁰

Giuseppe Costa tracing out the initiation of the periodicals for the young notes that these periodicals were a result of a particular attention of the editors to the young, to their need to be informed and formed, to their eagerness for diversion; accompanied by the desire to exploit this wide unexplored and very lucrative market.

The initiation of true periodicals for the young, of properly Italian origin according to Costa started with «Cordelia», on 6th November 1881 in Florence, directed by Angelo De Gubernatis (1841-1913) and edited by Le Monnier; and «Novellino», on 5th January 1899 in Rome, published by the Calzone-Villa publishing house. It was the ambience of scholastic and pedagogical renewal in the united Italy that occasioned the birth of these periodicals.

²⁰ Cfr. VOLPI D., Storia ed Evoluzione della Stampa per Ragazzi e suoi Attuali Orientamenti in Italia e nel Mondo. Linee di un Giornale del Nostro Tempo, in *I Ragazzi e i Loro Giornali*, Roma, UISPER, [1963], 69.

In 1900 the Turin editor Paravia brought out «La Domenica dei Fanciulli», a weekly illustrated journal with moral stories, serialised narrations, poetry, writings of the young themselves, correspondence with the readers and some advertisements.

The Salesians of Catania – Sicily – started the publication of the periodical «L'Amico della Gioventù» in 1903 and continued up to 1949. In 1906, Bemporad, the editor of Firenze, brought out «Il giornalino della Domenica» for the young people, directed by Luigi Bertelli (1858-1920). It was more cultural in character.

To cater to the needs of the young people for information about the various events in the social and political fields, the «Corriere della sera» from December 1908 onwards brought out a supplement for the young called «Corriere dei Piccoli» which later on came to be called «Corrierino». This supplement continued as late as 1993.

In 1912 was born «Lo Scolaro» of Genoa and continued till 1972. In 1920 Antonio Cojazzi started the publication of «La rivista dei Giovani». It was Catholic in nature and the contents were well worked out. The «Il giornale dei Balilla» was started in February 1923. It was totalitarian and nationalistic in outlook. The Italian Catholic Action in 1937 brought out «Il Vittorioso» as an organ of the association. The communists in reaction to the publication of «Il Vittorioso», initiated in 1950 the periodical «Il Pioniere». In 1950 the SEI brought out the youth periodical «Giovani». «Ragazzi due mila» which later on changed its title to «Mondo Erre» and «Dimensioni» was started in 1960, published by the LDC of Turin.²¹

Missionary periodicals

At the end of the 19th and beginning of the 20th century, Italy and for that matter the whole of Europe registered a flowering of missionary bulletins. These periodicals were connected to the various missionary associations or to the religious Orders or Institutes which worked in the missions. They were generally

²¹ Cfr. COSTA G., *Parole Attorno ai Media. Saggi, Cronache, Provocazioni*, Roma, Salvatore Sciascia Editore, 2002, 25-29.

addressed to members, friends and benefactors of these associations and religious institutes. Normally they carried articles and news items from the missionaries. Almost always the contents of the periodicals of the religious institutes were restricted to the areas where their missionaries worked, because of their motive of propaganda for their proper missions. The financial motive was in no way hidden.²²

Periodicals of the Pontifical Societies

The *L'Oeuvre de la propagation de la Foi* started in 1822, brought out in the same year the periodical «Nouvelles revues des Missions» to stimulate interest of the Catholics in the association and to diffuse information on the missions, with the motive of collecting funds for the same missions. They started with 6 issues a year. This was a publication along the lines of «Choix des Lettres edificantes et curieuses» a Jesuit publication, which in some way could be considered the forerunner of all missionary periodicals. In 1825 the review was renamed «Annales de la Propagation de la Foi» and later on in 1868 «Les Missions Catholiques». «Annali della Propagazione della Fede» the Italian translation of «Annales de la Propagation de la Foi» appeared in 1828. «Le Missioni Cattoliche» was started initially by the PIME fathers as the Italian translation of «Les Missions Catholiques» in 1872, but soon had its own course of development.²³

The *Oeuvre de la Sainte Enfance*” founded in 1843, initiated its review «Annales de l’Oeuvre de la Ste Enfance» in 1846. It was published from Paris as a bimonthly review. The Italian tradition «Annali della Santa Infanzia» was started in 1853 published first from Paris and then later on from Genova.²⁴

²² Cfr. GHEDDO P., *Dai Nostri Inviati Speciali. 125 Anni di Giornalismo Missionario da «Le Missioni Cattoliche» a «Mondo e Missione» (1872-1997)*, Bologna, Editrice Missionaria Italiana, 1997, 19.

²³ Cfr. METZLER J. (Ed.), *Storia della Chiesa*, vol 24, 32; COMBY J., *Due Mila Anni di Evangelizzazione*, 211; COSTA G., *Parole Attorno ai Media*. 137; Elenco delle Riviste in Lingue Europee, in «Bibliografia Missionaria» 2 (1934-1935), 143, 170.

²⁴ Cfr. Elenco delle Riviste in Lingue Europee, 142,143.

It would appear that the *Opus a Sancto Pietro pro Clero indigeno* started in 1889 initiated its periodical «Bulletin de l'Oeuvre Pontificale de Saint-Pierre-Apotre» only in 1928, eight years after the association was brought under the control of the Propaganda Fide. The periodical was a monthly and published from Montreal.²⁵

It would appear that the periodicals of the three above Pontifical Missionary Societies underwent a unification in January 1934 especially for the Italian context, and was published under the unified title: «Crociata Missionaria». It was a monthly periodical with a fortnightly special issue for the young.²⁶

The *Unione del Clero* in Italy started their Bulletin in 1917 under the title of «Bollettino dell'U.M. del Clero». In 1919 the title was changed to «Rivista di studi missionari», and in 1923 «Rivista dell'U.M. del Clero», and further in 1939 «Rivista Missionaria» and finally in 1950 «Clero e Missioni». The same *Unione del Clero* in 1929 initiated yet another periodical for the cultural formation of the clergy, more scientific in nature under the title «Pensiero Missionario».²⁷

Periodicals of the Missionary Institutes of Italy

The four of the more important missionary Institutes of priests and religious which had their origin in the last decades of the 19th century or the beginning of the 20th century, of which mention has been made, followed the example of the Pontifical Missionary Societies and initiated periodicals with the purpose of propaganda, information, and requesting financial help for the missions. So the PIME fathers as noted above started the «Le Missioni Cattoliche» in 1872. In 1969 the title was changed to «Mondo e Missione». The Combonian Fathers started in 1883 the «La Nigrizia». The Saverians of Parma started in 1903 «Fede e civiltà». From 1927

²⁵ Cfr. Elenco delle Riviste in Lingue Europee, 150.

²⁶ Cfr. Elenco delle Riviste in Lingue Europee, 179.

²⁷ Cfr. PAVENTI S., *La Chiesa Missionaria. Manuale di Cooperazione Missionaria e di Missionografia*, Roma, Unione Missionaria del Clero in Italia, 1949, 39.

to 1947 this periodical was called «Missioni Illustrate». After this period there was a return to the original title. The Missionaries of the Consolata founded in 1899 the periodical «Missioni Consolata».²⁸

Giuseppe Costa is of the opinion that the first missionary periodical properly Italian in its origin was the «Il Museo delle Missioni Cattoliche» founded by Canon Ortalda in Turin in 1857.²⁹ «Italia Missionaria» founded by the PIME fathers in 1919 would appear to be the first missionary periodical addressed specifically to the young.³⁰ The Jesuits would start the Lega missionaria Studenti only in 1927, with the publication of the periodical of this association, «Gentes» in the same year.³¹

It has been noted earlier that the second half of the 19th century and the first decades of the 20th was a period of the birth of many religious congregations and institutes, many of them having a missionary dimension. These various missionary religious institutes, in the atmosphere of the general missionary expansion, and their particular commitments in specific areas, brought out their own missionary periodicals, often keeping in mind the general public, at times aimed specifically at the young or the adults, mainly with the motive of propaganda.³²

Classification of missionary periodicals according to their scientific nature

Metodio Da Nembro in *Missionologia* classifies the missionary reviews into six broad groups. The reviews with a strictly scientific character belong to the first group. Among the Italian missionary

²⁸ Cfr. Elenco delle Riviste in *Lingue Europee*, 170, 171, 174.

²⁹ There is a discrepancy of information about this periodical. «Bibliografia Missionaria» presents this as a mere supplement to the «Annali della Propagazione della Fede» and notes it was a bimonthly, started in 1881. Cfr. Elenco delle Riviste in *Lingue Europee*, 173.

³⁰ Cfr. COSTA G., *Parole Attorno ai Media*, 137-138.

³¹ Cfr. Elenco delle Riviste in *Lingue Europee*, 165.

³² A kind of an elenco of the more important missionary periodicals of the religious institutes in the Italian context at the time of the initiation and spread of GM is given in the appendix 5.

periodicals, only «Il Pensiero Missionario» of the *Unione Missionaria del Clero in Italia*, and published from Rome, belong to this group. However scientific write ups on the missions and on the culture of the indigenous people in the missions were also published in reviews not strictly missionary like the periodicals of the various Universities. In the Italian context these include «Euntes Docete» of Urbaniana, «Studia Missionalia» of the faculty of missiology of Gregorian University, «Antonianum» of the Franciscans Minor, and the «Gregorianum» of the Gregorian University.

In the second group of periodicals, not strictly scientific, but with many and well researched articles on missionary problems, were those of the *Unione Missionaria del Clero* in various European countries. In Italy the periodical was «Bollettino dell'Unione Missionaria del Clero» published from Milan, started in 1917.

The Annals of the various Pontifical Missionary societies forms the third group of missionary periodicals. Less scientific, and with few well studied articles, these form a good source of information on the missions, on the various groups of people in the missions, and on the general missionary activity of the Church. Among these, the precedence of place is occupied by the Annals of the Propaganda Fide.

The periodicals of the various religious orders and congregations make up the fourth class of the missionary periodicals. They are generally limited to the mission areas of the particular congregation, and have a propagandistic nature. These periodicals, with a marked absence of serious scientific research, however, offered useful information, and above all served to maintain the interest of the public in the missions. They were present in all the Catholic countries of Europe: France, Spain, Italy, Germany, Belgium, Holland, Switzerland, Ireland, and outside in Canada.

The publications of the various missionary associations constitute the fifth group of missionary periodicals. In Italy, according to Da Nembro, one such review was «Gentes» of the Lega Missionaria Studenti started in 1927.

The sixth group of missionary periodicals were those published in the mission areas. Often they are only propagandistic

in nature, though some of them carry well studied articles. Among these are: «The Week» of Bombay; «The Southern Cross» of Capetown; «Le maroc Catholique» of Rabat; «The light of the East» of Ranchi; «The Herald» of Calcutta; «India» of Madras; «The Indian Ecclesiastical Review» of Mangalore; «Veritas et Vita» of Asmara; «Far East», «The Twentieth Century», «The Catholic Weekly», «The Australian Catholic» of Australia.³³

Conclusion

Persons with a vision and the inner drive shared their vision and energy with fellow human beings, setting afoot the formation of groups and movements. Often the synergy created by the coming together of like minded people, and others who willingly shared similar visions and had similar hopes, went far beyond even the expectations of the founders of these associations. Associations helped in a big way to tap human energy and to direct it. Great sacrifices seemed little when a spirit of healthy vying with one another to give the best to the life and purpose of the group was created in the association.

Besides satisfying the natural tendency of the young for peer groups, the youth associations served as schools of formation of the young. Groups with ideals which were humanizing and elevating helped to produce truly great persons, and those with ideals which were sectarian, divisive and destructive served to impoverish the human person.

Formation through instruction and information! That was the purpose of the various periodicals. Not just scattering in front of the readers just what they wanted to read, stuff that easily satisfied but seldom challenged. In these missionary periodicals the readers perhaps read what they would have preferred not to read. But reading it, the human spirit was roused, and moved into action. Some action, even if it consisted in a little prayer or a small contribution for the missions, was the goal of these periodicals. And they achieved much!

³³ Cfr. DA NEMBRO M., *Missionologia*, 395-397.

CHAPTER 5

GIOVENTÙ MISSIONARIA THE SALESIAN MISSIONARY YOUTH ASSOCIATION

The re-flowering of missionary enthusiasm in the 19th century consisted primarily but not exclusively of the renewed commitment of the Church to undertake missions in lands as yet untouched by Christianity. The evangelizing activity of the frontline missionaries had a very salutary effect on the Church back in their home countries. It could be said that the Church as a whole breathed a “missionary air” all the more so in the golden period of missionary expansion. The experiences of the missionaries in distant lands: their aspirations, achievements, failures, difficulties, struggles and loneliness were vividly and at times even exaggeratedly reflected in the pages of the many missionary periodicals. These instruments of information and animation had a great effect on all sections of society, and helped in a substantial manner to the missionary momentum.

«Gioventu Missionaria» was one such periodical aimed precisely at the missionary animation of the young boys and girls of the Salesian institutions of Italy. However, prior to its being a periodical, *Gioventù Missionaria* was a missionary association, a missionary movement of the young in the salesian institutions of Italy. It was this youth missionary association that gave birth to the periodical, which in its turn fortified, propagated, expanded and contributed to the development of the movement. To understand the scope, contents, structure, and evolution of the periodical, it would be necessary to examine the foundation, the scope, structure and evolution of the missionary association itself. As the periodical was the organ of propaganda, information and animation of the youth association, it cannot be seen as an entity, separate in itself.

Gioventù Missionaria does not seem to have been the first missionary association for the young in the salesian ambience. From a study of the relevant documents kept in the Salesian Central Archives, Rome, it is clear that this youth association that would in the process of its development call itself an “international youth movement of spirituality and missionary co-operation”¹ had its predecessors.

The Predecessors of *Gioventù Missionaria* in the Salesian ambience

The focus of this section is not to examine when and how the various other missionary associations for the young existing in the wider context of the Church, was founded in the salesian institutions. Initiation of the Pontifical Missionary Societies in the salesian ambience, perhaps cannot be ruled out. In fact the associates of *Gioventù Missionaria* were themselves constantly invited to form part of these Pontifical Societies. The concern of this section is to study if in the general missionary reawakening, and particularly in the general context of other missionary associations for the youth, the Salesians founded some association properly their own, to animate the youth in their own institutions; if so, where, how, with what scope and what structure? Therefore, this section does not examine the possible initiation of the pontifical missionary societies in the salesian institutions, instead proposes to examine the missionary associations properly salesian in foundation, even though their scope and activity be very similar to those of the other then existing missionary associations.

Obra de Maria Auxiliadora para las Misiones

According to a document preserved in the Salesian Central Archives, Rome, it would appear that the first salesian missionary association for the young had its beginning in Spain. The young students of certain salesian hostels in Spain were enthused by the accounts of the missionary enterprise of the Salesians in Patagonia and Terra del Fuoco. They were moved by the appeal of the

¹ Cfr. *Gioventù Missionaria*, in GM 43 (1965) 1, 1.

missionaries working in these regions for assistance both spiritual and material. In the face of such great need they wanted to contribute their share and collaborate in the great work of evangelisation and civilisation of the indigenous people. These students, therefore, started a kind of an association, called "*Obra de Maria Auxiliadora para las Misiones*" with the primary motive of raising funds for the salesian missions from among fellow students and friends.²

According to the above mentioned document this association was officially launched on 24 June 1887, the feast of Mons. John Cagliero, with the first enrolments in the group. From its scope and activities, it is evident that it was meant to be just a pious association for the young in favour of the salesian missions. The members of the group promised a monthly contribution of 5 centavos for the South American salesian missions. They also promised to recite daily one Hail Mary, for the conversion of the indigenous people, and the short invocations: Sweet Heart of Jesus make me love you always more and more; Mary Help of Christians, pray for us. The members also contributed spiritually to the work of the missionaries by offering four Holy Communions a month for the intentions of the missionaries. Besides the little financial contribution that each one made, the group as such, had recourse to other ways of raising funds to assist the missions. Membership to this association was limited to the salesian institutions only. Students and artisans, interns and externs were encouraged to form part of the association. The document does not make any mention of any specific structure or regulations and statutes for the said association.³

² Cfr. ASC A 837. *Obra de Maria Auxiliadora para las Misiones*, typescript - anonymous, [s.d.], 1. The document does not mention the specific institute where this pious association was started nor the names of the persons who initiated and animated this group.

³ Cfr. *Obra de Maria Auxiliadora para las Misiones*, 1. Evidently the association was more for the missionary animation of the young itself than for the possible contribution that they could make for the various works of the missionaries in distant lands. One notices immediately the spiritual slant of the movement, and one would think that the vocational aspect was certainly not absent in such a movement. Making the young love the missions was a way of making them missionaries.

Apostolato dell'Innocenza

Fr. Demetrio Zucchetti,⁴ in his reconstruction of the story of *Gioventù Missionaria* written on the occasion of the 50th year of the association, traces back its origin to 1908, to the beginnings of the missionary association *Apostolato dell'Innocenza*, in the institutions of the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians.⁵

Foundation of Apostolato dell'Innocenza.

The first group of salesian missionaries, with Luigi Versiglia⁶ as their leader, reached China in 1906 and took up their work in Macao. Giovanni Fergnani⁷ too formed part of this first missionary expedition to China.

It was a period of great social disturbance in China. Piracy was rampant all over the country. There was a general suspicion and rejection of foreigners and everything that they engaged in: commerce, education and evangelisation. Faced with the difficulty of penetrating the heart of the Chinese people with the message of the Gospel, and the apparent failure of all efforts wrought with so much sacrifice, the young missionary Giovanni Fergnani, felt helpless and disheartened. In this frame of mind, he recalled to mind how when he was still a young boy, his good mother taught him to pray for the conversion of non-believers all over the world.

⁴ A somewhat detailed sketch of the life of D. Zucchetti will be given in the section dealing with the directors of GM.

⁵ Cfr. ASC A 837, *Cinquantesimo dell'Associazione Gioventù Missionaria*, typescript of Zucchetti D., [1958], 1.

⁶ Luigi Versiglia (1873 - 1930), was the leader of the first group of salesian missionaries to China in 1906. He founded the first salesian house in Macao. In 1918 he opened the mission of Shiu Chow, of which he became the first Vicar Apostolic in 1920. He was martyred along with his companion Fr. Callisto Caravario, by a group of pirates on 25 February 1930, while he was on a visit to the district of Lin Chow. Cfr. VALENTINI E. - A. RODINÒ (Eds.), *Dizionario Biografico dei Salesiani*, Torino, Ufficio Stampa Salesiani, 1969, 292.

⁷ Giovanni Fergnani (1874-1932), was a member of the first salesian missionary expedition to China in 1906. Later on he was a missionary in India, and in the Middle East. Cfr. VALENTINI E. - A. RODINÒ (Eds.), *Dizionario Biografico dei Salesiani*, 124-125.

And he thought to himself: “why don’t many good mothers invite their little ones to pray for the conversion of the non-believers?” This memory of his mother inspired him to request all the young students of the salesian institutions in Italy, to join in a crusade of prayer for the conversion of the Chinese people. This, according to Zucchetti, was the moment in which was born the missionary association for the young in the salesian institutions, *Gioventù Missionaria*.⁸

With this inspiration, together with his then director, Luigi Versiglia, Giovanni Fergnani in 1908 proposed the idea of a new missionary association of students to the institute of the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians in Nizza Monferrato and to their other hostels. The purpose of the association was to collaborate with the work of the missionaries in China by prayer and good works. This missionary proposal was accepted with great enthusiasm and the missionary association *Apostolato dell’Innocenza* was started at the FMA institute of Nizza Monferrato the same year. From this institute, the idea of enrolling the collaboration of the young in the difficult work of evangelisation of the Chinese people spread quickly to their other institutes, hostels, schools and oratories. Units of *Apostolato dell’Innocenza* sprouted up in the various institutions of the Sisters. Though this association had the encouragement and support of the then Rector Major, Michael Rua, it took roots only in the institutes of the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians and did not spread to the institutes of the Salesians of Don Bosco.⁹

Programme cf “Apostolato dell’Innocenza”

In the period of initiation, the simple project of prayer, good works and little financial contributions formed the whole programme of the association. All the various activities of the groups, spiritual and otherwise, were oriented towards the salesian

⁸ Cfr. *Associazione Gioventù Missionaria*, Torino, SEI, 1942, 8-12; ASC A 837, *Cinquantesimo dell’Associazione Gioventù Missionaria*, 2.

⁹ Cfr. ASC A 837, *Associazione Gioventù Missionaria*, typescript - anonymous, Torino, 8 Settembre 1952, 1; *Pie Associazioni Giovanili per le Case delle Figlie di Maria Ausiliatrice*, Torino, L.I.C.E.-R.Berruti & C., [s.d.], 55.

missions of China.¹⁰ In the course of time, when the Salesians launched their youth missionary association, *Apostolato dell'Innocenza*, organised more in accordance with the feminine psychology, still continued to flourish in the institutions of the Sisters, and became what could rightly be called the feminine wing of the new association, retaining its nomenclature, structure, activities, and above all its independence, benefiting however from its association with the salesian missionary movement, especially in regard to the review GM.¹¹

Although the intention of the initiators of *Apostolato dell'Innocenza* was to have the young girls and boys of their institutes to pray and make little sacrifices for the conversion of the non-believers in China, it enlarged its scope in its association with the salesian movement of *Gioventù Missionaria*. In the process of this association, it also acquired its own Statutes and extended its activities. In 1940 it was officially recognised and special spiritual favours were granted to its members. In 1948 the Statutes were officially approved by Don Pietro Ricaldone the then Rector Major. In 1953 Arcadio Larraona, in his capacity as the Secretary of the Sacred Congregation for Religious approved the Statutes and Regulations of the Association.¹²

Membership to *Apostolato dell'Innocenza* was open to any one who attended the various institutes of the FMAs. Boys and girls, interns and externs, students and girls who learned some trade at the various institutes were encouraged to enrol themselves in this missionary movement. It found a most enthusiastic acceptance, and was started in many of the institutes of the Sisters. In the initial period the association retained for the major part its local character in the sense that it depended solely on the local Superior.

¹⁰ Cfr. *Pie Associazioni Giovanili*, 55; *Origine dell'AGM Descritta da Don Giovanni Feignani*, in GM 36 (1958) 19, 8-9; ASC A 837, *Associazione Gioventù Missionaria*, 1.

¹¹ Cfr. ASC A 837, *Associazione Gioventù Missionaria*, 1.

¹² Cfr. *Pie Associazioni Giovanili*, 56-57. Since the extended scope and activities of *Apostolato dell'Innocenza* very much coincide with those of *Gioventù Missionaria*, they will be dealt with in a later section.

For quite some time there was no central co-ordination or direction. The life and activities of the local groups in the houses of the FMAs were under the direct supervision of the local Superior. In the process of its development, this missionary movement among the young who attended the FMA institutes came to be co-ordinated and animated by the Major Superiors of the Sisters in Turin. The local groups were required to send in regular report of its life and activities in predetermined forms. At the birth of GM, the periodical became the official organ of animation and communication among the various groups.

The ordinary activity of the *Apostolato dell'Innocenza* was centred around certain special days. Every Tuesday acquired a specially missionary character. The members were required to participate in the Eucharist and offer their Holy Communion on that day for the intention of the missions. Besides, they were invited to pray the Way of the Cross, the Rosary for the same intention. Their visits to the Blessed Sacrament, their other good works and prayers were to be offered every Tuesday precisely for the intention of the missions. Every Tuesday, the members reported their spiritual and material contribution to one responsible for the group who recorded them in a register for reporting them later on to the Superiors.¹³

Besides this weekly Mission day, special missionary solemnity was attributed to the 24th of the first month of the scholastic year, a day to re-launch the missionary programme of the year. The last Tuesday of the scholastic year too was kept with great solemnity to present to the general assembly of the members a summary of all that the local group had realised in the course of the year and to encourage them to do everything possible in favour of the missions during the period of vacations.¹⁴

***Gioventù Missionaria* – the salesian missionary association for the youth**

In the previous chapter, mention has been made about the missionary associations for young people that came up in the first

¹³ Cfr. *Pie Associazioni Giovanili*, 61-64.

¹⁴ Cfr. *Pie Associazioni giovanili*, 62-63.

two decades of the 20th century in some of the catholic countries of Europe. These associations had their periodicals which contributed not only to disseminate information about the various missions, but also served to inspire and sustain missionary vocations. Naturally, the religious congregations that inspired and maintained certain influence over these associations were the ones who benefited most from this flowering of missionary vocations. Though Italy had accepted enthusiastically and continued to propagate the Pontifical Missionary Societies, it did not have a missionary association properly its own for the school going boys and girls, nor a periodical to serve the missionary aspirations of this age group in the first two decades of the 20th century. Italy would have to wait as late as 1927 to see the birth of its Student Missionary league.

Initiation of Apostolato dell'Innocenza in the Salesian Institutions

It would appear from an anonymous reconstruction of the history of Gioventù Missionaria kept in the Salesian Central Archives that in the absence of missionary associations for the young, Fr. Samuel Vosti,¹⁵ under the inspiration of Fr. Philip Rinaldi initiated one such group for the young boys of the Salesian institute of Valdocco in 1919. The document mentioned above carries this report:

In 1919 Fr. Vosti, under the inspiration of Fr. Rinaldi attempted to exhume the “Apostolato dell’Innocenza” in the Salesian institutes calling it precisely “Associazione Gioventù Missionaria”. He gave it a minimum structure: prayer and a small monthly offering for salesian missionary vocations.¹⁶

The scope of this association keeping in line with that of the *Apostolato dell'Innocenza* was to support spiritually and materially

¹⁵ Samuele Vosti (1874 – 1939), even as a cleric was called by Fr. Michael Rua to the secretariat of the Superior Council. He was the director of Bollettino Salesiano and in charge of the official propaganda of the Congregation. For the youngsters of the salesian oratories he founded and sustained for many years the publication of a weekly folder entitled «Per la Gioventù». In 1919 he founded the missionary association—*Gioventù Missionaria* in Valdocco. Cfr. VALENTINI E. – A. RODINÒ (Eds.), *Dizionario Biografico dei Salesiani*, 297-298.

¹⁶ ASC A 837, *Associazione Gioventù Missionaria*, 1;

the salesian missions, and also to pray and to make a monthly offering for salesian missionary vocations. This association of Vosti had a purely local character. However, from the fact that he started a supplement to the «Bollettino Salesiano» entitled «Per la Gioventù» for the missionary animation of the young, and from his own memorandum to the Superior Council dated 14 December 1922, where he mentions that 10,000 have subscribed to this supplement, one would think that this association spread quickly to the other salesian institutions.¹⁷

Initiation of Gioventù Missionaria with specific scope and structure

From the document mentioned above it is not clear if in 1919 Vosti really intended to start an altogether new, independent organization for the boys of the Valdocco salesian institution, or all that he wanted was to plant in the salesian institutions what was already proving to be of great benefit in the institutions of the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians. The document's use of the phrase "*exhume the Apostolato dell'Innocenza*" makes the case all the more confusing! Was he "exhuming" something that existed also in the Salesian institutions, but some how had been buried? There does not seem to be documented support to think that the *Apostolato dell'Innocenza* existed also in the Salesian circles prior to the initiative of Vosti. What ever be the case, it would appear from the document mentioned earlier, that Vosti initiated a missionary association for the boys of the salesian institute of Valdocco, and named it *Gioventù Missionaria*. It is probable that this association remained quite localised, and came to public notice, received the active support of the Superiors, only in 1920.

Events leading up to the public recognition of Gioventù Missionaria

It would seem that two circular letters of Fr. Paul Albera had a major role to play in reawakening the whole Salesian Congregation to the need for committed efforts in promoting

¹⁷ Cfr. ASC A 837, *Associazione Gioventù Missionaria*, 1; ASC A 837, *Pro Memoria su Gioventù Missionaria e sul Periodico Missionario Salesiano*, Typescript of Samuele Vosti, Torino, 14 December 1922, 1.

vocations, particularly in view of the urgent calls coming from the various missions for additional personnel. The first, dated 19 March 1920, was originally addressed to the Salesian Provincial Superiors of Europe, but was later published on request, in the August issue of «Atti del Capitolo Superiore» of the same year. Re-echoing the words of Christ, Albera wrote:

The harvest is abundant indeed both in the East and in the West, but we do not have the labourers to gather it in! This is true for all Catholic Missions, but is more so for ours. Certainly, these were, so to say, born just yesterday! Yet they have had a prodigious growth, blossoming so wonderfully and bearing such rich fruits even in regions where other workers have worked with great zeal but in vain! Quite often, however, it happens that such fruits cannot be gathered even by us for the lack of a sufficient number of missionaries.¹⁸

The Rector Major pointed out how the World War I had not only emptied the few centres of missionary formation, but even quenched the missionary enthusiasm of many youngsters who otherwise held out great hopes for the successful realisation of a missionary vocation. Therefore he wrote:

A fatal stoppage [of vocations] has taken place! And unfortunately we will continue to feel the consequences of this for many more years to come if we do not engage ourselves in this area immediately with all our forces to reawaken the vocations that have in some way become dormant and to arouse new ones!¹⁹

To the possible objection from the Provincial Superiors that they themselves had no personnel even for their own institutes, Albera anticipated courageously,

The greater the number of missionaries that a province is able to send to the distant Americas, among the savages of Terra del Fuoco, Patagonia, Paraguay, Brazil, Ecuador, Africa, India,

¹⁸ ALBERA P., *Lettera sulle Missioni Salesiane e sulla Necessita di Provvedere Personale Idoneo per le Medesime*, in ACS 1(1920)2,28.

¹⁹ ALBERA P., *Lettera sulle Missioni Salesiane*, 28-29.

China and wherever we have our missions, the more numerous and illustrious will be the religious vocations with which the Lord will gift that province.²⁰

And for him that had been the experience of the Congregation so far. He wanted every salesian house to be a nursery of vocations especially for the congregation. He desired that the Provincial Superiors would speak about the missions in private and in public and create among the salesians and among the young a vibrant enthusiasm for the apostolate among the non-believers. He noted that the personnel whom every province could offer to the Rector Major for the various missions all over the world would be the most beautiful monument to Don Bosco.²¹

Albera followed up this his urgent appeal to provide personnel for the missions by another circular letter on vocations addressed to all the Salesians, in May 1921 published in the May issue of ACS of the same year.²² In this letter Albera insisted that the Salesian's love for the Congregation manifests itself in his continuous effort to increase the number of its members with a persevering search for and cultivation of salesian vocations, as new vocations were indispensable for the life and apostolate of the congregation.²³ The Rector Major expressed his personal pre-occupation about the fall in vocations and called for an examination of conscience on the part of the confreres. He wrote:

I have a feeling that not a few of us Salesians allow the loss of more than one vocation every year. Very often I take in my hands the statistics of our congregation, re-read the reports, compare them with those of the past.

²⁰ ALBERA P. , *Lettera sulle Missioni Salesiane*, 29.

²¹ Cfr. ALBERA P. , *Lettera sulle Missioni Salesiane*, 29-32. This was the time when the Salesians were thinking of erecting a beautiful monument to Don Bosco right in front of the Basilica of Mary Help of Christians in Turin. And therefore the reference to the monument to Don Bosco!

²² This issue of the ACS is in fact totally dedicated to the theme of vocations. The long letter of 42 pages of Paul Albera is followed by some of the recommendations of Don Bosco and Don Rua regarding the same theme. There is nothing else that is included in this issue.

²³ Cfr. ALBERA P. , *Lettera sulle vocazioni*. in ACS 2 (1921)4, 186.

And a sense of sadness overwhelms my heart at the realization that many of our hostels and schools which were once giving abundant and very good vocations now give very few or none at all!

I am very much aware of the difficulties of the times. However, it appears to me that if all of us were to be animated by that sacred fire of charity which burned in the heart of our Venerable Father, we would find many and adequate means to overcome them, or at least to render them less destructive.²⁴

Albera insisted that studying all the means to promote a greater number of vocations to the Congregation, and actualising all the means possible for the same, were to be considered a requirement for being a true son of Don Bosco. And in this task no one was to be exempted. "No one should believe that he is dispensed from doing his part. Instead all should compete with each other so that the number of vocations keep on increasing from one year to another."²⁵

Notification to the Superiors of the existence of Gioventù Missionaria

It was in response to the urgent appeal of Paul Albera to do everything possible to promote vocations to the congregation, that a group of boys of the Salesian institute of Valdocco sent a letter to him dated Turin, 16 July 1921.²⁶ In it they expressed their desire to co-operate with the Rector Major in this worthy undertaking. And to assure that their co-operation would be as wide spread, lasting and efficacious as possible, they notified to the Superior that the students and past pupils of the first Oratory of Don Bosco had already formed themselves into a permanent Missionary Association to promote and assist missionary vocations. They indicated that a sizeable group of the boys of the Oratory had already become members of this association, a provisional

²⁴ ALBERA P., *Lettera sulle vocazioni*, 197.

²⁵ ALBERA P., *Lettera sulle vocazioni*, 224.

²⁶ A transcript of this letter is given in Appendix .

committee had been created and a general outline of Statutes of the association had been drawn up. This provisional committee requested the approval and blessing of the Rector Major.²⁷

Along with this letter requesting the blessing and approval of the Rector Major, the provisional committee sent to the Superior the provisional statutes of the nascent organization. It was the first effort at defining the nature, the scope, activity and structure of the association. This two page document is entitled *Gioventù Missionaria per le vocazioni missionarie*. This title would point to the fact that the provisional committee is in the document speaking about the already existing association started by Don Vosti a year or so back. From this presentation of the association it would appear clear that *Gioventù Missionaria* did not mean to be a mere reproduction of *Apostolato dell'Innocenza* in the salesian institutions. The primary scope of *Gioventù Missionaria* was the promotion, formation and sustenance of missionary vocations. Therefore it was not to be a group that would just pray for the missions and the missionaries and contribute their little mite towards their varied undertakings. From the start it would appear clear that the focus of the group would be the missionary conscientization of the young and through this awareness motivate the young boys and girls to opt for a life of dedication as missionaries in distant lands.²⁸

Membership cf Gioventù Missionaria

According to the draft of the Statutes presented to Albera, membership to the group was open to all young boys and girls of the various salesian schools, hostels, professional schools, oratories. Even boys and girls outside the salesian circles could become members of the association. The statutes envisioned three types of members: *attivi*, *propagandisti* and *benemeriti*. The *attivi* were the one who took part in the various programmes on a regular basis.

²⁷ Cfr. ASC A 837, *Letter cf the Provisional Committee cf Gioventù Missionaria to Don Albera*, Typescript, Torino, 16 July 1921, 1.

²⁸ Cfr. ASC A 837, *Letter cf the Provisional Committee to Don Albera*, 2; *Azione Missionaria*, in GM 1(1923) 1, 13.

Propagandisti or *collettori* were the one who made themselves apostles of the association, they were to have the charge of making propaganda for the association as well as of collecting the little free offerings from members and outsiders, on them would depend the growth and success of the association. The *benemeriti* were those who supported the association especially with generous offerings.²⁹

Programme cf Gioventù Missionaria

In accordance with the command of Jesus “Ask the Lord of the harvest to send labourers into his vineyard” (Lk 10:2), the members were to have recourse to prayer as the primary means to arrive at the scope of the association. Besides their daily prayers, they would offer masses, holy communions, and rosaries for this intention. The second means was to consist in a direct campaign of propaganda to make known the sublimity and urgency of missionary vocations, and the need to do everything possible to promote, cultivate and sustain them spiritually and materially. The members would help to channel prospective vocations to the various missionary institutes. And thirdly the members promised to offer at least two *soldi* a month, or more for those who could afford more, for the maintenance of these vocations in the various institutions. Incapacity to contribute this small sum was by no means to be considered as a factor that prevented any one from membership in the group. Additional prayer would make up for one’s lack of financial means.³⁰

The privileges, the patrons, structure and organ cf Gioventù Missionaria

The preliminary statutes outlined the privileges that every member of the association would enjoy. They would have the joy to be co-operators with Jesus Christ in the salvation of souls. It was the right of every member to have a share in the merits of the prayers of the missionary aspirants. Though indirectly, they

²⁹ Cfr. ASC A 837, *Letter cf the Provisional Committee to Don Albera*, 2; *Azione Missionaria*, in GM 1 (1923) 1, 13-14.

³⁰ Cfr. ASC A 837, *Letter cf the Provisional Committee to Don Albera*, 2; *Azione Missionaria*, in GM 1 (1923) 1, 14.

would also participate in the pains, joys and merits of the zealous and sacrificing work of the missionaries in distant lands.³¹

Associazione Gioventù Missionaria chose as its patron Mary Help of Christians, and as its model Dominic Savio. The Rector Major himself would be the superior of the association. Besides, it would be directed and administered by a President, a Secretary and a Cashier, assisted by an Ecclesiastical Assistant, all nominated by the Superior himself. The missionary vocations inspired by the propaganda of the association would be directed first of all to the Superior, so also the offerings collected. The Salesian Bulletin would be the official organ of the association and the leaflet «Gioventù Missionaria»³² would be the means of propaganda and would be sent to the propagandists and any one who asked for them.³³

The approbation of Gioventù Missionaria

Don Albera responded to this letter expressing his great joy and satisfaction at the daring venture of these young boys. He wrote:

With great joy in my heart, I have read your beautiful letter of 16th July and taken note of the scheme of the Statutes of the Association “Gioventù Missionaria” for vocations, which

³¹ Immediately one notices the spiritual slant given to the movement. All the privileges deal with things that matter to the spirit, and there is no mention of any material advantage. Evidently it is characteristic of the spirit of the times. It points definitely to the emphasis the Salesians laid in their formation of the young. One would think of an ambience that was truly permeated by the spirit of “Da mihi animas, cetera tolle.” Cfr. ASC A 837, *Letter of the Provisional Committee to Don Albera*, 2; *Azione Missionaria*, in GM 1 (1923) 1, 14.

³² Unfortunately, copies of this propaganda material are not found in the archives. Don Vosti himself in his *Pro Memoria su Gioventù Missionaria e sul Periodico Missionario Salesiano*, mentions the existence of an additional leaflet to the Salesian Bulletin called “*Per la Gioventù*” that had already got a circulation of about 10,000. A later report of 1952 also, narrating the story of the review, makes mention of the leaflet “*Per la Gioventù*”. Cfr. ASC A 837, *Associazione Gioventù Missionaria*, 1.

³³ Cfr. ASC A 837, *Letter of the Provisional Committee to Don Albera*, 3. This letter is signed by Pivano Pietro (President), Pisani Luigi (Cashier) and Balma Gaspare (Secretary). The letter however makes no mention of Don Vosti. One would think however that he was the moving spirit behind this letter. Cfr. also *Azione Missionaria*, in GM 1 (1923) 1, 14.

you have in mind to plant among your companions of the first festive Oratory of Don Bosco, and to propagate among all catholic youngsters.³⁴

He emphasised once more that among the good works that one could do, the primacy of place was held by action in favour of promoting and sustaining priestly vocations. He reminded the boys that Don Bosco was a great promoter of priestly and religious vocations and that it would only be most fitting that the boys of his first oratory continue this cause so dear to his heart. He insisted that the primary scope of the association be always the promotion and cultivation of missionary vocations, to reawaken in the young the desire for apostolate. He imparted his paternal blessings to this initiative in these words:

Therefore, it is most appropriate that the first festive Oratory founded by him, [Don Bosco] and from which he drew out excellent vocations, makes itself in some way the agent of continuation of this apostolate of the father in a more regular and efficacious way through the Association just founded. I therefore impart to it my cordial blessing. I wish that the associates will be so numerous so that together you will be able to contribute the finance necessary not only for one, but many young people who feel the call to the missions.³⁵

In concluding the letter Paul Albera expressed his enthusiasm over this “magnificent plan” of these young boys. He concluded:

To work then! May our most gracious Help of Christians and the angelic servant of God, Dominic Savio, obtain for you all the strength and all the necessary help to realize your magnificent project, and in particular, the enlightenment to draw up the definitive Statutes and Regulations of the Association, because on it depends the success of the undertaking. I pray fervently for this grace, and certainly, Don Bosco will sustain my poor prayers with his powerful patronage.³⁶

³⁴ ASC A 837, *Reply cf Paul Albera to the Provisional Committee*. [s.d], 1.

³⁵ ASC A 837, *Reply cf Paul Albera to the Provisional Committee*, 1.

³⁶ ASC A 837, *Reply cf Paul Albera to the Provisional Committee*, 1.

Besides the blessing and encouragement of the Rector Major, the nascent association received the apostolic blessing of the Holy Father himself. From the letter dated 21 August 1921 of Cardinal Pietro Gaspari, the then Secretary of the State of Vatican, it would appear that Don Vosti had forwarded to the Holy See a copy of the Statutes of *Gioventù Missionaria*, asking for the blessing and the approval of the Holy Father. In reply, Cardinal Gaspari conveyed to Don Vosti the great joy that the Holy Father felt at the birth of the new association, and his great happiness to impart to the association the papal blessing. The letter states:

The Holy Father has received your letter in which you have made known to him the statutes and the programme of the new association “*Gioventù Missionaria*” and requested his Apostolic Blessing for the promoters and for the young affiliated to it.

[...] His Holiness cannot but accept favourably your request and wish a fervant blossoming to such a beautiful institution so much in conformity with the evangelical teaching. He imparts whole heartedly his Apostolic blessing to the promoters and to all the members of *Gioventù Missionaria*, invoking on it the choicest graces so that it will prove to be an instrument for the enlarging of the Kingdom of God. I pray that it will be the means of bringing to many who still live in the shadow of death, the supreme good of man: the grace of knowing Jesus Christ, the way, the truth and the life, and in this way assure peace of heart on this earth and an eternity fully joyful and perfect.³⁷

The initial development of Gioventù Missionaria

The idea of a missionary association for the young with the particular scope of missionary animation and promotion of missionary vocations aroused much enthusiasm among the young, among the clerics, and among the people in general. However voices that conveyed scepticism and indifference were not missing.

³⁷ ASC A 837. *Letter of the Secretary of State Cardinal Pietro Gaspari to Don Samuele Vosti*. Vatican, 21 August 1921. This letter was also published in the very first issue of GM. Cfr. *La Benedizione e i Voti del S.Padre*, in GM 1 (1923) 1, 14.

These argued that the new association was nothing but a useless duplication of the Pontifical Society of the Holy Childhood or the Pontifical Society for the Propagation of Faith. Vosti defended the individuality of the association by highlighting its specific scope. While the scope of the Pontifical Society of the Holy Childhood was primarily the collection of funds for the Chinese children, and that of the Pontifical Society for the Propagation of Faith was to collect funds for the various Catholic missions all over the world, *Gioventù Missionaria* had as its primary scope the promotion, and sustenance of missionary vocations. This fundamental orientation of the new association towards vocations was to be the characteristic that would differentiate it from all other existing missionary societies.³⁸ This argument of Vosti strengthened the position of all who were in favour of it and answered the question of those who inquired about the specificity of the proposed new association.

It would appear that with the sanctioning of the publication of the review GM in January 1923 by the Superior Chapter, the missionary association *Gioventù Missionaria* received the character of a movement that belonged to the Salesian Congregation as such. The Congregation intended to care for and propagate this movement of the youngsters in its various institutions especially by the publication of the new periodical.

Missionary associations like the Pontifical Society for the Propagation of Faith, the Pontifical Society of Holy Childhood, and others already present in Italy at the time of the founding of *Gioventù Missionaria* had been favoured by the granting of special spiritual blessings and especially indulgences from the part of the Holy See. Albera wrote to the Holy See requesting for similar spiritual favours on the nascent missionary association of the salesians. The Holy See granted the special spiritual blessings and indulgences to *Gioventù Missionaria* in June 1923. To every member was granted plenary indulgence on the day of registration, on the anniversary of their registration, on the following feasts of

³⁸ Cfr. ASC A 837, *Promemoria su Gioventù Missionaria*, 1.

the Lord: Christmas, Name feast of Jesus, Epiphany, Ascension, Pentecost, Trinity, on the following feasts of Our Lady: Purification, Annunciation, Assumption, Mary Help of Christians, Birth day, Presentation, Immaculate Conception; and the following feasts of the Saints: St. Francis of Sales, St. Francis Xavier. The members also gained partial indulgences every time that they recited the short invocation: “*Adveniat regnum tuum, fiat unum ovile et unus pastor*”, and every time that they did something for the missions or even procured a new subscription for the review. This sanction was valid for a period of seven years.³⁹ These same favours were renewed again in September 1930.⁴⁰ There was a further application for renewal of the same favours made by Fr. Peter Ricaldone, Rector Major, in 1937.⁴¹

On 24th October 1924, Pietro Ricaldone, the then Vicar of the Rector Major, sent out a circular letter to all the directors of the salesian institutions in Italy, in which he pointed out that it was the expressed desire of the then Rector Major, Philip Rinaldi, that every salesian house should start and develop the *Associazione Gioventù Missionaria* for promoting missionary apostolic spirit among the young, and with the specific scope of promoting missionary vocations and evoking offerings to form and sustain these vocations. Ricaldone desired that the oncoming celebration of the 50th anniversary of the Salesians missions would have the promotion of missionary vocations as one of its distinctive characteristics. In this context of a committed campaign for vocations, the letter urged the heads of the various institutions to do everything possible to make known the Association, establish sections of the said association in the schools, hostels and oratories, and constitute small committees to make the association active and

³⁹ Cfr. ASC A 837, *Letter of Philip Rinaldi to Sacra Poenitentiaria Apostolica C,fficium de Indulgentis*, Torino, 1 June 1923. The sanction of the indulgences is given in the same letter of Rinaldi. These indulgences were also published in GM. Cfr. GARNERI D., *Un Associazione Missionaria*, in GM 2 (1924) 10, 145.

⁴⁰ Cfr. –ASC A 837, –*Letter of Philip Rinaldi to Sacra Poenitentiaria Apostolica C,fficium de Indulgentis*, Torino, 1 September 1930.

⁴¹ Cfr. ASC A 837, *Letter of Pietro Ricaldone to Sacra Poenitentiaria Apostolica C,fficium de Indulgentis*, Torino, 20 September, 1937.

functional. The committee, besides working towards the establishment of the association and having charge of the same, was also to study and to promote activities that would serve to propagate the missionary ideal among the young.⁴²

It would appear that the birth of the missionary review GM, signalled the quick spread of the association. In fact, right from the start every subscriber was considered as a member of the association. Even before the completion of the first year of the review, the associates numbered 6,000.⁴³ By January 1924 the number of associates and subscribers shot up to 10,000.⁴⁴ It was not only a question of numbers. The salutary effects of this true missionary animation of the young boys of the salesian institutions brought about a noticeable change first of all in the spirit reigning in these institutions. It altered the ambience and charged it spiritually and missionarily. The various groups of boys who enthusiastically associated themselves with this new missionary movement in the salesian institutions, and the vigorous propaganda sponsored by the salesians in these institutions, contributed to give a missionary tone to these institutes. Domenico Garneri⁴⁵ as early as November 1924 testified to this when he wrote:

Enthusiastic sympathy for the missions is today the dominant note of all the salesian institutions of Italy and outside, and our young people are closely imitating their brothers of 1875.⁴⁶

The association, given the unstinted support of the salesians and especially of the Superiors experienced a great and continued growth in the initial years. By 1959 the membership of AGM reached an all high point of 30,000.⁴⁷

⁴² Cfr. ASC A 837, *Circular Letter of Ricaldone P.*, Torino, 24 October 1924.

⁴³ Cfr. *Leggete e Fate Leggere*, in GM 1 (1923) 10, i.

⁴⁴ Cfr. *Posta*, in GM 2 (1924) 1, iii.

⁴⁵ A more detailed sketch of the life of D. Garneri will be given in the section that deals with the Directors of GM.

⁴⁶ The first missionary expedition was sent out by Don Bosco to South America in November 1875. It certainly created great enthusiasm in the Oratory for the missions. Every one in some way or other wanted to be part of this great adventure. Therefore the reference to the happenings of 1875 is rather significant here. GARNERI D., *Giubileo delle Missioni Salesiane*, in GM 2 (1924) 11, 162.

⁴⁷ Cfr. *Cento Lettini per i Bimbi Naga*, in GM 37 (1959) 23, 45.

Attention to cater to the psychological needs of a youth association

The central direction of Gioventù Missionaria was attentive to the youthful nature of the association. Aware of the desire of young groups for features that distinguish them from other groups and associations, the central direction adopted “*Adveniat regnum tuum*” as the motto of the group. Along the lines of the Scout movement it invented a mode of greeting each other among the associates. The members would greet each other by the simple word “ART” which were the first letters of the three words that formed their motto. The direction proposed the short invocation “*Adveniat regnum tuum, fiat unum ovile et unus pastor*” as the one to be preferred by the associates. A round badge was also coined for the use of the members, representing a ship in the open sea with the cross on its sails, and the phrase from the Gospel “*Andate per tutto il mondo, predicate il vangelo ad ogni creatura*” (Mk. 16:15) inscribed around it. This badge, however, was not imposed on all the members. The Central administration also issued a kind of an Identity Card for the associates that had on it the emblem of the association, the blessing of the Holy See, the statutes of the association, and a kind of a personal register where the member could daily enter all that was done in favour of the missions.⁴⁸

The temporary lull and the energetic re-launching of AGM

No doubt the initiation of the review GM signalled a period of great popularity for the youth missionary association, and its establishment in the institutes of the Salesians all over Italy and even outside. However, it would appear that after the initial euphoria of the first years, in the second half of the 1930s, more attention was dedicated to the review itself and its circulation than to the nurturing and maturing of the association as such. An anonymous report in the Central Salesian Archives goes to the extent of speaking of “the neglect and complete destruction” of the association in this period. The name “Associazione Gioventù Missionaria” remained, and every subscriber to the monthly review “Gioventù Missionaria” came to be considered a member of the Association. It would appear

⁴⁸ Cfr. *L'A.G.M. nel suo Cinquantesimo di Vita*, Torino, AGM, 1958, 17.

that the only activity characteristic of the associates was to subscribe to the periodical. The report has this harsh tone:

The Italian edition of the review “Gioventù Missionaria” saw the light of day in the year 1923. [...] For the Association, this event initiated a short-lived period of great popularity [...] followed however, by one of neglect and complete destruction. The title crystallized in this form: “Association of Gioventù Missionaria” and the members were confused for the subscribers of “Gioventù Missionaria”.

This moment is the beginning of the end of the active story of the Association. It comes to be absolutely forgotten (and ignored by even the major Superiors). No one spoke of it any more; all that they talked about was the review “Gioventù Missionaria”. That was at the beginning of the 1930s.⁴⁹

This lack of attention and care to nurture the association gradually had its adverse effects on the periodical itself. GM that had reached a circulation of about 20,000 within the initial years was reduced to 3,500 towards the end of the 1930s! It was evident that both the monthly review as well as the association needed to be revamped, re-energised, re-organised. In this situation, Pietro Berruti⁵⁰ intended gradually to renew the editorial board and with Demetrio Zucchetti worked towards revitalising the association. It was clear that the editorial success of the review had to go beyond the review itself and operate at the level of an association that was already there only to be reawakened.⁵¹

AGM – The new face of the salesian missionary association

At this re-starting of *Gioventù Missionaria* little attention was paid to drawing up the definitive Statutes and Regulations of the

⁴⁹ ASC A 837, *Associazione Gioventù Missionaria*, 1.

⁵⁰ Pietro Berruti (1885 – 1950), left for the South American missions as a young cleric. From 1927 to 1932 he was the Provincial Superior of Chile. In 1932 he was elected Prefect General of the salesian Congregation and Vicar of the Rector Major. He held this post till his death. Cfr. VALENTINI E.– A. RODINÒ (Eds.), *Dizionario Biografico dei Salesiani*, 37.

⁵¹ Cfr. ASC A 837, *Associazione Gioventù Missionaria*, 2; *Associazione Gioventù Missionaria*. Torino, SEI, [s.d.], 18-19.

organization. The relaunching of the organization was at the centre of attention, and it was thought that in the course of experience a suitable set of statutes and regulations would naturally evolve. Much was left to the initiative of the local groups.⁵² The immediate concern of those responsible for the renewal was to revive the association and give it a new and attractive face to invite every youngster to become a member of it. In November 1941 the central direction brought out a four page folder that explained the scope, activity and basic structure of the renewed missionary youth association.

The relaunching of the *Associazione Gioventù Missionaria*, then on to be simply called AGM, sought more to organise an activity than to organise persons. What was thought of in this re-organization was not the establishment of the AGM in the various Salesian institutions as a separate association as such, along side with the other associations already in existence at the period. AGM would be sections in the already existing groups, and at the same time be above the particular groups. This mode of re-organization sought to avoid possible initial antagonism and opposition. This was the principle approved by Berruti.⁵³

AGM – the salesian youth missionary association

The renewed AGM was launched in November 1941. The Rector Major himself was to be the Director of the Association, assisted by the Secretary of the Association, the editor of GM and the missionaries who would be the propagandists of the association.⁵⁴ *Gioventù missionaria* was born in the salesian ambience primarily for the youngsters of the salesian institutions. In its re-organization, it was evident that this association would remain part of the salesian heritage, though extending its boundaries to embrace non-salesian institutions too.

It was also clear that the initiative for the re-vitalisation of the association and the re-organization of the editorial board of the

⁵² Cfr. ASC A 837, *Associazione Gioventù Missionaria*, 3.

⁵³ Cfr. ASC A 837, *Associazione Gioventù Missionaria*, 2.

⁵⁴ Cfr. ASC A 837, *A.G.M. Associazione Gioventù Missionaria*, Printed folder of AGM, Torino, 1 Novembre 1941, 1-2.

periodical GM that served also as the central direction of the association, became a matter of direct concern to the salesian Superiors in Turin. In fact, Pietro Ricaldone, in his capacity of Vicar of the Rector Major, wrote to the Rectors of the Salesian institutions requesting their active support for the re-establishment and re-organization of the association, and for the diffusion of the review.⁵⁵

The actual co-ordination and animation of the AGM was entrusted to the initiative of the editorial board of GM, especially to the director, who became the secretary of the whole association. In line with the scope of the AGM, it was the duty of the central direction to encourage initiatives and to organise and promote activities in the various institutions that would contribute to an efficacious catholic and missionary formation of the young. It would also offer within the limited possibilities, opportunities for study, formation, culture, propaganda and other such activities which promote the scope of the association or serve directly or indirectly the salesian missions.⁵⁶

Introduction cf a new emphasis in the scope cf AGM

The above mentioned folder published from the central direction projected AGM as an association that was by nature formative with a triple scope: promotion and sustenance of missionary vocations, collaboration with the Catholic missions according to the directives of the Holy Father and of the Rector Major, and promotion of missionary culture. Although the association collected funds for the missions, this particular activity was not mentioned as one of the scopes of the movement.⁵⁷ *Gioventù Missionaria* of Don Vosti had for its scope the promotion and sustenance of missionary vocations. At this relaunching of the association, this goal was kept in view; with a new emphasis on missionary formation and the propagation of a missionary culture. This formative and cultural aspect would distinguish AGM from other similar associations which had made the study of the missions

⁵⁵ Cfr. ASC A 837, *Letter cf Pietro Ricaldone to the Rectors*, Torino, 1 November 1941.

⁵⁶ Cfr. ASC A 837, *Associazione Gioventù Missionaria*, 3.

⁵⁷ Cfr. ASC A 837, *A.G.M. Associazione Gioventù Missionaria*, 1.

or the collection of funds for the missions their primary scope. The clarification was a safeguard against the not too rare accusation of useless duplication of associations.⁵⁸

GM was projected as one of the chief organs for missionary formation and the spreading of a missionary culture particularly among the young people. Therefore one of the un-announced scopes of the association was also the greater diffusion of the periodical. Every member, besides being a subscriber to the periodical, was encouraged to become a propagandist for the same.⁵⁹

Obligations and Advantages of the Associates

According to this folder, in view of the new emphasis in the scope of the organization, the obligations of the members consisted in praying for missionary vocations and for the missions, making an annual offering of L.1 as registration fees, and registering themselves with at least one of the three Pontifical Missionary Societies. The members were entitled to the following advantages: co-operating more actively in the work of evangelisation of the peoples, benefiting from the spiritual favours bestowed on the association, receiving annually a booklet of missionary animation from the central direction, and a reduction of L.0.50 in the subscription fees of GM.⁶⁰

Membership

AGM proposed to be a missionary association of the youth and so it was primarily meant for the youth. However adults were not excluded from its membership. One could be a member of the association either individually, not belonging to any group in the salesian institutes, or precisely by belonging to one of the groups in the various institutions.⁶¹ It was clear that the AGM was not meant to be an elite group in the salesian houses. To fulfil its scope of missionary formation of the young, it had to be as extensive as possible, and therefore embrace every one in its fold.

⁵⁸ Cfr. ASC A 837, *Associazione Gioventù Missionaria*, 2-3.

⁵⁹ Cfr. ASC A 837, *A.G.M. Associazione Gioventù Missionaria*, 4.

⁶⁰ Cfr. ASC A 837, *A.G.M. Associazione Gioventù Missionaria*, 2.

⁶¹ Cfr. ASC A 837, *A.G.M. Associazione Gioventù Missionaria*, 2.

Vosti had stipulated in his founding of the association that the benefits from the movement in form of new vocations and financial contributions be primarily addressed to the Salesian congregation. At its relaunching this orientation was maintained. However, it was felt that the movement should not be limited by the salesian missions, instead it should take on a truly Catholic character.⁶² There was an explicit project to extend the organization to non-salesian institutions and become truly a youth missionary association.⁶³

The Vital cell of the Association

It was the local group that was to be the vital cell of the movement, the ambience for animation, formation and realisation of the scope of the association. The constitution of the local group was to be very simple. It was made up of persons who officially registered themselves in the association. No ceiling was put on the number of members of a particular group. It was an open group. In the salesian context, even those who did not form part of other associations then existing in these institutions, could form part of AGM. There was no imposition from the central direction as regards the internal life and activity of the local group. These matters were left to the initiative and creativity of the local group, especially its leadership. However, the central direction could offer guidelines and suggestions and request report with the view of information and publication in GM.⁶⁴

The central direction offered the following structure for the efficient management of the group. The *capo-gruppo* was the one responsible for the local group. Since AGM formed part of the salesian institutions, it was proposed that the Rector of the house be the Director of the group – an honorary charge; while the *capo-gruppo* would be the Catechist. The presidents of the other associations present in the house would be automatically considered

⁶² Cfr. ASC A 837, *Associazione Gioventù Missionaria*, 3.

⁶³ Cfr. ASC A 837, *Cinquantesimo dell'Associazione Gioventù Missionaria*, 3.

⁶⁴ Cfr. ASC A 837, *A.G.M. Associazione Gioventù Missionaria*, 2-3.

as assistant leaders. Each group would have a secretary, appointed by the *capo-gruppo* in consultation with the Rector. The mode of recruitment of the members was to be decided by the leader of the group. For a central co-ordination and recognition of the group, the local group was required to send the list of the associates to the Central direction of the AGM.⁶⁵

The relation between AGM and Apostolato dell'Innocenza in the relaunching of AGM

It would seem that in the process of the renewal of the AGM there was serious thought given to a greater unification of *Apostolato dell'Innocenza* and AGM. So far the two associations had lived and functioned side by side. *Apostolato dell'Innocenza* flourished in the institutions of the FMAs and the *Gioventù Missionaria* in the institutions of the SDBs. Except for being bound together by the common periodical GM, it would seem that there was not much co-ordination of life and activity among the two associations.⁶⁶

The differences between Apostolato dell'Innocenza and Gioventù Missionaria

From the documentation preserved in the Central Archives of the Salesians, it would appear that it was widely acknowledged that both the associations were missionary in character, had practically the same scope possibly with varying emphasis, and the same activities. However, at the relaunching of AGM, the differences between the two associations seem to have created some problem, particularly in the effort to unite the two associations.

While the *Gioventù Missionaria* as an association, after the initial flowering, was almost reduced to non-existence, the *Apostolato dell'Innocenza* assumed a physiognomy and personality all its own and continued to flourish in the institutions of the FMAs ever since its initiation back in 1908. The regular reports that the local groups were required to send to the mother house, helped to keep the

⁶⁵ Cfr. ASC A 837, *A.G.M. Associazione Gioventù Missionaria*, 3-4.

⁶⁶ Cfr. ASC A 837, *Differenze tra AGM e AI*, Typescript anonymous, [s.d.], 1.

movement alive and active. This missionary association entered into the official mechanism of the Institute. Their General Chapters and general superiors showed great interest in this movement. The yearly report from the groups kept the centre well informed about the various activities in the different institutions, and the general superiors followed up this association by monthly circulars. Thus *Apostolato dell'Innocenza* was an organisation that was cared for at the highest level of the Institute. The sisters also jealously guarded their association and its independence from *Gioventù Missionaria*.

Besides the difference in the process of development of the two associations, there were also others which at the moment of relaunching AGM aroused a greater eagerness for a greater unification of the two for the mutual advantage of both the groups. While the *Gioventù Missionaria* had been granted special spiritual favours and indulgences, the *Apostolato dell'Innocenza* remained without them. In the renewed programme of the AGM the aspect of missionary formation and promotion of missionary culture had received primacy of place, while this aspect was quite absent in *Apostolato dell'Innocenza*. It was relatively easier for the salesians to introduce AGM in non salesian structures and thus make the movement one that had a universal appeal. *Apostolato dell'Innocenza* remained for most part an association connected only with the institutions of the FMAs.⁶⁷

Mode of unification of Apostolato dell'Innocenza and AGM

From the circumstances, it was felt that the total fusion of the two organizations into just one movement was neither convenient nor necessary. In the re-organization of the AGM, it was felt that AI could continue its activities as earlier, preserve its own organization and mode of operation, especially its dependence on the General Direction of the FMAs, and continue to channel to this central direction all the offerings of its members. However, a kind of adhesion to the AGM was desired so that this feminine wing too would take advantage of the spiritual benefits, and more,

⁶⁷ Cfr. ASC A 837, *Differenze tra AGM e AI*, 1-4.

cultivate the dimension of formation and promotion of missionary culture. No change of name or structure was called for, but a simple adhesion to the AGM by sending to the central direction of the AGM the names of the members of the AI, to be registered anew with AGM. As the associates of the AGM did, so too the members of the AI would send annually to the central direction of AGM an offering of L.1 per member, and in turn receive from the central direction certain material for missionary animation.⁶⁸

AGM recognised AI as the best actualisation of its programme in the feminine context and therefore wanted to respect it and do whatever possible for its promotion. What was proposed in the process of this renewal of the AGM was to integrate the AI with the AGM in its programme of missionary formation and promotion of missionary culture. AGM however, would not interfere with the internal organization and activity of the groups. The AI would continue to depend on its Central direction in the Mother house of the FMAs. However, it would also submit its annual reports to the central direction of the AGM.⁶⁹

AGM – Effects of its relaunching

All these efforts at relaunching AGM bore abundant fruit. Within a short time the review itself arrived at a subscription of 28,000. The idea of AGM was diffused in the salesian institutions creating a renewed awareness of the missions. About 12,000 copies of *Catechismi Missionari*⁷⁰ were distributed to the associates, various conferences of culture and propaganda were held, the first film strips were brought out during this period, and various picture

⁶⁸ Cfr. ASC A 837. *Differenze tra AGM e AI*. 1-3.

⁶⁹ Cfr. ASC A 837. *Differenze tra AGM e AI*. 4.

⁷⁰ These consisted of two booklets brought out by SEI in 1943, dealing with the problems of the missions in question and answer form. Each of the books had five chapters. The 5 chapters of the first booklet dealt with: the problem of eternal salvation, the divine command of Christ, the Catholic Missions, the foundation and consolidation of the Church and the Evangelical workers. The second booklet instead dealt with the missionary work, the results of the missions today, the certainty of tomorrow, missionary co-operation, and particular missionary co-operation.

post cards of the missions were printed and distributed. This activity had to be suspended in the time of the World War II, and AGM's Central Body's activity was reduced to the editing of the review only. However, with the cessation of the war, the AGM soon returned to its activities prior to the period of the war. It was commonly accepted that the AGM had its role to play in the promotion of many missionary vocations, and the congregation looked to this movement to bear more fruits for the missions.⁷¹

By 1947 the AGM counted about 20,000 associates in about 300 groups. And the total issue of the review was 17,000.⁷² In a report prepared by Zucchetti on the occasion of its 50th anniversary (1958) he stated that by that time there were about 2000 groups of the association spread out in the various other associations found in the salesian institutions all over the world, and of these about 600 groups were to be found in the salesian institutions of Italy. And a similar number of groups of the AGM were to be found in the institutions of the FMAs in Italy.⁷³

In the same report, Zucchetti spoke of the incalculable good that AGM had done, the spiritual and material help extended to the missionaries all over the world, particularly in the field of arousing and sustaining missionary vocations. According to him, many of these youngsters found in the association a suitable nursery for their vocation.⁷⁴ This aspect was testified to by the fact that within a space of 10 years from the initiation of the Association, the Salesians opened as many as 10 aspirantates for the nurturing of missionary vocations! And the total number of missionary aspirants in these various institutes rose to 1000.⁷⁵

⁷¹ Cfr. ASC A 837, *Associazione Gioventù Missionaria*, 4.

⁷² Cfr. ASC A 837, *Report of Don Zucchetti*, Torino, 2 August 1947.

⁷³ Cfr. ASC A 837, *Cinquantesimo dell'Associazione Gioventù Missionaria*, 3; *L.A.G.M. nel suo Cinquantesimo di Vita*, 10.

⁷⁴ Cfr. ASC A 837, *Cinquantesimo dell'Associazione Gioventù Missionaria*, 2.

⁷⁵ Cfr. ASC A 837, *Pro-memoria per l'Associazione Gioventù Missionaria*, Typescript – anonymous, [s.d.]. This report was prepared at the occasion of the 50th anniversary of the priestly ordination of Philip Rinaldi.

The golden jubilee celebration of AGM

One of the important mile stones in the life of AGM was no doubt the celebration of its golden jubilee in 1958.⁷⁶ The celebration consisted in a 10 day programme of prayer, study and communion, that lasted from the 1st to 12th of July 1958, held at S. Fosca di Selva di Cadore. It was a great gathering of the young associates of AGM from all over Italy. The presence of Mons. Michele Arduino, former Bishop of Shiu Chow expelled from China added a special tone to the celebration, so too the presence of young clerics from China, Japan and India who were pursuing their ecclesiastical studies in Italy.⁷⁷

Each day of the celebration had a special theme and intention for prayer, and these themes formed the matter for study and discussion during the day. Some of the themes that received special attention were: The Holy Father – the great missionary, the Catholic Missions, Missionary vocations, missionary collaboration, the silent Church, the Salesian missions.⁷⁸

The Holy Father sent a message to the youngsters gathered at S. Fosca dated Vatican, 7 May, 1958. After expressing great happiness at the celebration of the golden jubilee of the association, the letter invited the participants to greater commitment to the missionary ideal:

The festive celebration of the 50th anniversary will not be for the beloved sons and daughters just a sterile commemoration. Instead, from much that has been done, they intend now to turn their desire and their will to what remains to be done to promote among themselves and others the missionary culture, to share their missionary ideals with the people of their own

⁷⁶ It is interesting to note how 1958 was actually the 50th anniversary of the birth of Apostolato dell’Innocenza, and not of Associazione Gioventù Missionaria, the association started by don Vosti in the Oratory of Valdocco. The fact shows how much AGM had accepted AI as part of it, and traced its origins not merely to the association of Vosti, but to the origins of the missionary movement among the institutes of the FMAs.

⁷⁷ Cf. ASC A 837, *Cinquantesimo dell Associazione Gioventù Missionaria*, 1-2.

⁷⁸ Cf. ASC A 837, *Cinquantesimo dell Associazione Gioventù Missionaria*, 3

age, to arouse and help vocations, to be in all ways possible good auxiliary rearguards of those who are engaged in the frontlines for the peaceful spread of Christianity.⁷⁹

In response to this message of the Holy Father, at the end of the ten days of study and prayer, the young people gathered at the meeting came out with one unanimous resolution to commit themselves fully to make the AGM alive and operative in every hostel, oratory, parish, convinced that AGM stood for the practical actualisation of missionary Catholicism.⁸⁰

Further structuration cf AGM

In 1942 a little booklet was brought out with the title, *Associazione Gioventù Missionaria*, explaining the history, the scope, and activity of the association. It gave general rules for the efficient running of the group, however, abstaining from establishing a set of fixed rules and regulations.

C, fice bearers cf the local units.

The celebration of the 50th anniversary of the foundation of AI was the occasion of the publication of a booklet *L'A.G.M. nel suo Cinquantesimo di Vita*. The booklet offered something new by way of re-structuring the local units. It suggested an introduction of some more office bearers into the governing body of the local units. The *capo-gruppo* remained the one ultimately responsible for the group and its activities. While the structure suggested in 1941 recommended that the Catechist of the house be the *capo gruppo*, *L'A.G.M. nel suo cinquantesimo di vita* indicated that the Catechist of the house be the Assistant. There is no indication as to who is to be the *capo-gruppo*. Every group was to have besides a secretary and a philatelist. The presidents and vice-presidents of the various other associations found their place again among the office bearers of the AGM as envisaged in the earlier re-organization of the association in 1941.⁸¹

⁷⁹ ASC A 837, *Letter cf Mons Angelo Dell'Acqua – Substitute cf Secretary cf State cf Vatican, Vatican*, 7 May 1958.

⁸⁰ Cfr. ASC A 837, *Cinquantesimo dell'Associazione Gioventù Missionaria*, 2.

⁸¹ Cfr. *L'A.G.M. nel suo Cinquantesimo di Vita*, 14-15.

Duties of the office bearers of the local units

The *capo gruppo* fixed the weekly or monthly meetings. He was required to prepare what was needed to be communicated to the group regarding the various activities proposed by the Central Direction. He was responsible for getting the group to prepare well ahead of time the missionary days. He saw to the maintenance of the correspondence with the missionaries. He invited the missionaries to address the group during the meetings. Together with the Assistant, the leader of the group prepared the agenda of the meetings. He was held responsible for submitting periodical reports to the Central Administration of the Association.⁸²

It was the duty of the Assistant to expose a missionary thought at the beginning of the meetings of the group. He kept alive the spiritual activity of the association. He helped those who gave conferences. He kept a constant check on the advancement of the life and activity of the group and served as a general counsellor for the well running of the group.

The Secretary's duties included the maintenance of the minutes of the meetings of the group, preparation of the notice board, keeping a record of the activities of the group, especially report of the weekly missionary day, and supervision of the little library of the group.

The philatelist promoted the collection of used postal stamps. He forwarded them to the Centre of stamp collection in Turin, and supervised the collection and sale of waste-paper, the collection of illustrated postcards etc.⁸³

The duties of the members of AGM

Every member was expected to participate in the weekly or monthly meetings, take active part at the various programmes organised by the group, collaborate at the preparation of the various missionary days in the hostel, Oratory, parish. As a sign of their

⁸² Cfr. *L'A.G.M. nel suo Cinquantesimo di Vita*, 15.

⁸³ Cfr. *L'A.G.M. nel suo Cinquantesimo di Vita*, 15-16.

loyalty to the association, they would do everything possible to make propaganda for GM. The members were also required to collaborate at the preparation and management of the exhibitions, lotteries, and other such activities specially aimed at raising funds for the missions. They also had the right to suggest other initiatives to make known and help the missions.⁸⁴

The meetings of the local unit

The local groups were to hold regular meetings. The primary motive of these meetings was to pray for the missions. It was also to be a time for reporting and planning the various activities of the group. These meetings also were to be occasions for the members to listen to a conference on some missionary theme, and these conferences were to be followed by discussion in the group. The groups took advantage of the missionaries who returned to Italy for their vacations, to have them give conferences and talks to the groups. These conferences by the missionaries themselves added fresh enthusiasm to the groups. The regular meetings were considered indispensable for the life and activity of the group.⁸⁵

Conclusion

Great things begin often with just one soul being fired with an idea. However, if these things are not just one time achievements, instead are new trends that help to bring about a better spirit, they need to be made into a movement. Heroes are just individual persons, but it is a fact of history that these same heroes gather around them lesser heroes who share in their spirit, and who in turn transmit their spirit to others. Greater the capacity to gather following, and animate the followers with the true spirit that forms the ideals of the founders, greater the efficacy of the movement. This was the case with Associazione Gioventù Missionaria – not merely a missionary club, but a real missionary movement for the young.

⁸⁴ Cfr. *L.A.G.M. nel suo Cinquantesimo di Vita*, 16.

⁸⁵ Cfr. *L.A.G.M. nel suo Cinquantesimo di Vita*, 17.

Information aimed at formation which was again directed to some direct action in favour of the missions was the scope of the movement. It was question of creating a missionary culture! Every culture is a human creation, often just the unconscious product of a group of people living together. Little thought is given in most cases to purposeful creating of a culture. But the story of AGM proves that a culture can also be created purposefully, and it was done! No one needs to raise his hands up in sheer despair at the corruption that is creeping into all spheres of contemporary culture, or sit back and do nothing. There is a process of creating a culture where authentic values have their proper place, and the human soul generously respond to the call to self-transcendence.

Not everyone becomes a saint! But there is a saint asleep in the heart of every one, who needs to be woken up and set on a purposeful journey forward. Not all will reach the proposed goals, but it is worthwhile even awakening the desire in the heart of the individual for things apparently a little beyond reach. Not every one in the AGM became a saint, or a missionary, or some one great in society or in the Church. It was good enough that they were for some time under the soothing shades of this umbrella, felt the warmth of the association, and carried on their lives, touched in some way by their experience.

CHAPTER 6

THE PERIODICAL “GIOVENTÙ MISSIONARIA”

The very name of the periodical points to its strict connection with the missionary youth association *Gioventù Missionaria*. It would be difficult to separate one from the other. The progress and likewise the stagnation of one had direct repercussions on the progress and stagnation of the other. The periodical then can be seen not only as an organ of animation and information of the association, but as a real expression of it. As the circulation expanded, the association expanded, as the circulation was reduced, so too the association stagnated. It was the periodical that kept alive and vibrant the association and the association that accounted for the progress of the periodical and acquired for it new subscribers who often automatically became members of the association.

The missionary youth association *Gioventù Missionaria* was the point of study in the previous section. This present section will examine the foundation, the characteristics, the evolution, the directors and contributors of the periodical GM. The purpose of this part of the study is to arrive at a correct image of the periodical itself and to grasp the rationale that motivated the initiation, the continuation, the progress and development of this committed undertaking of the salesian congregation in favour of the young.

Precursors of GM

In the period of the renewal of missionary enthusiasm and commitment in Europe particularly in the second half of the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th century, when missionary literature, especially by way of periodicals, was rather abundant, the only periodical that the Salesians had for diffusion of information about their missions was the “*Bollettino Salesiano*”, a

monthly that had been started by Don Bosco himself. The coverage that the periodical gave to the various salesian missions was ample proof of the great interest of its editorial staff in the missions and their eagerness to keep the readers informed about the various events therein. It also testified to the desire of the Salesians, not only to inform the readers about the missionary activities of the salesians, but also to involve them in that great activity by means of support, both spiritual and material. However, the periodical was the official organ of the Association of the Salesian Co-operators, and not the organ of the Salesian missions as such. Its main purpose was the animation of this association of men and women and keeping alive their allegiance to the Congregation. It carried reports of events that had in any way some importance in the life and activity of the Salesian congregation, and consequently also on the Association of the Co-operators. It carried reports of the missions because it was one of the great undertakings of the congregation, and because these reports about distant lands and their peoples captivated the attention of the readers, and served to arouse greater generosity by way of financial assistance to the Congregation.

As an organ of the Association of the Salesian Co-operators "*Bollettino Salesiano*" was addressed specifically to the members of this association, most of whom were grown ups. There was little that was addressed directly to the young people. Published for the co-operators, the periodical entered their families, and one would easily think that it was read with eagerness by every one in the family. One would also think that even the children of the family read, or had read to them the interesting and captivating reports about salesian missionary activity. Still, it was not a periodical that catered directly and specifically to the needs of the young. Therefore as in the case of the absence of a missionary association for the young in the salesian institutions of Italy, so too in the absence of a missionary review for the young that would address the needs of the school going boys and girls of Italy, there was a feeling among the salesians that something had to be done.

Some time after the starting of the association *Gioventù Missionaria* at Valdocco, and its initial spread to the other institutions, Vosti took the initiative of adding a supplementary four

page folder to “Bollettino Salesiano”, entitled “Per la Gioventù”. As the title itself would suggest, it was addressed to the young. The purpose of this initial supplementary publication was precisely to interest the young boys and girls in the salesian missions all over the world. Vosti in his capacity of the Director of the “Bollettino Salesiano” wanted to address the need of these young people for information about happenings in the missions. In the process of information, this little instrument served also the purpose of animating the young readers in missionary spirit and creating among them enthusiasm for the missions. It gradually became an organ of the association started by him.¹

The approval of the foundation of GM by the Superior Council of the Salesians

The publication of a missionary review for the young was first taken up in the Superior Council of the Salesian Congregation in its sitting of 3rd August 1922. It was occasioned by the printing of a propaganda leaflet entitled «Gioventù Missionaria» by Vosti. The first reaction of the Council towards the feasibility of a new missionary periodical was negative. It was the opinion of the Council members that although “Bollettino Salesiano” was the official organ of the Salesian Co-operators, it had always been an organ of diffusion of information about the Salesian missions. Therefore there was no need for a further periodical solely for the purpose of diffusing information about the salesian missions. It would only be an unnecessary duplication of matters. What the Council desired in this sitting was that the “Bollettino Salesiano” continue its missionary character, and initiate a section dedicated to reports coming in from the various groups of the Gioventù Missionaria. To encourage further the new association, it was suggested that the editors of the Bollettino bring out an issue, at the earliest possible, totally dedicated to the missions.²

¹ Cfr. ASC A 837, *Pro Memoria su Gioventù Missionaria*, 1.

² Cfr. ASC D 872, *Verbali delle Riunioni Capitolari*, vol 4, 30 July 1919 – 23 December 1926, 132-133.

This decision did not silence the voice of those who insisted on the need to found a specifically missionary periodical for the young. Not that there were no other missionary periodicals for the young already in circulation at the time. There existed quite a few of them!³ However, it was felt that almost all these missionary reviews, though meant for the young boys and girls, were of a severe character, and were more adapted to the University students. There was little or nothing that catered to the needs of the boys and girls of the middle schools, the primary schools, the professional schools and the Oratories. The need was felt to provide an instructive, well documented, yet simple and lively missionary periodical for young people of this group.⁴

After the first discussion on the matter in the Superior Chapter, and the subsequent decision to reserve a section in *Bollettino Salesiano* for *Gioventù Missionaria*, Vosti requested in writing the Superior Council for the foundation of a periodical that would serve as the official organ of the association *Gioventù Missionaria*. In his request he expressed that such a periodical was requested by many as an organ for the propaganda of the association, to serve as a means of communication between the various groups. As for its contents, the periodical would report the more interesting, edifying and significant episodes in the salesian missions, and in the missions of the other congregations and institutes. He was certain that a periodical of this type would do a world of good among its young readers. It would serve as an efficacious means for promoting vocations, arousing sympathy and enthusiasm for the missions, and would indeed initiate a truly great missionary movement among the young.⁵

To reinforce his argument for the urgency of such a periodical he wrote:

³ Mention has been made of them earlier.

⁴ Cfr. GARNERI D. *Le Associazioni Studentesche in Favore delle Missioni*, in GM 10 (1932), 6, 102.

⁵ Cfr. ASC A 837, *Pro Memoria su Gioventù Missionaria*, 1.

Almost all other Orders and Congregations which have Missions have their own periodicals for the young. The Missionary Institutes of Milan and of Parma have them, so too the Jesuits, the Franciscans and the Dominicans. We have been left behind in this aspect. The “*Bollettino Salesiano*” alone cannot satisfy the need. Therefore, many of our youngsters are forced to subscribe the missionary periodicals of the other non-Salesian Institutes. In some of our hostels there are 20, 30, 50 of those who have subscribed the “*Italia Missionaria*” and other such periodicals.⁶

Vosti was of the opinion that the periodical could immediately start with an initial circulation of 10,000 copies, as that was practically the number of subscriptions for «*Per la Gioventù*». From the letter of Vosti, it would appear that even a kind of editorial board for the proposed review was already formed! Domenico Garneri would willingly accept to be the Director of the review and work together with others who manifested some talent in the editorial field. The clerics who were pursuing their studies in Turin would be only too happy to be of help to the publication of the periodical. Vosti opined that financial considerations were not to hamper the publication as he hoped that the subscription fees would pay for the expenses.⁷

The topic of a missionary periodical was taken up again in the sitting of the Superior Council of 14th December 1922. Don Ricaldone reported that on the basis of a happy reawakening of missionary enthusiasm among the young in the various salesian institutions, many salesians had requested the launching of a new salesian missionary periodical for the young. The council again affirmed the missionary nature of “*Bollettino Salesiano*”. Some expressed the fear that the

⁶ ASC A 837, *Pro Memoria su Gioventù Missionaria*, 1. The reference is, in concrete, to «*Italia Missionaria*» of the Pontificio Istituto Missioni Estere di Milano, started in 1919, to «*Fede e Civiltà*» of Istituto Saveriano delle Missioni Estere di Parma, started in 1903, to «*Le Missioni della Compagnia di Gesù*» of the Jesuits started in 1915, whose original version was «*Missione di Mangalore*» started in 1903, to «*Missioni Francescane*» of the OFM published from Venezia starting from 1920, and to «*Bollettino di San Domenico*» published by the Dominicans from Bologna starting from 1921.

⁷ Cfr. ASC A 837, *Pro Memoria su Gioventù Missionaria*, 1-2.

initiation of a new missionary periodical could have adverse effects on the circulation of the Bollettino itself. None the less, in view of the golden jubilee celebrations of the first salesian missionary expedition, the council gave its consent for the initiation of a new salesian periodical for the young, but as a provisional measure. The council requested Ricaldone himself to draw up a programme of the review which would be discussed in a later sitting.⁸

In another proposal presented to the Superior Chapter, in favour of the missionary periodical for the young, Vosti proposed that the review be specially addressed to the young, with features particularly pleasing to them. He advocated that it be started as early as possible, at least as a provisional measure in preparation for the jubilee celebration of the salesian missions. He suggested that the periodical be titled «Gioventù Missionaria» with a subtitle «Pro missioni salesiane», an illustrated monthly with 16 pages, with two columns a page, with the format of 21 x 14 like the "Per la Gioventù", with cover in colours.⁹

What he proposed as the programme of the periodical was to make known the salesian missions in the world, project the more interesting features of the other missions, propagate the association *Gioventù Missionaria* as the practical and efficacious means to promote, sustain and help mature missionary vocations. For encouraging mass subscriptions to the review, he framed a system of graded pricing: L. 3 per single copy, L. 25 for 10 copies, L. 200 for 100 copies. He also suggested the initiation of scholarships that could be sponsored by the subscribers for missionary aspirants. He was certain that the clerics in the houses of formation would happily lend their assistance for the various editorial works. He was insistent on the early initiation of the review and proposed the 24th of January 1923 as the possible date for the first issue.¹⁰

The Superior Council took up again the matter of the missionary periodical for the young on 10th January 1923. Don Ricaldone expressed happiness over the awakening of missionary

⁸ Cfr. ASC D 872, *Verbali delle Riunioni Capitolari*, vol 4, 167.

⁹ Cfr. ASC A 837, *ProMemoria pel Periodico Missionario Salesiano*, Typescript of Vosti S., Torino, 20 December 1922, 1.

sensibility among the young in the salesian institutes. He highlighted the fact that quite a few of these students had subscribed to the missionary periodicals of other missionary religious institutes as mentioned in the letter of Vosti to the Superior Council. He was of the opinion that the desire for a salesian missionary periodical was felt by a good group of Salesians. He considered it opportune to start a missionary periodical in view of the golden jubilee of the Salesian Missions, as a provisional undertaking of the congregation. He proposed the adaptation of the proposal of Vosti for the scope of the review, namely, that it be an organ to make known the salesian missions all over the world. Through its missionary conscientization it would help promote, sustain and mature missionary vocations, and through the propaganda for the missions help to raise funds for the salesian missions. Along the lines of the proposal made by Vosti, Ricaldone suggested that the council sanction the foundation of the periodical as an illustrated monthly, of 16 pages, entitled «Gioventù Missionaria». He also suggested that Fr. Domenico Garneri be its Director. It would be the immediate task of Garneri to launch the idea, make propaganda for the review and bring out the first issue as early as possible. The Superior Council approved the suggestions of Don Ricaldone, and entrusted Don Garneri with the charge of the new salesian missionary periodical!¹¹

Soon after this meeting of the Superior Council, Bartolomeo Fascie¹² the then general councillor for studies sent out a letter to the directors of the salesian institutions calling their attention to the foundation of the new periodical «Gioventù Missionaria». In the name of the Rector Major and the other superiors, Fascie solicited the active and diligent propaganda for the review among students, friends and acquaintances.¹³

¹⁰ Cfr. ASC A 837, *Pro Memoria pel Periodico Missionario Salesiano*, 1.

¹¹ Cfr. ASC D 872, *Verbali delle Riunioni Capitolari*, vol. 4, 172-173.

¹² Bartolomeo Fascie (1861 – 1937) was the Provincial Superior of Sicily from 1907 to 1913 and of Liguria, Toscana and Emilia from 1913 to 1920. In 1919 Don Albera appointed him the General Councillor for studies and salesian publications. He was confirmed in this responsibility by the subsequent general chapter. Cfr. VALENTINI E. – A.RODINÒ, *Dizionario biografico dei Salesiani*, 121-122.

¹³ Cfr. ASC A 837, *Letter cf Bartolomeo Fascie to the Directors*, Torino, 24 January 1923.

Publication of GM

The official sanction of the Superior Council set in motion the process of publication of the periodical. The *Bollettino Salesiano* in its issue of February 1923 carried the announcement of the foundation of the new missionary monthly for the young, and its forthcoming publication.¹⁴ A propaganda leaflet announced the foundation of the new illustrated missionary monthly periodical entitled «Gioventù Missionaria» in preparation for the jubilee celebrations of the Salesian Missions.

This same propaganda handout stated that the scope of the review was to make known the story of the various salesian missions all over the world, to present the more interesting figures among the great salesian missionaries, and also inform the readers about the geographic and ethnographic curiosities of the various regions, various customs and beliefs of the indigenous people of the mission lands. It also announced that though the chief area of interest of the review would be salesian missions, it would also publish reports of missions managed by other religious institutes.

The propaganda announced that the periodical was addressed to the young boys and girls of the institutions of the Salesians and the FMAs, the children of the Salesian Co-operators and to all who would be interested in the missions. It would issue every 24th of the month. The subscription fee offered for readers in Italy and its colonies was L.5 per year, or L.3 per semester, while for readers outside Italy and its colonies, the price was to be L.8 per year and L.5 for a single semester. The propaganda leaflet already announced the proximate first issue of the new periodical on the 24th of February 1923.¹⁵

The first issue of GM was out of the press, as announced by the propaganda, on 24th February 1923, with an impressive initial

¹⁴ Cfr. *Nuovo Periodico Missionario*, in BS 47 (1923) 2, 36. Practically the same advertisement for GM is repeated in the April issue of the same year. Cfr. *Nuovo Periodico Missionario*, in BS 47 (1923) 4, 90.

¹⁵ Cfr. ASC A 837. *Leggete e Fate Leggere Gioventù Missionaria*, Printed handout of Central Direction of Gioventù Missionaria, [1923], 1.

10,500 copies.¹⁶ From the report of Garneri, written a year after the initiation of GM, it would appear that the review was welcomed with much enthusiasm by the young boys and girls of the salesian institutions. Garneri wrote in GM:

Two years ago, when “Gioventù Missionaria” made its appearance, it was welcomed enthusiastically by the young as a long awaited friend, desired by all. It found an army of souls that surrounded it with dedication and became ardent supporters of the missions.¹⁷

Translations of GM and their publication

The almost immediate translations of GM into various other European languages could further testify to what Garneri wrote about the enthusiastic reception of the periodical among the young people in the salesian institutions. According to the report of Garneri in the November issue of 1923, besides contributing to establishing a missionary atmosphere in the various salesian institutions, GM was already serving in a unique manner the promotion of missionary vocations. He wrote:

Missionary vocations are flowering marvelously! As soon as our venerated Rector Major, with a happy intuition, opened the Institute of Cardinal Cagliero at Ivrea for missionary aspirants, it was immediately filled with ardent souls; and this year he has had to open yet another similar institute at Penango, which again is already full. Many other young with similar ardour are just waiting for their turn.

This enthusiasm of the young for the sublime work of the mission augurs well for the future. It makes us hope for more numerous vocations and consequently with greater abundance of labourers in the vineyard, for more consoling fruits in the missionary apostolate.¹⁸

¹⁶ Cfr. GARNERI D., *Le Associazioni Studentesche in Favore delle Missioni*, in GM 10 (1932) 6, 103.

¹⁷ GARNERI D., *Giubileo delle Missioni Salesiane*, in GM 2 (1924) 11, 162.

¹⁸ GARNERI D., *Giubileo delle Missioni Salesiane*, in GM 2 (1924) 11, 162.

The minutes of the meeting of the Superior Council on 21 January 1925 bear ample witness of the impact that GM had in the promotion of missionary vocations. Probably because of the great number of boys who according to the propaganda of GM applied directly to the Rector Major to be accepted in the aspirantate, this meeting decided that these applications be directed to the Provincial Superiors of the region of the candidate. The minutes makes specific mention of possible regions which had so many vocations that they could not accept all in the house of formation! In such case the Council directed that the Provincial Superiors should have an understanding with the Rector Major. The report reads:

"Gioventù Missionaria" was founded to hold aloft the missionary ideal and to promote vocations. These vocations inspired by Gioventù Missionaria and in turn cultivated by the single provinces outside Italy could be so many that some of the provinces are not in a position to maintain them all. In such a case these provinces need to have an understanding with the Rector Major who will come to their aid.¹⁹

One would think that it was particularly the vocational impact of GM that motivated the various translations. The first of these series of translations appeared in 1925 in Polish. It was entitled «Młodzież Misyjna», printed at Varsavia, initiated with an impressive 25,000 copies!²⁰

The Polish translation was occasion of further decisions by the Superior Council of the Salesians. On 9th January 1925 the Council discussed at length whether it would be convenient or not to leave freedom to salesians outside Italy to bring out their own translations or editions of GM.²¹ The matter was taken up again in the meeting of 13th January, and since there was no consensus of opinions, a commission was formed under the leadership of

¹⁹ ASC D 872, *Verbali delle Riunioni Capitolari*, vol 4, 303.

²⁰ Cfr. GARNERI D., *Le Associazioni Studentesche in Favore delle Missioni*, 103.

²¹ Cfr. ASC D 872, *Verbali delle Riunioni Capitolari*, vol. 4, 296.

Ricaldone to study further the problem.²² In the sitting of 21 January, the commission presented its report. It suggested that the printing and publication of the various translations of GM be done at Turin itself. One strong argument for this proposal was the fact that the various translations of the “Bollettino Salesiano” were already being published from Turin itself. Therefore there was already a definite structure that could deal with the various translations. The editor of the “Bollettino Salesiano” could be of great help to GM in this aspect. The Clerics coming from various nationalities, studying at Crocetta could help with the translations. This proposal of the commission was accepted, and consequently the Polish translation was then on published from Turin.²³

The Superior Council that met on 17th June 1925 to discuss the details of the celebration of the golden jubilee of the salesian missions also treated the topic of the missionary periodical of the congregation and the need to diffuse it as widely as possible. In this meeting the Councillors approved the initiation of the Spanish translation of GM.²⁴

Following on this decision of the Superior Council, Don Rinaldi in December of the same year sent out a circular to the Provincial Superiors and the Rectors of the salesian houses, in which, he said that in answer to the repeated requests from Spain and Latin America, the Spanish edition of the periodical would be started in January 1926, entitled «Juventud Misionera». He called upon every one to promote both the association and the review especially in view of their consoling fruits. A letter of similar kind was also sent to the Provincial Superiors and Heads of the institutions of the FMAs.²⁵ This Spanish edition came out initially with 12,500 copies.²⁶

²² Cfr. ASC D 872, *Verbali delle Riunioni Capitolari*, vol. 4, 298.

²³ Cfr. ASC D 872, *Verbali delle Riunioni Capitolari*, vol. 4, 303.

²⁴ Cfr. ASC D 872, *Verbali delle Riunioni Capitolari*, vol. 4, 336.

²⁵ Cfr. ASC A 837, *Letter cf Rinaldi to the Salesian Superiors*, Torino, 15 December 1925; *Letter cf Rinaldi to the FMA Superiors*, Torino, 24 December 1925.

²⁶ Cfr. GARNERI D., *E Noi?*, in GM 10 (1932) 6, 103.

Requests reached Don Rinaldi from Portugal and Brazil for a Portuguese translation of the periodical. In February 1926 writing to the Provincial Superiors and Heads of the institutions of the FMAs, he said that the Portuguese edition of GM, entitled «Juventude Missionaria», would be started in July of the same year. He also wrote to the Salesian Superiors dealing with the same matter. Like the other translations, the Portuguese one too would be published from Turin.²⁷

«Jeunesse et Missions», the French edition of GM, was brought out in 1927 with an initial 8,300 copies. Other translations of the periodical were realised in Hungarian in 1929 entitled «Misszios Ifjusag» with initial 10,000 copies printed at Budapest, and in the Slovak language in 1930 entitled «Misijonska Mladez» with initial 10,000 copies printed at Lubiana.²⁸

The Scope of GM

In the section on the periodical GM, the focus of attention so far has been the early history of the publication. In dealing with its foundation, reference has also been made to the reasons proposed by those who advocated its initiation. However, what has been said earlier does not make superfluous a deeper study of the scope of the periodical as envisaged by the founding fathers and presented in the review itself.

In the very first issue of the periodical, the editors manifested clearly its scope:

The missionaries will be particularly grateful to Gioventù Missionaria, because through its pages it will make known their sublime sacrifices, the great difficulties that they encounter, the consolations which comfort their hearts, and the various works of charity to which they attend. [...] It hopes to find in you missionaries of missionaries. It will send out frequent and continuous appeal to your generous hearts because it wishes to make you all zealous apostles of an idea – the missions!

²⁷ Cfr. ASC A 837, *Letter of Rinaldi to the FMA Superiors*, Torino, 24 February 1926; *Letter of Rinaldi to the Salesian Superiors*, Torino, 15 March 1926.

²⁸ Cfr. GARNERI D., *E Noi?*, in GM 10 (1932) 6, 103.

Through its pages you will come to know the pressing needs of our missions and how much you are in a position to do for it without excessive sacrifice! [...] Get ready then, to enter into action with all your enthusiasm and join the crowd of many others who are already generously supporting our missions.²⁹

GM was not a periodical that would serve the simple need of information about the missions. It was oriented towards action. It was meant to make the young readers “missionaries of the missionaries”.

From the constantly recurring presentation of the great and urgent need for missionaries, priests and religious, the vocational perspective of the periodical was all too clear. One would think that especially in the initial years the primary motive of the periodical was to create in the young hearts of its readers the first movement of attraction towards a missionary vocation, and then sustain and develop it, and help towards its realisation in actual missionary commitment. The post-World War I context, marked by an acute shortage of personnel in the missions, in which the association was born, justified the priority given to the scope of promotion of missionary vocations. Although there are no documents to substantiate it, obviously the apparent haste in bringing out its publication in the various European languages was motivated by this vocational perspective.

Was there also a financial dimension in the scope of GM? It is interesting to highlight what is found in the anonymous document dealing with the difference between *Apostolato dell’Innocenza* and *Gioventù missionaria*. Speaking about the difference under the subtitle of “offerings”, the document notes:

²⁹ *In Confidenza*, in GM 1(1923)1, ii. Since in the initial years, the outer and inner cover pages are not numbered, for convenience of reference to these pages I have used the roman numbers for indicating these pages. i= outer front cover, ii = inner front cover, iii = inner back cover, iv = for outer back cover. In the later years when these pages begin to be numbered in the review itself, the original numbering will be followed.

AGM: does not ask for them nor procure them directly. However, it asks for an annual contribution of L. 1 and gifts every subscriber with a formative booklet.

AI: the statutes do not demand it, but in fact, at least some of the groups of the AI procure these offerings.³⁰

Therefore one would conclude that financial considerations did not enter into the scope of the periodical too. However the initiation of a section "*C_jferte pervenute alla Direzione*" in January 1924 and its permanence till November 1945 would not point to a total absence of this dimension. Besides, there are certain campaigns of fund raising aimed at specific helps to particular mission centres addressed to the readers, like the 100 beds for the hostel in Imphal,³¹ a radio transmitter to Rio Madeira,³² the Statue of St. Joseph for the Church at Mawkhar – Shillong,³³ musical instruments for the Seminary of Kambikila in Katanga in Congo.³⁴ Also the encouragement given to the local units to go to the assistance of the salesian missionaries with whom they maintained some sort of a special contact, and the publication of the fruits of the different lotteries and such other activities in terms of money, would also point to the existence of the financial dimension in the scope of GM, though keeping in mind that the review was addressed to the school going boys and girls.

The contents of GM

In the first issue of the review itself, the editor sketched out the contents of the review and its various sections. As the periodical was started provisionally as one among other activities in preparation for the jubilee celebrations of the salesian missions, it was projected that an important content of the review would be the history of the first salesian missions in Patagonia, the Pampas and Terra del Fuoco. It would also report the various activities

³⁰ ASC A 837, *D_jferenze tra AGM e AI*, 1.

³¹ Cfr. *Cento Lettini per i Bimbi Naga*, in GM 37 (1959) 23, 45.

³² Cfr. Ugo V., *PY8YH chiama «Gioventù Missionaria»*, in GM 38 (1960) 5, 30-31.

³³ Cfr. *Servizio Missionario Dei Giovani*, in GM 39 (1961) 1, 45.

³⁴ Cfr. *Musica per il Congo*, in GM 39 (1961) 24, 44-45.

and experiences of the salesian missionaries in the other missions all over the world. It proposed to bring to the readers profiles of the great missionaries, especially salesians and edifying anecdotes from their lives. The programme also envisaged reporting about the faith and heroism of the neophytes in the various missions. The review would not be limited to the Salesian missions only, instead due efforts would be made to keep the readers informed about the happenings in the missionary world all over.

Keeping in mind the fact that the periodical was born also as an organ of communication for the AGM, the editors included in their programme the reporting of actions launched by the young people themselves in favour of the missions. To satisfy the need of the young for stories and adventures, and with a view to substitute what would be considered unprofitable and frivolous reading material, GM would include a section on adventures, historical or otherwise.³⁵ Replying to certain queries coming in from different salesian quarters about the content of the periodical, the March issue of 1923 announced:

“Gioventù Missionaria”, the monthly periodical will make known to the readers: 1) the history, the happenings and the development of the various salesian missions; 2) the tireless work of the Salesians and the FMAs in the various mission centres; 3) the adventures of the missionaries in the exercise of their ministry; 4) the various difficulties that they encounter in their work of converting the uncivilized pagans and in educating them to a civilized life; 5) the customs, rites, superstitions and traditions of the indigenous people in the missions; 6) geographical, zoological and botanical specialities of the missions which are of interest to the young; 7) edifying episodes and facts from the life of the catechumens and the neophytes which help highlight the effect of religion on these people; 8) whatever is interesting in the missions of other groups; 9) the stories of the more illustrious missionaries; 10) the youth movement in favour of the missions; 11) the various ways of helping the missions.³⁶

³⁵ Cfr. *Posta*, in GM 1 (1923) 1, iv.

³⁶ *Gioventù Missionaria*, in GM 1 (1923) 2, ii.

Even in the gradual process of its evolution, the periodical was faithful to its programme. Every issue of the review carried an editorial page, which touched upon themes relevant to the young as regards missionary animation. The need for missionaries and the consequent obligation to respond to a missionary vocation if one felt called, was one of the more repeated themes. In the later years the editorial was more focussed on the missionary intention of the month. Reports from the missionaries in the field spoke of their adventures, their difficulties, their joys and consolations, the happenings in the missions, the new Christians, the customs and beliefs of the people, and special characteristics of the various regions. Missionary news clippings kept the readers informed about the Catholic missions all over the world. To engage the young in their free time in useful activities, the periodical carried a section on puzzles, missionary quizzes, jokes and features of a light nature, often connected with the missions. Occasionally it also had short synopsis of books. The review kept the readers informed about the edifying activities of the various groups of AGM. Though this section was there right from its initiation, it became much more spacious and highlighted from 1942 up to the conclusion. Faithful to its programme of aspiring to substitute the unprofitable and often frivolous type of adventure literature, GM dedicated much space to serialised fictions of adventure, often situated in the mission context, and having some missionary significance.

The Presentation of the review

In line with the suggestion of Don Vosti, the founding father, 24th of the month was the date of issue of *Gioventù Missionaria* from 1923 to the end of 1925. From 1926 onwards it was changed to the 1st of the month.

The issues of 1923 to 1925 carried the same front cover design, in different colours. It depicted missionaries who preach and teach the aboriginals under the command of Jesus: “Go out to the whole world; proclaim the Good News to all creation” (Mk 16:15). It pictured the globe surrounded and supported by angels, alluding to the mission of the young readers to support the spread of the reign of God in the world. Another single cover design served the issues of 1926. The theme apparently was an invitation

to the young to launch out into the missions. The Badge of the Association *Gioventù Missionaria* occupied the front cover page of the issues of 1927 up to July 1929 inclusive. From August 1929 up to May 1931 the front cover carried the sketch of the boy Jesus inviting other boys and girls to work in harvesting the field already ripe. The front cover of the issues of June 1931 up to December 1931 represented the journey of the Church, in the image of a big ship, in the stormy waters of the ocean. From January 1932 onwards each issue has its proper front cover and consisted of photos of the inhabitants, events, temples, flora and fauna of the various missions. Occasionally it represented also missionaries in their various activities.

The pages were for the major part divided into two columns. Occasionally there appeared a three column division. Starting especially from 1959 there were also sections that did not follow this division of the page into two or three sections. However the majority of the articles still followed this formatting. Photos and illustrations do not necessarily follow this general division. The abundance of photos included kept it true to the nature envisaged by the founding fathers: that of being an illustrated periodical. The photo feature became more marked especially from 1959, the year that marked a definite change of format of the review, reducing at times the missionary literature as such to the bare minimum.

According to a report of Don Garneri, the first director of GM, the periodical started off with an impressive 10,500 copies in 1923. By 1930 it was almost doubled and reached as high as 20,000.³⁸ The 1930s, as reported earlier, seemed to have been a period of negligence of the association, and there was an evident decline in the number of copies printed, so much so that towards the end of the thirties it had reached as low as only 3,500.³⁹ With the relaunching of the association in 1941, the due changes brought about in the editorial board, and the vigorous propaganda made both for the association and the periodical, within a short time of

³⁸ Cfr. GARNERI D., *E Noi?*, in GM 10 (1932) 6, 103.

³⁹ Cfr. ASC A 837, *Associazione Gioventù Missionaria*, 2.

this new beginning 28,000 copies of the periodical were printed.⁴⁰ World War II had its effects on the circulation of the review and by 1947 it had come down to 17,000. However after the war there was once more an increase in the circulation. According to the report of Don Zucchetti, the then director, 20,000 copies of the review were printed in 1948.⁴¹ In the last decade of the life of the periodical, it would appear that its circulation remained more or less steady with small annual increments. According to the report of Don Mario Cleva, the administrator at the time, the circulation of GM in 1966 was 23,144.⁴²

Office and Press of GM

The office of the Central Direction of GM was situated at Via Cottelengo, 32, Turin, from its start right up to its closure. However, the administration of the review was for the first three years situated at Corso Regina Margherita 174, Turin which was the administrative office of SEI, and then transferred to Via Cottelengo 32, together with the Direction, thus unifying the direction and the administration. A change in the postal address of the Direction in 1954 indicates the renaming of this street. Via Cottelengo was named Via Maria Ausiliatrice.

From its initiation up to April 1963, the review was printed at the press of Società Editrice Internazionale, Turin.⁴³ Towards the end of 1945 because of shortage of paper with SEI, there was

⁴⁰ Cfr. ASC A 837, *Associazione Gioventù Missionaria*, 4.

⁴¹ Cfr. ASC A 837, *Letter cf Don Demetrio Zucchetti to the Rector Major*, Torino, 16 January 1948.

⁴² Cfr. ASC A 837, CLEVA MARIO, *Alcune Considerazioni e Rilievi Personali sulla Situazione di «Gioventù Missionaria»*, Typescript of Cleva Mario, Torino, 29 April 1966, 2.

⁴³ The Salesian Cooperators in 1908 started the «Società Anonima Internazionale per la Diffusione della Buona Stampa» (SAID) with the purpose of unifying the various presses and editorials of the Salesians that had their origin in the initiatives of Don Bosco himself in the field. In 1911 the SAID was renamed Società Editrice Internazionale (SEI). Cfr. SANI R., *L'Editoria Educativo-Popolare Cattolica tra le Due Guerre. Itinerari e Proposte*, in PAZZAGLIA L. (Ed.), *Chiesa, Cultura e Educazione in Italia tra le Due Guerre*, 335.

a thought that the periodical could be printed at Colle Don Bosco, Bechi. However, this was not followed up.⁴⁴ From May 1963 up to December 1966 it was printed at ILTE Turin. And the issues of 1967 were printed at the Istituto Italiano Arti Grafiche, Bergamo.

The evolutions

One would think of two basic types of evolution to which the periodical was subjected: those that concern the periodical itself in its material aspect, and those that concern its inner content and structure.

The material evolution cf GM

It was the decision of the Superior Council that GM be a monthly periodical. Evidently great attention was paid to bring out the monthly issues on time. However, from 1945 to 1951 the issues of August and September are combined in one number with no increase in the number of pages.⁴⁵ In 1947 the months combined are July-August instead of August-September. From 1952 onwards up to 1965 the review came out again with 12 issues per year. In 1966 and 1967 there was a return to the combination of two months in the holiday season.

Another significant phase of the evolution of the periodical took place in March 1946 when the review became fortnightly. The front page carried this title: "Gioventù Missionaria - Rivista quindicinale dell'A.G.M."⁴⁶ The direction explained the state of affairs two months later in the May issue:

⁴⁴ Cfr. ASC A 837, *Letter cf Zucchetti D. to Don Beruti*, Torino, 9 November 1945.

⁴⁵ Obviously, this was due to the summer vacation between July – September.

⁴⁶ "Gioventù Missionaria" – fortnightly review of AGM". Cfr. GM 24 (1946) 3, i. Because of the fortnightly edition, the numbering of the review started again from 1, even though it was already the month of March. This fortnightly issue was not a full edition of the original periodical. It should be considered more as a supplement than a full issue. Therefore, not that the periodical itself became a fortnightly, instead a fortnightly supplementary issue was initiated at this time. For the sake of consistency with the earlier numbering of GM, in this work, the numbering of the monthly issues refers to the number of the month, and not to the actual number which is found on the periodical itself."

This is the happy surprise that the Direction of our beautiful review has made to the numerous family of its readers and the *Agmists*, starting from the 1st of March 1946. Has it satisfied the desire of many? Yes and No.

The AGM, of which "Gioventù Missionaria" is the official organ of communication, besides spreading information about the mission, has also the education and formation of its readers as its scope. It is concerned with culture too.

The new edition is meant precisely to fulfill this scope and is addressed specially to the leaders of the groups, to the educators of our youngsters, to all who have the good of the young and of the missions in their hearts.

Spread it! It will do a world of good. It will contribute to form a solid missionary awareness, and to arouse in your young people a true wave of missionary enthusiasm.⁴⁷

The fortnightly supplement was considered as an integral part of the original review, even though the subscribers had to pay a little more now. Even in the numbering of the pages of GM the four pages of the supplement was taken into consideration. An indication on the back cover of the May issue of 1947 points to the fact that this supplement which was so far entitled «Gioventù Missionaria» was named «Guida allo Studio delle Missioni» or simply «G.S.M.».⁴⁸ This characteristic of being a fortnightly continued up to the beginning of 1967, when from the presentation of the periodical in 1967 as "*mensile*" (monthly) and no more as "*quindicinale*" (fortnightly) it would appear that the supplement was discontinued at the end of 1966.

One notices also considerable variations as regards the number of pages of the periodical. GM in its beginning came out as a monthly periodical of 20 pages, with a size of 24 cm x 17 cm.⁴⁹ In 1925 the pages were increased to 28. But from 1926 up to

⁴⁷ *Gioventù Missionaria Quindicinale*, in GM 24 (1946) 5, 56.

⁴⁸ Cfr. *Gioventù Missionaria*, in GM 25 (1947) 9, 16.

⁴⁹ In calculation of the number of pages of the periodical, the cover pages are taken into consideration. Although in the initial years the cover pages are not numbered, they come to be numbered later on.

January 1936 the periodical had 24 pages except for the issue of January 1930 with 44 pages. From February 1936 up to December 1938 the pages were reduced to 20. The numbers of January 1939 up to September 1939 return to 24 pages. From October 1939 the pages are again reduced to 20 up to August 1941. September 1941 sees a further reduction of pages to 16 and this number of pages is maintained till February of the following year. In March 1942 the pages are reduced to only 12 and this is maintained up to December of 1945. In January 1946 there is a return to 16 pages. In March 1948 there is an increase in the size of the review, 28 cm x 20 cm. And this size comes to be maintained till the end of 1958. However, the number of pages remains unchanged till the end of 1953. In January 1954 the periodical returns to 24 pages. This number of pages is maintained up to the end of 1958. In 1959 January the review has a totally new look. The pages are increased to 48, and the size reduced to 18 cm x 13 cm. There is a further increase of four more pages in December of the same year, and this situation is maintained up to the end of 1965. In January 1966 there is a slight increase in the size: 21.5 cm x 16.5 cm, and a reduction of pages to 36. At its closure at the end of 1967 this was the size of GM.

From 1923 up to 1946 the issues of the same year have a continuous numbering of the pages. However the four cover pages are not taken into consideration in this continuous numbering till March 1944 when they also begin to be numbered. From 1947 January onwards up to the last issue of the review, the monthly issues are numbered separately. From December 1959 up to the end there is a return to not considering the four cover pages in the numbering of the pages.

As regards the quality of printing, the review can be divided into three periods: 1923-1947, 1948-1958, and 1959-1967. A qualitative improvement is evident from one period to the next. In the first period it is just one colour that is used. In the second period there is a gradual introduction of multi-colour printing adding to the attractiveness of the review. In the third period there is a passage to true to life colour photos.

One of the evident and natural evolutions in the material aspect of GM was in its price. Following is a tabular presentation of the gradual increase in the price of the periodical:

Period	Individual Subscription	Group Subscription
1923 February - 1926 December	L. 5.00	
1927 January - 1927 December	L. 5.20	
1928 January - 1941 December	L. 6.20	
1942 January - 1944 December	L. 6.50	
1945 January - 1945 July	L. 10.00	L. 10.00
1945 August - 1945 October	L. 35.00	
1945 November - 1946 September	L. 60.00	L. 50.00
1946 October - 1947 April	L. 95.00	L. 80.00
1947 May - 1947 July	L. 100.00	L. 80.00
1947 August - 1947 October	L. 150.00	L. 100.00
1947 November - 1948 August	L. 200.00	L. 150.00
1948 September - 1950 November	L. 250.00	L. 200.00
1950 December - 1954 October	L. 300.00	L. 250.00
1954 November - 1955 October	L. 400.00	L. 300.00
1955 November - 1965 December	L. 500.00	L. 400.00
1966 January - 1967 December	L. 700.00	

The evolutions in the content and structure of GM

As seen earlier, one of the primary motives of GM was to make known to the young the salesian missions. It did not exclude the missions of other congregations and institutions. However, the emphasis was on salesian missions. Naturally, the section on news clippings from the missions was entitled "*Missioni Salesiane*"

starting from April 1923.⁵⁰ One of the first changes noticed in the periodical is the change of “*Missioni Salesiane*” to “*Missioni Cattoliche*” in January 1926.⁵¹ It could indicate a purposeful choice to widen the camp of the periodical. The initiation of the section however does not signal a reduction of reports about the salesian missions. Instead it does signal an increase in the reports about the world wide Catholic missions. The priority of attention given to the Salesian missions is maintained up to the end.

In the course of the life of the periodical, in keeping with its general scope the editors added new sections, adapted the existing ones and removed sections that were of little interest to the readers. Thus in the issues of 1931 the editors presented the various aspirantates of the Salesians in Italy. The editors did the same with the houses of formation of the FMAs through the issues of 1940.

A gradual evolution is noticed also in the projection of the nature of the periodical. In its presentation of itself from the start up to 1941, it simply projected the image of a monthly periodical with no qualifications. The title was simply “Gioventù Missionaria – periodico mensile”. Certainly its missionary nature was obvious from its very title and so too the fact that it was meant for the youth. In the later part of this period the word “periodico” was replaced by “pubblicazione”. From 1942 onwards the periodical is presented as something that belonged specifically to the Associazione Gioventù Missionaria. The title was: “Gioventù Missionaria – Rivista Mensile dell’A.G.M”. This was a period of relaunching of the association and revamping of the editorial board. The alteration in the presentation is indicative of the re-initiation of the missionary movement. As noted earlier from March 1946 the periodical began to be fortnightly, and presented itself therefore as “Rivista quindicinale dell’A.G.M”.

It would appear that the Director was not satisfied with this simple presentation of the periodical. Probably there was need to

⁵⁰ Cfr. *Missioni Salesiane*, in GM, 1 (1923) 3, 38. Even in the first two months, though there was no specific section under this title, the reports about the missions were mainly reports coming from the salesian missions.

⁵¹ Cfr. *Le Missioni Cattoliche*, in GM 4 (1926) 1, 3.

specify the scope of the review and differentiate it from others. This specific scope came to be announced on the front cover from December 1959 up to the very end with some alterations. From December 1959 up to the end of 1964 the front page carried this caption: "Gioventù Missionaria. Rivista dell'A:G.M. Periodico quindicinale per la informazione, formazione, azione missionaria dei giovani".⁵² In January 1965 the caption was slightly altered: "Gioventù Missionaria. Rivista della Gioventù Missionaria, movimento internazionale giovanile di spiritualità e cooperazione missionaria".⁵³ There was a further change in January 1966, which continues till the closure of the review: "Gioventù Missionaria. Rivista giovanile d'impegno missionario".⁵⁴ Besides the changes in the wording, these alteration point in some way to the change of emphasis, at least, on the part of the editorial board.

Quite a curious section that is found in the issues of the period from July 1936 to February 1937, is the—"Vocabolario", that presents a mini Italian-Ethiopian dictionary. This was a kind of an echo of what was happening in the political field, the Fascist drive to create a colonial empire in Ethiopia.⁵⁵ Along the same line, in 1942, "La pagina Enciclopedica" is introduced. Under this title the editors offered explanations of various terms, names, concepts connected with Catholic missions. This section lasted from January to September of 1942.

Following the directives of the Minister of Popular Culture,⁵⁶ GM initiated in May 1942 its report of the War. For the first three months this page was entitled "*Italia in armi*"; but then for the rest of the period up to July 1943 these reports on the War were

⁵² *Sommario*, in GM 37 (1959) 23, 1.

⁵³ *Gioventù Missionaria*, in GM 43 (1965) 1, 1.

⁵⁴ *Gioventù Missionaria*, in GM 44 (1966) 1, ii.

⁵⁵ Cf. *Dizionario Italo-Etiopico*, in GM 14 (1936) 7, iii; 14 (1936) 8, iii; 14 (1926) 9, iii; 14 (1936) 10, iii; 14 (1936) 11, iii; 14 (1936) 12, iii; 15 (1937) 1, iii; 15 (1937) 2, iii.

⁵⁶ Cf. ASC A 837, *Letter of the Ministry of Popular Culture to the Director of Gioventù Missionaria*, 18 June 1942; ASC A 837, *Don Favini's Reply to the Ministry of Popular Culture*, Torino, 1 July 1942/XX.

entitled “*Vincere*”. Evidently this was an imposition of the Fascist government, not only on GM but on other periodicals too, irrespective of their nature. In 1943 Italy witnessed the fall of Fascism and in August 1943 the war page of GM was entitled “*Su ragazzi, cantate con me*” and with this the war reports came to an end.

In 1943 two new sections where the readers could participate were added: “*Enigmi e Interrogativi*” which contained three puzzles and 3 quiz questions (on missions and missionaries) to which the young were invited to respond, with the incentive that those who sent in the correct answers would be rewarded with some prizes. This section was removed from March 1944 onwards. Later issues have sections on puzzles and games, but not under this title. The second new participatory section introduced in 1943 was “*Echi di Corrispondenza*” which was to serve as the space for the readers to express their opinions on various issues concerning missions. In 1944 a new section entitled “*Collaborazione*” was introduced where the young readers were invited to express their opinion on specific missionary themes suggested by the direction for every month. It did not however replace the “*Posta*” or the “*Echi di Corrispondenza*” which continued in some form or other till the closure of the review.

The column of “*Cjferite pervenute alle Direzione*” was started as early as January 1924. It carried names of persons and institutions who sent in offerings for the missions, for the periodical, and from the month of September 1924 onwards especially for the imposition of names desired by the donors on children who would be baptised in the various missions. In November 1945 the directors officially announced that due to lack of space this section would be removed.⁵⁷

Although GM came out as the periodical of AGM in the beginning of 1942, a greater space dedicated to reports of the activities of the various groups is noticed only from 1947 onwards.

⁵⁷ Cfr. *Echi di Corrispondenza*, in GM 23 (1945) 11, 120.

A good number of the issues after this period have two full pages dedicated to these reports. This section carries on up to the last issue of the periodical.

From January 1949 up to April 1951, with the exception of a few issues, a new section was added entitled "*Pagina attiva*". For the major number of issues this section was on the inner front cover itself. It offered a tabular presentation of the major feasts of the months with the connected indulgences. It served as a reminder to the associates of the weekly missionary day and the monthly meeting of the group; suggested ideas for notice boards and for various other activities. It also put forward possible themes for conferences and gave general orientations for the month. This page, evidently, was meant to help the life and activity of the local groups of AGM.

One of the expressed scopes of GM was to substitute the seemingly frivolous literature in the hands of the young with something that was equally adventurous, yet more uplifting and as far as possible based on real facts. The interesting section of serialised fictions served this purpose. Even in this section certain changes are evident. Although a kind of a continuation is evident from the conclusion of one fiction to the initiation of the next, there have been periods of interruption. Between June 1926 and January 1929, this section on fictions and adventures were occupied by disconnected narrations of missionary adventures, or of events in the missions. During this period was also introduced the publication of a serialised skit by A. Marescalchi, "*Quando Dio chiama*" (October 1927 – January 1928). The section of adventure fictions comes to be substituted by—"Pr*o*fumo d'Oriente" by Luigi Ravalico⁵⁸ in the issues of the period from January 1956 to December 1957. In this section the author reported anecdotes, stories, wise sayings and fables of the East. The section of serialised fictions practically ends with the

⁵⁸ Luigi Ravalico (1906 – 1967), reached the missions of Assam in 1924 as a cleric. A missionary of great calibre, he was responsible for the opening of the mission at Tezpur, the salesian work in Goa, the mission of Imphal in Manipur. He dedicated the last years of his life to the establishment of "Savio Juniorate" - the salesian aspirantate in Shillong. Cfr. VALENTINI E.- A. RODINÒ (Eds.), *Dizionario Biografico dei Salesiani*, 234.

conclusion of this series by L. Ravalico. From 1958 onwards this section was substituted by "*Sapienza d'Oriente e d'Occidente*" which was more than anything else a section on cross word puzzles, quiz, games and such other activities.

An evident change is noticed in the presentation of the material of the review in 1951. Up to this period the monthly issues carried reports, notices, letters of missionaries, from different salesian missions. However in 1951 the single issues presented a somewhat unified vision of one particular mission, under various aspects, like the history of the church in the region, the characteristics of the people of the region, their beliefs, customs and festivals, events of particular significance in the life of the Church in the region, etc. It was no more a collection of scattered information about missions all over the world. This type of focussing of attention on specific missions continued for the whole of 1951. In 1952 already there was a change in this type of presentation. Although the majority of the notices were still centred on one region, articles were also introduced about one or more other regions. However, this attempt at offering a more unified information continued till the end of 1958. From 1959 onwards this type of concentration of the various presentations on few selected regions for each issue, became much less evident and was slowly abandoned.

From its initiation the outer back cover of the review was normally occupied by correspondence, puzzles, games, names of those who sent in donations etc. Every little space was made use of. In 1959 the back page of the review comes out with postage stamps of various countries along with some relevant statistical data about those countries. This goes on till the end of 1960. In 1961 the back page is occupied by some illustrative series of missionary stories. From February 1962 onwards up to the end of the year, the outer back cover carries the flags of various new nations with some statistical details about these nations. In 1963 the same space is occupied by "*La Chiesa nei continenti*", with maps of different continents or regions and a short write up about the situation of the Catholic Church in these continents.

Among other features that in the course of the 1960s continued to change the presentation of the periodical, mention could be made of the following. From November 1961 onwards, some of the issues contained sketches for Bible Prayer Services, with missionary themes. It was not a regular section, but appeared quite a few times. In January 1964 a new series was started under the title of "*Sulle vie della Fede*" presented by Ernesto Bellone. They were rather long accounts of the great missionaries of the Church. Quite interestingly the March issue of 1964 has a long presentation of Mahatma Gandhi,⁵⁹ and that of April of the same year had an equally long article on a non Catholic missionary: Albert Schweitzer.⁶⁰ A series of short write ups about various missionary institutes engaged in the Catholic missions all over the world was started in January 1965 under the title "*Forze Missionarie*". This page ended in November of the same year.

There is little in GM by way of advertisements. From February 1939 to December 1941 every issue has a full page advertisement for Giovanni Sartorio & Figlio, mainly for the sanitary installations of this company. But after this period the only advertisement that is found in the review is the one for the review itself. In its last year of life, the monthly issues carried advertisement for «Ragazzi Due Mila» and «Dimensioni». In the issues of January, March, May and July of the same year there is also an advertisement for "Kron" toothpaste. The back covers of some of the issues of 1967 are occupied by the advertisement for Icam cioccolato.

Directors of GM

Domenico Garneri was the first director of GM. He continued in this office till February 1933. He was born on the 20th of December 1876. As a young boy he had the fortune to see Don Bosco personally. In August 1889 he entered the Oratory of Vadlocco and after completing his schooling entered the Noviciate of Foglizzo. On the 4th of October 1894 he made his perpetual profession and was ordained priest on the 1st of April 1900.

⁵⁹ Cfr. Bosco T., *Grande Anima*, in GM 42 (1964) 5, 26-33.

⁶⁰ Cfr. Bosco T., *Ha Incontrato Dio Nella Foresta*, in GM 42 (1964) 7, 18-23.

His first appointment was as secretary to the provincial superior of Catania. In 1919 he was appointed Secretary to Bartolomeo Fascie, the General Councillor for Scholastic matters. Besides being the Director of GM, in 1927 he was given the additional charge of being the Director of “*Bollettino Salesiano*” which post he held till 1933. Later on he became the Secretary of the Organization of Salesian Past Pupils and entered the editorial Board of “*Voci Fraterne*” which was the instrument of the Past Pupils. He passed the last years of his life at the salesian house of Piossaco (Turin) and died on the 3rd of November 1962. Besides being the editor of GM and of “*Bollettino Salesiano*”, he was a prolific writer of articles, booklets, biographies of great salesians, and among them that of Don Albera.⁶¹

Geminiano Ferrari was the first *Direttore responsabile* of GM, he had charge of the correspondence with the subscribers, and was authorised to represent the periodical in all legal matters. He continued in this service to GM till August 1924. He was born on the 21st of January 1884 at Casalgrande (Reggio Emilia). At the age of 20, he was accepted at Martinetto as a “*Son of Mary*”. After a year at that salesian house, he went to Valsalice to continue his studies. He was then admitted to the noviciate and received the clerical habit. But due to an illness, he chose to become a Salesian Coadjutor. From 1915 up to the end of his life, he worked in the Casa Capitolare of Valdocco, in the office of correspondence. He died on the 10th of March 1954.⁶²

In March 1933 Guido Favini was appointed the *Direttore responsabile* of the review, and held this office till February 1963.⁶³

⁶¹ Cfr. ASC C041, *Mortuary Letter Written by Pietro Farina*, Piossasco – Torino, 24 November 1962.

⁶² Cfr. ASC C005, *Mortuary Letter Written by Ruben Uguccioni*, Torino, 12 March 1954.

⁶³ There does not seem to be clear indication as to who was the Director of the review. As noted in the story of the association, the 1930s was a period of inactivity as far as the association was concerned, and one of great reduction in the number of subscribers as far as the periodical was concerned. The negligence on the part of the superiors could explain the fact that there was no Director of the review in the period between 1933 and 1949.

Guido Fiorenzo Favini was born on the 31st of May 1892 at Varallo Pombia. He lost his mother when he was just 7 years old. For some time, due to the various postings of his father who was a railway worker, Guido did not have a permanent home, till after his father remarried and the new family settled down at Nizza Monferrato. Here Guido started his technical education and made contacts with the Salesians in the Oratory of the place. Inspired by the life of the Salesians, the young man decided to join them and become a priest. For his father who had placed much hope in Guido, it was a difficult decision. However, having overcome the initial difficulties, Guido was accepted in the Oratory of St. Francis de Sales in October 1910. He did his novitiate at Foglizzo from 1915 to 1916, made his first profession on the 21st of October 1916, and was sent to Valsalice to continue his studies. He was ordained a priest on the 10th of June 1922.

After short experiences in various salesian institutions, in September 1929 he was called by Pietro Ricaldone, the then Prefect General, to Valdocco and given the charge of the *Letture Cattoliche*. In 1932, again Ricaldone, now Rector Major, made him the Director of "Bollettino Salesiano", a post that he held till 1950. He took charge also of GM from 1933, though with the official title of Direttore Responsabile. In the summer of 1950 he was made Secretary General of the Congregation. He died on the 6th of January 1983.⁶⁴

Demetrio Zucchetti was the third Director of GM, from 1941 to 1959. He was born on the 19th of March 1910 at Melzo (Milan). His father died when Demetrio was still very young, leaving the mother to look after 8 children. The boyhood of Demetrio was marked by his active participation in Catholic Action. He joined the salesian aspirantate of Ivrea in 1927, on 8th September 1931 received the clerical habit and entered the novitiate of Villa Moglia at Chieri at the end of the same month. After his first profession in September 1932 he left for Ecuador to continue the philosophical studies and the other phases of his salesian formation at Cuenca.

⁶⁴ Cfr. ASC B999, *Mortuary Letter Written by Egidio Viganò*, Rome, [s.d].

In 1937 he was asked to return to Italy, Padua, to continue his theological studies. He was ordained priest on 29th June 1940. In 1941, Pietro Berutti, the then Prefect General of the Congregation, gave him the charge of AGM and its review. As a young priest, Zucchetti dedicated the best of his energies to the revival of the periodical and of the missionary association. The rise of subscription from 4000 in 1941 to 28,500 in 1959 when he laid down the office, itself speaks of his dedication in the field. In 1963 he became the secretary to the Mission Superior Modesto Bellido, later Albino Fedrigotti and last Bernardo Tohil. At the transfer of the salesian generalate to Rome in 1972, Zucchetti remained on at Valdocco. In 1978 he was transferred to the salesian house of Treviglio and passed his last years in this house. He died on the 17th of December 1982.⁶⁵

In December 1959 Giuseppe Bassi became the Director of the periodical, and remained in office till its closure in 1967. Giuseppe Bassi was born on the 13th of December 1923 at Borgo San Lorenzo (Firenze). He did his noviciate at Varazze and made his first profession on the 16th of August 1941 at Varazze. He made his perpetual vows on the 18th of August 1946 at Strada Casentino. He did the theological studies at the institute of Bagnolo, Piedmonte, and was ordained priest on the 2nd of July 1950.⁶⁶

The place of Guido Favini as *Direttore responsabile* was taken by Umberto Bastasi in May 1963 up to the end of 1967. Umberto was born on the 8th of March 1904 at Caino in the province of Treviso. As a young man, he was the leader of the Catholic Action at the parish and the diocesan levels. He entered the salesian aspirantate of Gorizia in 1931, made his noviciate at Este and on 21st of August 1934 made his first religious profession. Immediately after his profession, he went as missionary to Ecuador, Cuenca, to continue his philosophical studies. He made his perpetual profession at Cuenca in 1937. But then, he was asked to return to Italy, Padua,

⁶⁵ Cfr. ASC C503, *Mortuary Letter Written by the Rector of the Salesian House of Treviglio*, Treviglio, [s.d].

⁶⁶ Cfr. ASC 41B079, *Bassi Giuseppe. Personal biographical data.*

to continue his theological studies. He was ordained priest on the 29th of June 1942. As a young priest, the superiors gave him the charge of the Salesian Past Pupils, an office that he held up to his death on the 24th of May 1982. He was the moving spirit behind the consolidation of the association of the Past Pupils and the creation of the Confederation of the past Pupils of Don Bosco.⁶⁷

Mario Cleva joined the staff of GM in September 1964 as editor. In 1966 he held the office of administrator of the periodical. He left the office in 1967. Mario was born on the 12th of August 1935 at Pesariis (Udine). He made his first profession on the 16th of August 1952, and was ordained priest on the 1st of January 1964. He left as a missionary for Paraguay in 1967. His principle camp of apostolate in Paraguay was technical education of the young. He passed the last years of his life at Don Bosco Roga, and died on the 12th of January 1997.⁶⁸

The Contributors of GM

Besides the section of the editorial page, the Directors themselves presented short summaries of the history of the various missions, salesian and non-salesian. Evidently the directors took on themselves the responsibility for the missionary animation of the readers. Occasionally the editorials are publications of the writings of other eminent persons.

The section on Salesian missions carried chiefly first hand reports sent to the office of the GM or to the Superiors by the actual salesian missionaries living and working in the distant mission territories. The list of contributors in this section appears to be really impressive. The vast majority of them contributed just one or two articles. The list of missionaries who sent in reports and narrations to GM testifies also to their earnestness to co-operate

⁶⁷ Cfr. ASC B802, *Don Umberto Bastasi. Mortuary Letter Written by Giovanni Raineri*, Roma, 24 May 1982.

⁶⁸ Cfr. ASC E095, *Letter of the Provincial Secretary of the Province of Paraguay, Cecilio Zodriguez*, 13 October 1997.

in the promotion of missionary vocations. It is no surprise that many of these writings often end with an invitation, explicit or implicit, to the young readers to join their ranks!

The section of news clippings from the non-salesian missions are for the most part taken from the missionary reviews of the other missionary congregations and institutes. Among the ones that GM directly acknowledges are the following: “Agenzia Fides”, “Annales des Missions-Etrangères”, “Annali della Propagazione della Fede”, “Bulletin des M. Lazaristes”, “Catholic Educational Review”, “Cronique des Soeurs Missionnaires de N.D.d’Afrique”, “Ecco di Cina”, “Fede e civiltà”, “Fides”, “Massaia”, “Missionario Cattolico”, “Misiones Catolicas”, “Missioni Cattoliche”, “Missioni dei PP.Bianchi”, “Missioni della compagnia di Gesù”, “Missioni della Madonna”, “Missioni Estere Vincenziane”, “Missioni Francescane”, “Missioni Vincenziane”, “Missions Dominicaines”, “Nigrizia”, “Petit Messenger de Ning Po”, “Siglo de las Misiones”, “Svegliarino Missionario”, “Un Missionario Domenicano” and “Veneto Missionario”.

Evidently the reports about the various activities of the local units of AGM are publications of the narrations presented by these groups themselves. For the most part these reports are presented as coming in from the groups themselves, that is to say, from the boys and girls of the groups. At times the reports are presented as compiled by the Rectors of the salesian houses.

The quite large and constant section of adventures and romances are contributions of individual salesians, quite a few of whom seem to have had at least some missionary experience.

The section on games, puzzles and quiz do not mention the authors. However, in the salesian context one would believe that the young clerics and students of theology and other such groups formed the team behind this section.

Conclusion

The Salesians could not be left behind the other religious families especially in the area of the printed media which was so

well utilized even by Don Bosco himself. The lengthy list of the publications by the saint bear ample witness to the appreciation he had for the printed word. In the publication of GM then, the Salesians were following the example of their founder, in reaching out to the young in an area where they were just being initiated: periodicals for the young. And this new undertaking paid good dividends: it did immense good, far beyond the hopes and aspirations of the founding fathers.

The times were favourable for the type of material that GM presented to the young. But the editorial board took pains also to tailor their presentations to the actual aspirations of the young. Both the editors and the readers worked on the same wave length, and this produced the desired effects. The natural tendency of the young seems to be to the more frivolous and lighter sides of reality. But tastes can also be developed, altered or transformed. This periodical for the young seems to have done just that: developed new tastes, altered the old ones.

The story of GM forms part of the story of the Salesian Congregation, particularly in Italy and quite a few of the European countries. Beyond the missionary vocations which were occasioned by the reading of the periodical, GM as attested to by many witnesses, helped to change the ambience of the salesian institutions: engendered generosity, sustained enthusiasm, opened up wider vistas of life, and even served as a bridge between different cultures. Its pages were informative, but more: formative! A true longed for friend of its young readers!

CHAPTER 7

GM IN THE MISSIONARY ANIMATION OF THE SALESIAN CONGREGATION - ITS CLOSURE

From what has been mentioned so far, it is quite clear that both the association AGM and its periodical GM formed a part of the salesian heritage. There were particular individual Salesians behind the initiation of both the association and the review. But from the beginning, it emerged as an undertaking of the Congregation, and this factor accounted for its great success. In the previous sections of this study, the direct involvement of the superiors has been examined where relevant. This present section seeks to study the place given by the Superiors of the Salesian Congregation to this periodical in their overall effort at the missionary animation of the Salesians and of the young people they served in their various institutions.

GM in the missionary animation of Philip Rinaldi

In 1925 the Salesians celebrated the 50th anniversary of the first missionary expedition to South America. The occasion was made use of to reawaken in the hearts of the confreres the love for the missions. Every effort was made to use the celebrations to promote missionary vocations, and enthuse young boys with the zeal for the salvation of souls. As noted in the section about the origin of GM, the Superior Chapter approved the periodical in the context of the preparation for this great celebration. Mention has been made also of the earnestness of the Salesian superiors that AGM be initiated in all the salesian houses, and the students be requested to become subscribers to the periodical.

In the June issue of ACS 1925, the Rector Major, Philip Rinaldi, dedicated a whole letter to the theme of the missions in preparation for the oncoming jubilee celebrations. In this circular

letter, Rinaldi noted that among the various activities that had been initiated and promoted in preparation for the celebration of the golden jubilee of the missions, one was precisely the starting of the missionary periodical. He acknowledged the great good that GM was doing in the various institutes of the Salesians and of the FMAs. He expressed great joy at the initiatives set in motion in the different houses in favour of the missions. He wrote:

How great the consolation the students of our Festive Oratories, schools and hostels have brought us and continue to bring us with their missionary zeal! They have made themselves promoters of congresses, lotteries, collections, charity shows and so on. How profoundly moving, visiting the houses, to see those little youngsters placing in the hands of their superiors, with eyes brightened up with joy, their little mite so industriously collected for the houses of missionary formation! [...] Missionary education, if well directed, is surely a source of numerous vocations among our young people.¹

Encouraging further the various initiatives, he insisted that in every Salesian institute at least one missionary congress be held during the jubilee year! Referring directly to the missionary enthusiasm aroused by GM in the salesian houses in Italy, he announced that a Spanish edition of the periodical would be soon out of the press.²

This missionary animation was not confined to the salesians and to the youth in their institutions. It was to include the whole family, and in a special way the co-operators. The September issue of ACS gave a detail programme of the 10th international congress of the Salesian co-operators to be held in Turin in May 1926. The theme chosen was totally missionary! Among the other topics of study, one was precisely the diffusion of GM and the methods of encouraging enrolment in the AGM.³

¹ RINALDI F., *Il Giubileo d'Oro delle Nostre Missioni*, in ACS 6, (1925) 30, 371. '

² Cfr. RINALDI F., *Il Giubileo d'Oro delle Nostre Missioni*, in ACS 6, (1925) 30, 372. '

³ Cfr. *X Congresso Internazionale dei Cooperatori Salesiani. Congresso Missionario - Maggio 1926 in Torino*, in ACS 6 (1925) 31, 386-387.

Overall appreciation of GM by the Salesian Rectors

The preparation for the jubilee celebrations of the salesian missions, the festive event itself, the missionary exhibition that formed an important part of the celebration, and the missionary fervour sustained by the superiors after the event, gave a specifically missionary tone to the salesian work. In fact, in the meeting of the Salesian Rectors held at Valsalice in 1926, it was again the theme of the missions that occupied priority of place! These heads of the salesian houses took cognisance of the situation of the world in the post World War I period. They were aware of the movement of the peoples towards civilisation and development. There was growing recognition of the deep rooted sentiment of nationalism in the world and more among the various peoples in the mission lands. They were also aware of the missionary activity of the various protestant groups and of the Muslims. In the face of these facts the meeting unanimously felt the need to double the missionary efforts of the congregation and provide the missions with all the personnel and financial help possible. And this immediately posed the question of promotion of missionary vocations. The Rectors concluded that it would be the creation of a truly missionary ambient that would contribute most to the promotion and cultivation of vocations. Two practical means proposed for this missionary animation was the propaganda for GM and the formation of groups of AGM in all the institutions. It would appear that this meeting of the Rectors endorsed fully the new missionary association for the young students of the salesian houses and desired its spread to all the houses, without, however, damaging the already existing traditional groups and sodalities.⁴

The proposal of the meeting of the Rectors was taken up by the Prefect General in the December 1926 issue of the ACS. Speaking of the great need to do all possible for the promotion of vocations to the congregation, he wrote,

⁴ Cfr. *Resoconto dei Convegni tenuti dai Direttori Saelsiani a Valsalice nell'estate del 1926*, in ACS 7 (1926) 36, 478, 503-505.

One of the more efficacious means of promoting good vocations, besides caring for the sodalities founded by Venerable Don Bosco, is the founding of and caring for the Association Giovenù Missionaria in all the houses and the spread of the review “Giovenù Missionaria”.⁵

Continuing his practical instructions to the Rectors of the salesian institutions, he requested that they submit to the General Direction of the AGM the list of students enrolled in the AGM, and reports of the activities undertaken by these groups.⁶ One gets an idea that this missionary movement among the young was not something to be left to the personal likes or dislikes of the heads of the institutions, but something desired by the Congregation itself.

GM enters the General Regulations of the SDBs

By the time of the 13th General Chapter (1929), the effectiveness of GM especially in the field of promoting missionary vocations seems to have been a factor widely accepted in the salesian circles. This chapter too took up the theme of the missions and of missionary vocations. Among the various proposals made by the chapter, one that passed on into the General Regulations, approved ad experimentum, dealt precisely with the means to deepen the missionary spirit and thus promote missionary vocations. And one such means was the active propaganda for GM. The article reads,

Active propaganda will be made for “Bollettino Salesiano”, “Giovenù Missionaria” biographies of missionaries and other such publications in the festive Oratories and even among the externs for the purpose of arousing the missionary spirit and promoting missionary vocations in our institutions.⁷

Creation of the post of Mission Superior - Growing appreciation of GM

It was during the 16th General Chapter that the Rector Major appointed one member of the Superior Council as the Councillor

⁵ *Il Prefetto Generale*, in ACS 7 (1926) 37, 528.

⁶ *Cfr. Il Prefetto Generale*, in ACS 7 (1926) 37, 529.

⁷ *Temi Trattati nel XIII Capitolo Generale*, in ACS 10 (1929) 50, 815.

for the Missions, separating this office from that of the Prefect General. Don Bellido was appointed to this post. The long drawn out war had in some way slackened the missionary spirit in the salesian institutes especially because of the lack of communication with the missionaries in the field. This councillor for the missions in his first letter to the confreres in the ACS July-August 1948 invited all to a committed effort to bring back the missionary fervour that existed in all the salesian houses prior to the war. And the means that he proposed again were the relaunching of AGM and greater diffusion of the GM. He wrote:

I recommend in a particular way to the Rectors and the Catechists the institution and in case it already exists, the reinvigoration of the Association Gioventù Missionaria in all our hostels and Festive Oratories during the current scholastic year. Let them do everything possible to diffuse our review which is doing so much good among the young.⁸

Less than two years after his election as the Rector Major of the Salesian Society, Don Ziggotti undertook a visit to all the salesian missions in the East. At his return from the long drawn out journey, he wanted to launch out a new missionary crusade in the salesian institutions. He wrote:

The complex vision of the Eastern World from Egypt to Japan has renewed within me that missionary vocation and the desire to appeal to the zeal of every one of you, my dear confreres and dearest children, for a new missionary crusade.⁹

He addressed this new crusade to various groups. He appealed to the missionaries themselves to do everything possible for the cultivation of local vocations. The Rector Major was very much aware that the Church can be said to be established in a place only when it is served by a sufficient number of indigenous clergy. He appealed to the Salesians in Europe to volunteer in greater numbers for the missions in view of the urgency of the situation of the missions. He encouraged the Provincial Superiors to be generous in allowing confreres who so desired, to opt for the

⁸ *Il Consigliere addetto alle Missioni*, in ACS 28 (1948) 148, 14-15.

⁹ *Il Rettor Maggiore*, In ACS 36 (1955) 187, 12.

missions. Finally he called on the youth in all the salesian houses to increase their interest in the missions. He insisted that every sodality have a nucleus dedicated to the study, propaganda and work for the missions and thus keep alive the missionary enthusiasm of the whole group.¹⁰

Following up this urgent appeal of the Rector Major, Bellido, the mission superior, called for a genuine reawakening of the missionary fervour in all the houses, and a return to the earlier years of profound widespread missionary enthusiasm in the whole congregation. He wrote:

A reawakening of missionary fervour in all our houses would certainly be most beautiful response to the long journey of the successor of Don Bosco through the missions of the East! May the Lord grant us a speedy return of that missionary enthusiasm which characterised the whole Congregation some years back. How fruitful it would be; and among those fruits not the least: the refilling of our Aspirantates and Noviciates! It is now a proven fact that missionary enthusiasm among the young is a most efficacious means to reawaken priestly and religious vocations! It would be a grave mistake to think that missionary fervour and missionary propaganda will reduce the personnel and the financial help to our houses. Instead, it will be just the contrary!¹¹

And to promote this missionary reawakening the practical means that Bellido suggested was an active propaganda for «*Bollettino Salesiano*» and for GM.

In the next issue of the ACS the same councillor for missions took up again the theme of the missionary animation of the young in the salesian institutions. He suggested uniformity in the celebration of the salesian day of the missions. He proposed the last Sunday of February for this celebration in remembrance of the salesian proto-martyrs Mons. Versiglia and Fr. Caravario who

¹⁰ Cfr. *Il Rettor Maggiore*, In ACS 36 (1955) 187, 12-16. Obviously the reference is to AGM and its spread among all the other associations existing in the salesian institutions.

¹¹ *Il Consigliere per le Missioni*, in ACS 36 (1955) 187, 19.

were martyred on 25th of February. In concluding his circular, he took up once more the need to propagate GM because of the great efficacy it had had so far to arouse vocations. He wrote:

The review is already printed in different nations and languages. Let us hope that soon it will extend also to other countries. Who can measure the great good that the review has realized among the young, and how many missionary religious vocations have had their beginnings in the reading of the beautiful narrations presented by our missionaries? Let us diffuse this our review not only among the students of our houses, but also, certainly with discretion, among the students of other schools and among the Christian families.¹²

The fact that the salesian institutions gave heed to the appeal of the Rector Major and in particular to that of the Superior for the missions is worn out by the letter of the same superior in the next issue of the ACS. He noted that most of the houses accepted his practical suggestions for a uniform celebration of the day of the missions. He expressed happiness in the apparent reawakening of missionary enthusiasm in the various houses and wrote:

It can be said that today in all the sodalities there is a special group that works for the missions. The spiritual fruits of this activity will be great, especially that of arousing numerous vocations.¹³

50th Anniversary of GM

The missionary reawakening relaunched by Don Ziggotti continued to gather force in the course of his rectorate. One of the features of this movement was the revitalising of the AGM in the salesian institutions. In their ministry of animating the congregation, the Superiors often recalled the attention of the confreres to cultivate and propagate this association precisely because of the salutary effects it had in the field of promoting vocations for the missions. On the occasion of the 50th anniversary of AGM the Councillor for Missions again wrote:

¹² *Il Consigliere per le Missioni*, in ACS 36 (1955) 188, 19-20.

¹³ *Il Consigliere per le Missioni*, in ACS 37 (1956) 191, 5.

The Association Gioventù Missionaria flourished in many of our houses till the outbreak of the World War II. The visible fruits were most consoling, and were evident especially in the numerous priestly, religious and missionary vocations. During the War there was a restudy of its structure as desired by the late Fr. Pietro Ricaldone, adapting it to the new times. At present it is active in many of our houses, and is bearing much fruit. On the occasion of the golden jubilee of this association, why not extend it to all our houses? That would be a most appreciated gift for our beloved Rector Major.¹⁴

Slackening of concern for the missions

It would appear that there was a slackening in the regular, sustained effort at keeping alive the missionary fervour in the salesian houses in the 1960s. In fact there is little written about the missions during these years in the ACS. The attention of the whole Catholic world was focussed on the Vatican Council II in the first half of the 1960s. The council brought about quite radical changes in the concept of the missions. In view of the new orientation given by the Council, the religious congregations were required to initiate a process of renewal and adaptation, and this preoccupation apparently took up most of the attention of the Superiors. Besides, the years that immediately followed the Council were years of great loss of personnel for most religious congregations. During these years there was no real missionary expansion in the sense of going to new regions and new people. The great effort of the missionaries was to maintain the positions already reached and to consolidate the Christians in their faith. In the circular letters of the salesian superiors, missions seemed to have lost that priority of attention that they had occupied in the previous decades. However it was not altogether absent. Calls were renewed more or less regularly for volunteers for the missions. The Superiors still looked to the missions and to the creation of a genuine missionary spirit in the houses as a way to bring about a re-flowering in vocations and a true renewal of the congregation. So Aloysius Ricceri the then Rector Major wrote in December 1967 calling for volunteers for the missions of South America:

¹⁴ *Il Consigliere per le Missioni*, in ACS 39 (1958) 201, 26-27

As for me, from what I have been able to see in these years, I am convinced of the profound truth of that affirmation by an eminent religious, “Congregations will flourish in the measure they are animated by an authentic missionary spirit.”¹⁵

But during this period there is practically no mention of AGM or of its periodical.

The closure of GM

A periodical that was appreciated and acclaimed, that was recognized as an efficacious agent of change for the better in the spirit of the various institutions which welcomed it whole heartedly, that was further acknowledged as a wonderful means of promoting religious and priestly vocations, came to a sudden close in the last month of 1967. What prompted such a sudden action on the part of the Salesian Superiors?

There was nothing in the periodical itself which gave even a slight hint at a possible closure at the end of 1967. In all probability, the announcement of its closure in the editorial of December 1967 came as an unexpected shock to the vast majority of its readers. It is difficult to ascertain the real reasons that induced the Superiors to decide to discontinue the publication of the review. The minutes of the Superior Council mentions that in the meeting of the Council on 17 March 1966 there was a discussion on the co-ordination of all the salesian periodicals for economic and editorial advantages. The council thought about a united organization, a single administrator, a single commercial director and a single general direction for all the periodicals. However it was decided that this unification would proceed very gradually. A little statement in the minutes of this meeting in regard to the unification of «Meridiano 12», «Dimensioni» and «Ragazzi in Azione» points to a certain initiative for the slow closing down of GM. It states:

There was a discussion on the possible absorption of “Gioventù Missionaria” by “Ragazzi in Azione”. But the fact that GM was diffused also in the institutions of the Sisters was considered as a strong argument against its closure.¹⁶

¹⁵ *Lettera del Rettor Maggiore*, in ACS 48 (1967) 250, 46.

¹⁶ ASC D 878, *Verbali delle Riunioni del Consiglio Superiore*, vol 10, 30 June 1962 – 1966, 303.

At a later period, if there was a discussion in the Superior Council of the Salesians about the closure of GM, access is not available to the minutes of the proceedings of the council of the period concerned. Therefore this section will consist in highlighting certain factors, which, put together, could have contributed to its closure.

Changes in the missionary perspective of the Church after Vatican II

The Vatican II brought in a vision of the Church and of its missionary activity, different from that which existed in the Church before the Council.

The image of the Church that predominated in the Middle Ages, starting especially from the Council of Trent even up to the Vatican II, was one that projected it as an institution, a society. This model gave priority to the organisational and institutional aspects of the Church, and relegated its dimension of interiority and mystery to a secondary position, though not denying the latter. This auto-concept of the Church identified it with the Kingdom of God, and consequently considered every one not in the Church as outside the Kingdom of God, belonging to the kingdom of the devil. Obviously, from this it followed that the Church was the exclusive place of personal salvation for every human being, absolutising the axiom of St. Cyprian “extra ecclesiam nulla salus.” Even salvation itself was seen more in its dimension of salvation of souls, than the salvation of the whole human person. Baptism alone, and that too in the Catholic Church, assured an individual of this salvation. The Protestant Churches were seen as false churches, not having any power to save their adherents. The only true Church of Christ was the Roman Catholic Church, the deposit of all truth and all power to save.¹⁷

¹⁷ FRIES H., *Mutamenti dell'Immagine della Chiesa ed Evoluzione Storico-Dogmatica*, in FEINER J. – M.LÖHRER (Eds.), *–Mysterium Salutis. Nuovo Corso di Dogmatica come Teologia della Storia della Salvezza*, Brescia, Queriniana, 1972, 313-316; ACERBI, *Da una Ecclesiologia Giuridica a una Ecclesiologia di Comunione. Analisi del Passaggio nella Elaborazione della Costituzione Dogmatica “Lumen Gentium”*, Bologna, Dehoniane, 1974, 13-107; BOSCH J.D., *Transforming Mission. Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission*, New York, Orbis Books, 1991, 214-238.

The Vatican II adopted a vision of the Church that was quite different from the ecclesiology traditional in the Church so far. It no longer projected the Church as an institutional, societal entity on par with other such structures, but saw itself more as a mystery of God's presence in the world, a sacrament of salvation, a community at the service of the world. In the very first paragraph of the dogmatic constitution on the Church, *Lumen Gentium*, the Council Fathers defined the church in these terms: "The Church, in Christ, is in the nature of sacrament – a sign and instrument, that is, of communion with God and of unity among all men" (LG 1). In the subsequent numbers, the council traced back the mystery of the Church to the mystery of the communion that exists in the Holy Trinity between the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit (LG 2-4). It no longer identified itself with the Kingdom of God, instead saw itself as "on earth, the seed and beginning of that Kingdom" (LG 5) and at the service of that Kingdom as "the universal sacrament of salvation" (LG 48). While recognising its own institutional dimension as a society governed by the successor of Peter and by the Bishops in communion with him, it humbly recognised the presence of elements of sanctification and truth outside its own visible confines (LG 8).

In its vision of salvation as communion with God and with men, it could not possibly limit the same within the boundaries of the Catholic Church itself. LG asserted the indispensable role of the Church for salvation in no dubious terms:

Basing itself on scripture and tradition, it teaches that the Church, a pilgrim now on earth, is necessary for salvation: the one Christ is mediator and the way of salvation; he is present to us in his body which is the Church. He himself explicitly asserted the necessity of faith and baptism, and thereby affirmed at the same time the necessity of the Church which men enter through baptism as through a door. Hence they could not be saved who, knowing that the Catholic Church was founded as necessary by God through Christ, would refuse either to enter it, or to remain in it (LG 14).

But, departing from previously held positions, the Council proclaimed the possibility of eternal salvation even outside the Church itself when it taught,

Those who, through no fault of their own, do not know the Gospel of Christ or his Church, but who nevertheless seek God with a sincere heart, and moved by grace, try in their actions to do his will as they know it through the dictates of their conscience – those too may achieve eternal salvation (LG 16).

Dissociating itself from the old institutional and heavily hierarchical vision of the Church, Vatican II put forward an image of a Church as a people who were fundamentally equal among themselves, and marked by an openness to mutual service in view of the plurality of charisms present in the Church (LG 10-12). What united this people was not a hierarchical ladder of power, instead a communion in faith and charity.

Vatican II marked a definite departure from the way, so far prevalent, in which the Catholic Church viewed the other Christian denominations. Speaking of this radical change of vision, David J. Bosch says that the change brought about by the council was little short of a miracle.¹⁸ The council, accepting the principle of a graduality of communion, affirmed the existence of authentic ecclesial elements in the other Christian denominations. It declared:

The Church knows that she is joined in many ways to the baptised who are honoured by the name of Christians but who do not, however, profess the Catholic faith in its entirety or have not preserved unity or communion under the successor of Peter. [...] These Christians are in some way joined to us in the Holy Spirit for, by his gifts and graces, his sanctifying power is also active in them and he has strengthened some of them even to the shedding of their blood” (LG 15).

The council Fathers went further in the pastoral constitution on the Church in the modern world, and called the Protestants “our separated brethren” (GS 90).

Again, according to the teaching of Vatican II, salvation was no more seen only in its spiritual dimension as salvation of souls, but in its more evangelical dimension of the salvation of the whole human person, and which manifested itself in communion with God

¹⁸ Cfr. BOSCH J.D., *Transforming Mission*, 462.

and with men. (LG 1, AG 12). Mission work was seen no more in the light of liberating the non baptised people from the clutches of the devil and offering them the possibility of eternal life, but more in the light of collaborating with all people of good will in their growth in communion with God and with each other. And the method of evangelisation that the council proposed was no more that of conquest but of dialogue (AG 11). The Church was no more seen as the ground of mission, nor its ultimate goal. The ground of the missionary nature of the Church was the mission of Christ Himself and that of the Holy Spirit (AG 2). And its ultimate goal was no more the planting of the Church, but serving the establishment of the Kingdom of God. However the Council again asserted the validity of missionary activity when it affirmed,

The reason for missionary activity lies in the will of God 'who wishes all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth' (1 Tim 2:4) [...] And so, today as always, missionary activity retains its full force and necessity (AG 7).

In its missionary methodology, the Council called for a greater attention to the local customs and practices of the various countries, and giving the local Churches a truly native character. The Fathers of the Council saw the true universality of the Church in its capacity to form part of every culture, and asserted that far from being agents of division, the local Churches with their specific native characteristics served to enrich the universal Church (AG 6, 19, 22).

What could be termed as a real break with the previous concepts of the Church which the Vatican II brought about, was in its definition of the Church's relation with the world. From the age old mode of viewing the world as a hostile power to be conquered, the council moved to a new vision of the church as immersed in the world, in solidarity with the world and at the service of the world. The council Fathers no more projected a Church distant from the rest of humanity, instead one that formed part of the whole of humanity, making its own "the joy and hope, the grief and anguish of the men of our time" (GS 1). A serious effort was made to bridge the gap that existed between the church and the world based on the earlier modes of conceiving the sacred and the profane, the spiritual

and the material, the holy and the sinful, the eternal and the temporal, the heavenly and the this worldly realities. In its desire to serve all men of good will who formed part of the Kingdom of God (GS 22,38), the Council offered to enter into a respectful dialogue with the world (GS 3). Further more, as the Church formed part of the whole of humanity, and all that touched the whole touched also the part, the new vision of GS sought to bring about a vision of the history of salvation that identified itself with the history of the whole of mankind (GS 11).¹⁹

The question remains to be asked: In this changed projection of the Church and of its missionary activity, had GM, as a periodical of missionary animation of the young, become irrelevant? Up to the Vatican II, what formed the background of GM's projection of the missions and of the missionary, were the notions of the Church and of the missions in vogue in Catholic circles in those times. However, in the period after the Council, one notices certain changes of perspectives, though not a definite departure from those of earlier times. While the idea of salvation remains for the major part that connected to the salvation of souls, one notices a greater importance given to the missionary's activities in the field of human upliftment. There is also a greater openness to Protestant missionaries and to their work of evangelisation. Evidently there is also a greater appreciation of the local cultures, and a practical disappearance of referring to the non-Christian religions as worship of the devil. In view of these gradual changes, however, it would be difficult to say that the editors of GM did not pay due attention to making the periodical relevant to the changed circumstances.

Birth of a new salesian missionary project for the young

In the second half of 1966 a new vision of youth missionary action was slowly taking shape in the Salesian circles of Italy. Piero

¹⁹ For a deeper knowledge of the changes brought about by the Vatican II and their repercussions on the missionary apostolate of the Church cfr. ACERBI, *Da una Ecclesiologia Giuridica a una Ecclesiologia di Comunione*; BOSCH J.D., *Transforming MISSION*; FRIES H., *Mutamenti dell'Immagine della Chiesa ed Evoluzione Storico-Dogmatica*.

Melesi, a Salesian missionary priest, working in Brazil, had returned to his native place for a short holiday after 10 years. The missionary's face, worn out by hard work, solitude and helplessness to do more for the poor people in the mission parish of Poxoreu in Brazil, impressed certain of his friends. A group of youngsters from the salesian institute of Arese, who at the time were attending a summer camp at Val Formazza, took up the appeal of the missionary and started to ask themselves "Can't we go to Mato Grosso to give him a helping hand?" The two Salesian Priests, Ugo De Censi and Luigi Melesi, animators of the summer camp, took up the proposal of the youngsters seriously enough. They got further encouragement from Mons. Camillo Faresin, the Bishop of Guiratinga in Mato Grosso, who paid a visit to the Salesian institute of Arese some time that period.

From Piero Milesi it was learnt that the most urgent need of his parish of Poxoreu in Mato Grosso was for a school and a dispensary. And the group of youngsters, animated by those two Salesian priests, decided to go to Poxoreu and construct the two structures for the people of the mission. On hearing of the project other youngsters joined the first group of volunteers, and soon the number reached 500. Out of this group just 22 were chosen for the first expedition of "Operazione Mato Grosso" as it was baptised! Each of the volunteers, besides paying for his own voyage to and fro, had to help towards the whole cost of the project! The group of volunteers raised the money needed for the project. And the first group left Genova for Mato Grosso on the 8th of July 1967.

Operation "Mato Grosso" was a new response to the new sensibilities of the youth to the condition of the poor, to their eagerness to do something for the less privileged, to their aversion for a religion that was more a thing of the intellect than of the heart, to their longing to pass from words to creative action, and also to their natural interest in adventure. At the same time it was not just a project of getting something done for the sake of doing it. The project was to have a profoundly formative dimension. It intended to reinforce all the values of the School camps: life of the group, friendship, capacity to confront problems in the society and in the Church, etc. Here was a programme that had a clear orientation towards action. The project was born out of a concrete

need to do something for the poor people of Mato Grosso. And this ideal in some way captured the imagination of the young. By 1968 the volunteers numbered over 5000.

Certain features characterised the movement. Great emphasis was laid on the life of the group. Operation Mato Grosso was not an undertaking of simply like minded individuals. Behind every individual there was a group that sent, that supported, that assisted. And even in the actual execution of the project, it was the group that worked as a single unit. It was to be an experience in community living, in friendship. Operation Mato Grosso was not intended as a quick fix for some particular problems of the third world. The emphasis instead was on an adequate conscientization of the youth about the problems of the people of the third world. And lastly the group was marked by its capacity to raise the funds needed for the various particular projects in the mission lands. The capacity to pay for one's own voyage was considered essential to be considered a candidate for the group of volunteers.²⁰

Here again, it would be difficult to measure the impact that the new missionary project had on the closure of GM. Evidently Operation Mato Grosso aimed at the more adult age groups, and among them, those capable of paying for at least their journey to and fro. There was a great difference in the scope and methodology of the new movement and those of AGM. Although in the later years, Operation Mato Grosso witnessed a great growth, its origins could not perhaps be associated with a closure of AGM or of its periodical.

Administrative difficulties of GM

According to a report by Mario Cleva, the administrator of the review in 1966, there was a noticeable decrease in the

²⁰ Cfr. ZULIAN L. (Ed.), *Operazione Mato Grosso, Supplemento a «Note di Pastorale Giovanile»*, Sussidio 11, [1968], 5-24. GM itself speaks of Operation Mato Grosso in the August and October issues of 1967. Evidently the new venture is not projected as a substitute to AGM. GM speaks positively of the young boys who volunteer to go personally to help the poor people of Mato Grosso, and of the experience of these youngsters. Cfr. *Operazione Mato Grosso*, in GM 45 (1967) 8-9, 3; *A Poxoreu Rifiorisce la Speranza*, in GM 45 (1967) 10, 8-13.

subscription of the review among the institutions of the Salesians in 1966. While in the previous year these institutions together subscribed for 7,450 copies, it was reduced to 6,485 in 1966. There was a minimal increase in the subscriptions from the institutions of the FMAs. While it was 10,940 in 1965, it rose to 11,009 for the year 1966. However in the non-salesian circles the subscriptions more than doubled during the same period! While these institutions together subscribed for 2,600 copies in 1965, in 1966 they subscribed for 5,650.²¹ This increase in subscription among the non-salesian circles was due to the greater propaganda made for the review in these circles. However, according to Cleva, this propaganda could not be further sustained and extended due to the uncertainty about the future of the periodical.²²

Cleva mentions that the review particularly in its new form was appreciated by the boys and girls, in the parishes and in the institutions of priestly and religious formation, and in some schools GM was even matter for scholastic assignments. He attributes the fall in the subscriptions in the Salesian institutions to a decrease in the number of students and an evident disinterest in the periodical among the salesians.²³

According to the report of Cleva, one of the major, if not the primary reason, for the closure of the periodical was its precarious financial situation. The author states that by the end of 1966, GM's deficit would pile up to an impressive sum of L.20,000,000. Though the administrator envisaged ways of arresting the escalating rate of yearly deficit, he did not foresee any scheme of income generation from the part of the periodical that would ultimately clear off the accumulated deficit. As such, this huge sum would remain a burden of the Salesian Congregation.²⁴

Written in all honesty, the report of Cleva appealed for the continuation of the periodical, in spite of the above mentioned problems. It forwarded the following reasons for the continuation

²¹ Cfr. ASC A 837, *Alcune Considerazioni*, 2.

²² Cfr. ASC A 837, *Alcune Considerazioni*, 2-3. One would conclude that there was already a discussion at the time about the possible closure of the review.

²³ Cfr. ASC A 837, *Alcune Considerazioni*, 3-4.

²⁴ Cfr. ASC A 837, *Alcune Considerazioni*, 5-6.

of the periodical. There was no doubt, in the mind of Cleva, that the review was still much appreciated by both the young and the old. In its list of subscribers, a few thousands were adults. The FMA circles not only appreciated the review, but also made effective use of it in their work of promoting vocations, even during the period of compilation of the report. Precisely because of its folkloristic character, GM had succeeded to enter groups and organizations outside the salesian institutions, and this augured well for an increase in priestly and religious vocations, and even for greater financial assistance! As it stood at the time, GM was practically the only organ of contact that the SDBs had with the girls of the institutions of the FMAs. In spite of the evident fall in subscription in the salesian circles, the periodical still had an overall subscription of more than 23,000, a status reached by few other periodicals of the type at that time! The periodical was a means of propaganda not only for the salesian missions, but for the salesian congregation and the institute of the FMAs. Cleva argued that for these advantages, the periodical deserved to be continued even at the cost of certain financial loss.²⁵

However, as per the announcement of Giuseppe Bassi, the Superior Council had reasons “*di forza maggiore*” (more compelling) to arrive at the decision to close the publication of GM. And in the editorial of the issue of December 1967, Bassi sadly announced the closure of the periodical.²⁶

Conclusion

History has proved that it is the difficult and the challenging that brings out the best in the human person. The easy and the pleasurable please, but often kill initiative, creativeness and the nobler spirit in man. Few of the readers of GM perhaps were appalled by the projections of the reality of the life of the missionaries and withdrew into safer regions of life. Not all are made of the stuff that makes heroes! But for most, these same presentations served to challenge them to greater ideals. When a group is constantly kept

²⁵ Cfr. ASC A 837, *Alcune Considerazioni*, 6-8.

²⁶ Cfr. BASSI G., *Commiato*, in GM 45 (1967) 12, 1. A transcript of this editorial is found in Appendix 6.

motivated with those concerns that really matter, and which help towards a greater stretching of the human person, that group flourishes, and many souls who search for some worth while cause to commit their life find therein a suitable place. Little wonder then at the flourishing of religious and priestly vocations during the golden period of GM and the missionary association.

Initiated in a period of great missionary undertaking, and even greater missionary enthusiasm, GM served the purpose of missionary animation of the young in the salesian institutions. Its efficacy in sowing the seeds of missionary vocation was undeniable. Many in the Salesian congregation and outside owed their first enthusiasm for priestly and religious vocation to the pages of this periodical. Started as an undertaking of the Sons of Don Bosco, it has become part of the rich heritage of the Salesians.

It served its purpose for its life time. For students of Salesian history, it has recorded in its pages not only the advancement of the actual mission work, but more the history of a mode of thinking, a vision that the Salesian Congregation cultivated, nourished and advanced during the period. No doubt, this vision has given to the Congregation and to the Church as a whole some of the best men and women who have joined the ranks of Don Bosco. Not all these men and women actually worked in the frontier missionary areas, many did; but others lived their dedication animated with a spirit that put them apart from the normal.

Human experience is rooted both in that which is universally human and in the particular circumstances that surrounds the human being. The particular characteristics of time and space are elements that qualify specific times and places and keep on changing with the progress of time. It is absolutely essential to read and understand these changes. A simple grasp of the external changes may not be always sufficient to understand the times in which one lives. Certain things which served great purposes in some fixed time of history with its own world-vision, may not have the same value for a later generation. However, the abrupt closure of GM, with nothing that really took its place, with its particular perspective, seems to have left an empty space requiring to be filled in some way or other.

CHAPTER 8

THE SALESIAN MISSIONARY VISION : “DA MIHI ANIMAS”

With this chapter, the present study enters into what could be rightly called the core of the theme under examination. What was the vision that was transmitted to the young readers by GM? What was the mental attitude that the great missionaries of this era acquired from the pages of this periodical, which made them capable of such heroism, and which humanly speaking brought out the best in their personalities?

What is of interest in this study is the mentality reflected in the pages of the periodical. While acknowledging the indispensable role of formation in loco, even before the young missionary reached the actual field of apostolate, the visionary and the missionary was in some way given the preliminary form by the material that was transmitted in the pages of GM.

The aspect of missionary work that has received most attention on the part of the periodical was not doubt that of “salvation”. If “salvation of souls” was the one driving force behind the life and activity of Don Bosco, this dimension of the Bosconian spirit found its clearer expression in the missions. This zeal for souls, without which the Salesian loses his particular identity, found a singular and unconfined horizon in the mission fields of South America, Asia and Africa! And the same driving force that operated in the father, worked now in the sons to make of them personalities of the highest calibre.

Salvation of souls

On its very first page, GM speaks of the work of the missions as “the most beautiful among all other works.”¹ Bartolomeo Fascie,

¹ *In Confidenza*, in GM 1 (1923) 1, ii.

introducing the nascent periodical to its readers, and tracing out what he calls the programme of the periodical, invites the readers to join hands with the missionaries and become part of “such a grandiose work of charity.”² The one aspect of the missionary apostolate that, according to GM, adds to this ministry its special lustre and greatness, is obviously, the fact that the missions are primarily and uniquely ordered to the salvation of souls.

The editorial of the issue of May 1942 could be cited as typical of the mentality of the times on the necessary connection between mission and salvation of souls.³ It reads:

Mission is ordained to salvation! Thousands of people, misled by error, march to the abyss of perdition. For them the way of salvation and of peace remains closed. These are invited precisely to tread this new path to life through the action of the missionary. [...] The task of the missionary consists exactly in combating satan, weakening him and driving him from positions which he has held since a long time. The missionary liberates many who were born and grew up in error and vice. He frees entire nations which have become so habituated to their vicious ways, which pervade their traditions, social institutions, religious practices, laws and customs regarding domestic and individual life. Who can rightly evaluate the ruin brought about by superstition and perversion in these poor human natures now for so many centuries? It is the missionary who has to pull them out of the mire in which they are being drowned, and liberate them from their vices which have almost cancelled in these poor creatures the image of the Creator.⁴

The picture of the non-Christian world

GM was a child of its times. It reflects a vision of the non-Christian world, prevalent in the first half of the 20th century, but

² FASCIE B., *Il Nostro Programma*, in GM 1 (1923) 1, 2.

³ Obviously this editorial comes almost 2 decades after the initiation of the review. Not that the idea contained in this editorial is something that has developed in the course of the two decades. One would think that the conviction was there right from the initiation of the periodical. It just came to be spelled out in all its clarity, and more comprehensively in this particular editorial.

⁴ *Una Grande Missione*, in GM 19 (1941) 6, 81-82.

which had its roots in the mentality of the 18th and the 19th centuries. The principle, then accepted and vigorously expounded by the teaching authority of the Church, was that there was no salvation outside the Church. Baptism was thought of as the single door to membership in the Church, the community of those destined to salvation. It was also the commonly accepted position that the Church was the agent of civilisation, and consequently anything outside the Church was considered uncivilised. Applied territorially, it came to be held that Europe alone was civilised while the rest of the world remained uncivilised.

GM views the world through the prism of the redemption realised by Christ through his passion and death. Jesus on the cross gave His life for the redemption of the whole world. But one participates in this redemption through his personal acceptance of Jesus, manifested in his acceptance of Baptism, and thus becoming member of the Church. In this world vision, the whole of humanity is divided into two distinct camps: those who are baptised and consequently saved, and those who are not baptised and as a result are not saved.⁵

Another article of the Catholic faith that forms the foundation of the various projections of the periodical is that the Catholic faith alone is the only true religion. And this leads to the natural consequence of considering all other religions as not true, and as a result, incapable of leading their adherents to God and to eternal salvation. GM, keeping in line with the thought of the times, classifies the pagan religions as idolatry and even as worship of the devil. Writing to the Mother General, G. Berra, a missionary sister in Assam speaks of the great religious piety of the people of Guwahati. But then, for the missionary, the whole cult was unfortunately addressed to the devil. She wrote:

Behold the Muslims, kneeling on their coloured carpets, with
their faces turned to the sinking sun and their hands raised in

⁵ There is no discussion in GM on the salvation of the non-baptised. GM simply presents the non-baptised part of humanity as not saved, because it has not benefited from the passion and death of Jesus Christ.

prayer! Behold the daily evening procession of men and women, youth and children who descend the steps that lead to the water of the river; dressed in their best dress, they descend very recollected singing mournful dirges; they kneel near the water, dip their hand in the water and sprinkle themselves according to the rite of ablution. How the heart pains to see such a crowd of people rendering homage to Satan! When will those knees bow before the true God and pray to him with a cult of faith and love?⁶

The evil one is the master not only of pagan worship, but from some of the early reports, it appears that, the impression that GM had of the non-Christian world was of a space where the devil had made his home, and where he had his officials to perpetuate his lordship. Poignant indeed, is what Giovanni Fergnani, a missionary in India, writes in the June issue of 1923. Reporting some cases of possession by the evil spirit, and what Fr. Mederlet, a missionary in India, was doing to deliver the victims from the power of the evil one, the author remarks, "The evil spirits live in the pagan countries as if in their own house!"⁷ And the missionary views the priests of the local religions as nothing less than agents of the evil one. In fact Fergnani, pictures a Hindu Fakir as "one

⁶ BERRA G., *Prime Impressioni a Gauhati*, in GM 2 (1924) 3, 38. Another article in the same issue of GM, though it does not directly speak of the pagan religion of China as a worship of the devil, refers to it in similar terms. In that article V. Bernardini narrates the story of a young boy who was accepted in the Salesian institute of Macao, and in the course of his stay with the Salesians accepted baptism. The boy was noted for his great affection for his mother. The author notes that the boy's greatest joy was to go home during the days of vacation. But after his baptism, the boy, out of the conviction that a baptised person could not live in the same house where the family adored the devil, sacrificed even that which was so dear to him: to see his beloved mother. Cfr. BERNARDINI V., *Il Missionario della Propria Mamma*, in GM 1 (1923) 3, 41-42.

⁷ FERGNANI G., *Gli Scherzi del Diavolo*, in GM 1 (1923) 5, 74. Another missionary, G. Cucchiara, speaks of the situation of China in a very similar fashion. He writes in March 1924, "The devil is almost like the uncontested lord in China. His presence is felt every where: in the thousands of pagodas, in the innumerable idols, in the mysterious superstitious rites, in the customs and in the works and words of their worshippers." CUCCHIARA G., *La Rabbia del Demonio*, in GM 2 (1924) 3, 43. This presentation of the pagan world placed under the tyrannical

of those unfortunate ones who in India are docile instruments of the wicked seducer.”⁸

Thus, besides the simplistic division of the world into saved and unsaved, there was yet another division based on the two kingdoms: of God or of the evil power. The saved world is synonymous with the kingdom of God, and the unsaved world signified the kingdom of evil. The use of the concept of the two kingdoms brought in the element of a warfare between the two kingdoms, a warfare that was to last to the end of time, and culminate in the decisive victory of the kingdom of God over that of the devil. In this perspective, the image of the mission that emerges is that of conquering souls from the power of the evil one, and making them willing subjects of the kingdom of God. Accordingly, every missionary is a conqueror, a peaceful and just captain who leads his army from one conquest to another.⁹ He rescues souls from the tyranny of the evil in this life and from eternal damnation in the next life. Then the only order for the whole army of missionaries is that to conquer souls. “Conquer souls

dominion of the evil one, forms what would be a backdrop for the various presentations of the indigenous people in GM. It is the dominion of the devil that is the cause of the various inhuman customs prevalent in the various countries. The spirit of vendetta among the aboriginal groups of Latin America, the practice of cannibalism present in many tribes of Africa, the caste system in India, the utter social disorder and confusion in China, the attachment to the worship of the ancestors that closes the heart to accepting the Catholic faith could all be seen in this perspective of a world controlled by the powers of the evil one. Although the assertion is not repeated so often, it is clear that this mode of viewing the pagan world is basic to GM’s vision of the missions. In some articles GM does not hesitate to make open statements about this tyrannical dominion of the devil over the pagan world. For example in the editorial of September 1933, speaking of the urgency to work for indigenous clergy in the missions, the editor refers to the mission lands as “regions which still lie under the tyrannical dominion of Satan”. *Il Clero Indigeno e le Speranze della Chiesa*, in GM 11 (1933) 9, 194.

⁸ FERGNANI G., *Gli Scherzi del Diavolo*, in GM 1 (1923) 5, 75. Practically same is the discription that GM gives of bonzes in other Asian countries. In a little narration that actually deals with the conversion of a bonze to the Christian faith, the bonzes are spoken of as “priests of the devil”. *L’Ave Maria del Bonzo*, in GM 15 (1937) 5, 74.

⁹ Cfr. *Con gli Eroi della Croce*, in GM 4 (1927) 2, 36.

for Christ! This is the order to every ideal missionary,”¹⁰ so writes the editor in the March 1937 issue of GM.¹¹

Another image that is constantly used in reference to the Christian world in relationship with the pagan one is that of light and darkness. The Christian world has in Christ the true light that illumines all aspects of life (cfr. Jn 8:12). But the pagan world, being deprived of this light lives in darkness. Not only that they do not have the light of revelation to know the true God and the only way of salvation, but also that the reign of evil that is spread over them, makes them even blind to what would otherwise be easily reached by human reason. The various inhuman practices prevalent in the mission lands reinforce the conviction that these people live in a darkness that is almost total.

It is the profound conviction of the missionary that the indigenous people in the missions are waiting for the light of faith and of civilisation. Cesare Albisetti speaks of the savage Bororos in March 1923, as “those poor children of the forest who await the light of faith and civilization from us.”¹² The tyranny of the evil one and the consequent darkness that pervades the life of the pagans is something that is imposed on them. It is not that the people themselves are evil. It is a cruel slavery to which they are subjected. So the missionary’s battle is not with the indigenous population, as was that of the colonisers. The missionary’s engagement is in favour of the pagan people, against the powers of darkness, to liberate the pagans from such a cruel tyranny. As human beings destined to eternal happiness, the pagans themselves long to be liberated, to be enlightened, to be placed on the road to eternal salvation. Therefore the picture that emerges is that of a world desperately in need of some one to help them. Referring to

¹⁰ *Il Filo Conduttore*, in GM 15 (1937) 3, 33.

¹¹ In the period after World War II there is a kind of a toning down of this concept of conquering souls. In fact an article in 1962 stresses that the missionaries are not like the colonisers sent out to conquer foreign lands. Instead they have come to call people of all races to form part of the great family of God. This is the true vocation of every race, to form a single people in Christ. Cfr. *Uniti nell'Amore di Lui*, in GM 38 (1960) 9, 3. But in some way the idea persists, and does not disappear completely.

¹² ALBISETTI C., *Quant'è Buono il Signore*, in GM 1 (1923) 2, 26.

the almost 2 billion non-baptised people in the world, in July 1942, GM remarks, “Deprived of light, thirsty for truth and justice, the non-believers wait for a generous hand which would unbind the bonds of superstition and error and reach them to the green pastures of redemption and of life.”¹³

As true happiness of the human person consists in his knowledge and service of the one true God, the pagan world is pictured as one deprived of this foundation of true joy. The situation of the non-baptised is one of unhappiness and total abandonment. All that the pagan religions can offer them is fear, unrest, interior and exterior conflict. However, often this situation is brought about through no fault of theirs. They are born in it, live in it and die in it. A write up of an FMA sister in October 1927, reflects this sense of total abandonment of the pagan. Speaking of her impressions of her missionary life in Assam, she writes: “How many unhappy souls are born, live and die in an abandonment that is total: material and moral, without ever knowing their Creator, without being able to love Him because they have none to guide them to Him.”¹⁴

More poignant is what Ravalico writes in July 1952:

Paganism is the religion of despair. On the face of the pagans – be they Hindus, Muslims or animists— one searches in vain for those traces of serenity and of joy which instead are normal on those of our Christians. The pagan is sad and melancholic. All his actions and even his songs are pervaded by this sadness which has their source in that sense of diffidence and of fatalism. He feels as if he is oppressed by a being who is both relentless and cruel. He fears and is terrified by a multitude of evil spirits which persecute him continuously and whom he does not know how to propitiate adequately.¹⁵

¹³ *Ho Sete*, in GM 19 (1941) 7, 97. Certainly this is the natural perception of a person who is fervent in his faith, and recognises the value of the redemption in Christ. In the actual missions, the missionary does not find always this thirst for truth, this thirst for salvation among the people. Often he meets with an all pervading indifference; at times his presence and his activity is not accepted. Not that GM does not talk about these ground realities. But it prefers to project the believers’ perception of the pagan world.

¹⁴ *Vita Missionaria*, in GM 5 (1927) 10, 190-192.

¹⁵ RAVALICO L., *Seminatori di Gioia*, in GM 30 (1952) 7, 4.

The figure of the missionary

In this general picture of the pagan world, GM depicts the missionary as the one who dedicates himself to this pagan world. It is his perception of this world and of its basic needs that determines his response, his activity. He is the one who brings salvation to the world that needs to be saved. He is the true conqueror of souls, who liberates them from the tyranny of the evil one. He is the one who brings to the world light and joy. His mission is that of Christ himself, to save the world.

The saviour of souls

GM presents the salvation of souls, regenerating the pagan people in the waters of baptism, as the driving force behind all missionary action of the Church. Salvation of souls is the one great goal of all missionary life. It is the ideal that gives birth to the desire to dedicate oneself to the mission. It is the powerful motivation behind all that the missionary does. It sustains him in his moments of difficulty. And it is to save souls that the missionary lays down his life.

Examining some of the descriptions of GM, one gathers immediately the importance that the periodical has given to the dimension of saving souls. In November 1924 GM publishes a letter of one of its subscribers where the author calls the missionaries: "those who sacrifice everything to gain souls for God!"¹⁶ A. Marescalchi, in his serialised drama published in GM "*Quando Dio chiama*" defines the missionary as "a person who goes far away to convert the savages."¹⁷ In January 1934, GM speaks of missionaries as those who are "disposed to leave behind everything and to immolate themselves for the salvation of the non-believers."¹⁸

¹⁶ *Una Preposta*, in GM 2 (1924) 11, 173. It would be simplistic to state that this image was created only by GM. When one takes into account the general missionary ambient of the times, the missionary propaganda of the various groups and religious congregations, and the general religious ambience of the times, it becomes easier to accept that this was the accepted and popular image of the missionary in the Church and in society.

¹⁷ MARESCALCHI A., *Quando Dio Chiama*, in GM 6 (1928) 1, 17.

¹⁸ *Stelle*, in GM 12 (1934) 1, 2.

Introducing the small write up about Domenico Milanese (1843-1922) missionary in Patagonia, Zucchetti writes in April 1944, "The Missionary is another Christ who goes from country to country to preach the Gospel. He is the good shepherd who runs in search of the sheep to lead them to the fold of the Church."¹⁹

Renato Zigiotti writing to the readers of GM in the July 1955 issue, points to the conversion of non-believers as the one reason why more missionaries are needed especially in the eastern nations.²⁰ The missionary, according to the projection of GM from its beginning up to its very end, is primarily a seeker of souls, not for any personal gains, but to offer them salvation, and thus extend the Kingdom of God.

The missionary's one great desire, his earnest prayer is that every one be baptised, every one be saved. The prayer to Don Bosco and to Mary Help of Christian, which concludes the report of Mons. Lorenzo Giordano about his exploratory journey in Rio Negro "Grand that all be regenerated in the waters of Baptism, and that their children one day learn to love you in thousands of festive oratories,"²¹ is expressive not only of the earnest desire of the author, but of every true missionary.

This desire for the salvation of souls is not simply a desire; instead it is a passion, and the driving motive of all he does. In May 1928, GM publishes a report of Sr. Carolina Mioletti, an FMA sister visiting the FMA houses of the S. American missions. Speaking of the great hardships that the missionary sisters accept with so much joy, the visitor remarks: "their only longing is to gain and bring souls to Jesus."²² This desire for souls in the missionary is not something of a passing nature. It is a passion, and it is the only passion!

It is this passion for the salvation of souls that makes the missionary capable of accepting all the sacrifices involved in his

¹⁹ ZUCCHETTI D., *Gli Itinerari di un Missionario*, in GM 22 (1944) 4, 37.

²⁰ Cfr. ZIGGIOTTI R., *Un Appello dall'Oriente*, in GM 33 (1955) 7, 23.

²¹ GIORDANO L., *Primo Viaggio di Esplorazione*, in GM 1 (1923) 2, 23.

²² MIOLETTI C., *Dalle Suore a Macas*, in GM 6 (1928) 5, 88.

vocation. GM does not downplay the difficulties and sacrifices of missionary life. Among these sacrifices, one that every missionary has to accept is the necessary separation from his family and dear ones.²³ The missionary is called to break with every human tie as GM says. It is that great passion for the salvation of souls, for co-operating in the saving mission of Jesus Christ himself, that assists the young missionaries to overcome the natural pains of such a definitive separation.²⁴

The supernatural motive of saving souls, sustains not only the primary sacrifice of breaking with all human ties, but sustains the whole life of the missionary in the distant lands. The transfer from one's homeland to the mission land is always a transfer from comfort to discomfort, from abundance to poverty, from development to backwardness, from ease to difficulties of all types! Salvation of souls is the only and true motive for this apparently unintelligent choice. This aspect of sacrifice is so much present in the life of the missionary that it becomes almost synonymous with

²³ All missionaries had to leave their homes, their families, and their homelands. But the sacrifice seemed to be all the more demanding when it had to be made at a still tender age. Even though travelling had been facilitated by the big steam driven Ocean liners, it was common practice that when the missionary left his home and country, he left it for good, often with no hope of return. It was a definitive and perpetual separation from home and from homeland! The separation became all the more painful when it involved aged or sickly parents. Yet the heroic missionary accepted this necessary separation as a part of his missionary vocation.

²⁴ Cfr. BONARDI P., *Giovinetti, Pensate al Missionario*, in GM 1 (1923) 12, 195. Quite often this generosity is opposed by the parents and the family, and almost always beyond the understanding of the people of the world, especially who have their eyes fixed on material gains. Thus the crowd of people travelling along with the missionaries in the same ships do not understand why these young men should leave everything precious in the world, just to save souls! Cfr. FOGLIA G., *Accoglienze a Shillong*, in GM 2 (1924) 3, 38; CAVOLI A., *A Traverso la Zona Nera*, in GM 4 (1926) 6, 106-108. V. Barberis in May 1925 notes that the Chinese people in general find it difficult to understand the motive of the missionary in leaving their families and their countries. Very much governed by their excessive love for money and their greed to make profit, they just fail to comprehend why the missionaries, intelligent as they are, should leave a better condition back in their homelands to live in the misery of China. In their ignorance they are at times quick to attribute material motives to the missionaries' sacrifices and activities. Cfr. BARBERIS V., *A Tu per Tu con i Cinesi*, in GM 3 (1925) 5, 99-102.

his earnestness to save souls. In July 1929, after describing the difficulty of visiting the villages of the mountainous region of Cherrapunjee, in the Assam missions, Giuseppe Farassino writes: "Oh! If it were not to save the souls for whom Christ has shed his blood, certainly, no one would come to spend his life in this yes beautiful but difficult land."²⁵ This is the feeling of not only this missionary in Assam, but of every missionary who leaves his homeland to work for souls in distant undeveloped lands.

The Catholic missionary, accepts the inclemencies of the weather, the uncomfortable dwellings, the savage ambience, the ignorant and even ungrateful people, makes himself one with them, shares their living patterns; all with the motive of gaining them to Christ. And truly enough, the local people recognise the true ambassador of God, and through him the true religion, from the sacrifices that the missionary is capable of making. Bonardi Paolo, in December 1923, speaking about how the missionary accepts all the sacrifices required by his apostolate, reports what the people of his mission remarked to him, "We are convinced that your religion is the true one because you love the native people, and you don't do it simply for the sake of a job!"²⁶ In March 1937 a write up of Cignatta, missionary in India, notes that the Catholic missionary accepts not only the small and big sacrifices involved in the life in the mission land, but also the slow ruining of his own physical health and the gradual shortening of his own life span, consequence of his dedication to his apostolate. And according to Cignatta, it is only the Catholic missionary who goes to such extremes and that too for the sake of souls. He writes: "Only the Catholic Missionary in general and the Salesian in particular accepts to loose his own physical health, and that always to gain souls to Christ who by preference preached the Gospel to the poor."²⁷

²⁵ FARASSINO G., *Su e Giù pel Distretto*, in GM 7 (1929) 7, 135.

²⁶ BONARDI P., *Giovanetti, Pensate al Missionario*, in GM 1 (1923) 12, 193. Cfr. also Pilla, *L'Appello Celeste*, in GM 13 (1935) 8, 158; CASIRAGHI L., *Lettera di un Pioniere*, in GM 37 (1959) 11, 26-28.

²⁷ CIGNATTA, *La Mercede dei Conquistatori di Anime*, in GM 15 (1937) 3, 44-45.

If the missionary's motivation to save souls is great in the ordinary run of his ministry, it is all the more compelling when the non-believer is at the moment of death, and runs the risk of being eternally damned. In such cases nothing at all seems to be powerful enough to hold the missionary back from reaching the bed side of the dying person. Hours of journeying through forests infested with wild animals, dangerous crossings of swollen rivers, fear of pirates, his own physical tiredness, pouring rain, the unbearable tropical heat, etc. only add lustre to the missionary's zeal to assure eternal life to the dying person. And one of the great joys of the missionary is precisely to be able to baptise a dying person! And it is a joy all so special, of some one who has definitely helped a person to reach heaven. Such a joy recompenses all the sacrifices involved in reaching the dying person.²⁸

Besides being "their only longing" and the compelling motive behind their life of constant sacrifices, salvation of souls is something to which the missionary consecrates his life, and in which consecration finds his joy and fulfilment. In April 1925, Mons Luigi Mathias reporting the death of the first FMA in Guwahati, Sr. Maria Bricarello, reports that these were her last words: "I have consecrated my soul and body to the Lord for the salvation of souls. Since my journey to India on the large steamer, I have renewed to Him many times this sacrifice of my life."²⁹

According to the presentation of GM, such dedication was not the matter of just some particular individual cases. It was the normal missionary behaviour! Freed from all human bonds,

²⁸ Cfr. *Vita Missionaria*, in GM 5 (1927) 10, 190-192; CASSETTA G., *Azione Religiosa*, in GM 9 (1931) 8, 144; *Un Battesimo in un Tempio Buddista*, in GM 20 (1942) 6, 52-53; CAVALLA C., *Salvare un Anima*, in GM 33 (1955) 4, 18; RAVALICO L., *La Pista degli Elefanti*, in GM 45 (1967) 8-9, 16-19.

²⁹ MATHIAS L., *La Prima Vittima della Carità Cristiana*, in GM 3 (1925) 4, 82. What Mons. Mathias highlights about the life of Sr. Bricarello is that as a nurse working in the public hospital of Guwahati, she had the joy of baptising 40 dying people and thus assuring them of eternal salvation. And again it was her zeal to serve the sick and the dying that made her contract small pox from which she died at the age of 35. Mons. Mathias notes that the missionary is very much aware that he will be required even to sacrifice his life for the sake of the Gospel.

planted in a foreign land, the missionary wanted to give himself fully to his ministry of saving souls. Very pertinent is the prayer that Pietro Piacenza, a missionary in Japan, is reported to have made in front of the picture of Mary Help of Christians in the basilica in Turin before he departed for the missions. He prayed: "May my new life be a continual immolation of myself to Jesus for the salvation of souls."³⁰ In August 1942, presenting the figure of Angelo Rouby, a salesian priest in Ecuador, and the difficult journeys he would undertake across forests, rivers, overcoming all kinds of difficulties, GM reports what the missionary himself pointed to, as the motive of such endless journeys: "The desire to be of benefit to that soul makes me devour the way!"³¹

It would appear that the missionary is so fully dedicated to the cause of saving souls that this aspect colours his whole vision of life. As, according to the saying, the cobbler has his eyes on the shoes, the missionary has his eyes on souls! In June 1926, presenting the narration of Antonio Cavoli about the long journey from Italy to Japan, GM notes that what impressed the young missionaries on their journey, was the pagan population of the various ports of call, who needed yet to be evangelised. And the question that in some way tormented the group of those young missionaries was "When will the Gospel be preached to them, and by whom?"³²

This dedication to the mission is something more than mere background of his life and activity. It is in the foreground, and he

³⁰ *Il Santo della Strada*, in GM 13 (1935) 9, 162.

³¹ *Un Apostolo dei Kivari*, in GM 20 (1942) 8, 68. Angelo Rouby in this case was speaking of a particular visit to a dying person, of the difficulty of the long journey, of what motivated him to accept all that with joy. That which an ordinary person would calculate only in terms of fatigue, difficulties and sacrifice, the missionary calculates in terms of love for Christ and for the souls redeemed by His saving passion.

³² Cfr. CAVOLI A., *A Traverso la Zona Nera*, in GM 4 (1926) 6, 106-108. Obviously this preoccupation with the salvation of souls, colours the way that the missionary looks at the whole non-Christian reality. What the missionary spends his life for is not just civilisation, progress, peaceful co-habitation of various ethnic groups. The missionary is not contented with just making good human person. The truly good human person for him is the baptised. Therefore it is to baptising and to making disciples of Christ, and that too in the Catholic Church alone, that the missionary dedicates his entire life.

lives it consciously every day. And in his talks, both public and private to the people of the mission, he is in no way apologetic about his motives and convictions. In March 1926, Stefano Fernando, speaking of a Eucharistic celebration in one of the villages near Shillong, reports the contents of the preaching of Costantino Vendrame at the occasion. Aware of the presence of many non-Christians who were either present at the function, or who were listening to the sermon from their homes, Vendrame is reported to have pointed to the group of young missionaries, present at the feast, who had just arrived from Europe, and said:

Why have these missionaries come here? Because of their thirst for gold? No! They have come for your sake! Yes for you! God has sent us to you to bring you salvation. Because there are two ways: one that leads to hell and the other to paradise. Heaven is reserved for Catholics, and hell for the others who refuse the grace of God.³³

The missionary – the apostle of Christ, sent to establish God's kingdom

It would be difficult to distinguish between saving souls and establishing the kingdom of God in the mission lands. The latter points more to the true Master who sends out the missionaries, and at whose command, and in reference to whom, the missionary does all that he does. The missionary's love for souls is not something that is based on mere human philanthropy. It has its roots in the profound recognition, guided by Christian faith, of the value of redemption brought about by Jesus Christ.

The missionary launches out into the foreign lands in obedience to the explicit command of Christ: "Go, make disciples of all the nations; baptise them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit" (Mt 28:19). His love for souls is a reflection of his allegiance to Christ.³⁴

³³ FERRANDO S., *Nel Villaggio di Macolai*, in GM 4 (1926) 3, 46.

³⁴ The foundation of the missionary work in the command of the Lord is what is reflected all through the life of GM. Even the designs on the front covers, especially of the first few decades, often carrying the words of the mandate, insist on this divine marching order to the missionary.

GM presents the missionary's relationship with Christ, and his zeal to make Him known as the force that sustains his thirst for the salvation of souls. The memorable words which Mons. Cagliari reported to have addressed to group of benefactors gathered to see the missionaries set sail from the port of Marseilles, "We set out with the intention of making Jesus Christ known and reign to the extreme confines of the world."³⁵ portray very much the sentiments of every missionary who left for distant mission lands.

According to Giovanni Siara one of the pioneering Salesian missionaries in Australia, the missionary is one who has made his own the interests of Christ and of his kingdom. And the interests of Christ which he makes so profoundly his own, spur the missionary even to put his life at risk in the many ordinary and extra-ordinary situations in the mission lands. The consciousness of being a minister of God, an apostle of Christ, sent out by the Church to conquer souls for the Kingdom, pushes the missionary to an enthusiasm that appears to the outsider, to be bordering on the eccentric, especially in its non-concerned attitude to the various dangers in strange and foreign lands.³⁶

According to a write up of Ravalico, this enthusiasm for the interests of Christ, and this eagerness to conquer whole nations for Him, is even more intense than that which would be felt by some one who is on an expedition in foreign lands just for the sake of making a fortune for himself. In an article, in July 1930, describing his journey to India, Ravalico reports that with the missionaries in the ship, there were many others travelling to India, but, as the author says, moved by the love of the gold of India. They too had left their families and dear ones, they too were putting their life at risk, and they too were enthusiastic about reaching India. But the missionary's enthusiasm superseded that of these

³⁵ GARNERI D., *Ricordi della Patagonia e Terra del Fuoco*, in GM 1 (1923) 9, 115.

³⁶ Cfr. SIARA G., *Verso la Missione di Lombadina*, in GM 3 (1925) 1, 5. Impressive indeed is the way that the missionary concludes his report, reflecting on the element of danger, risk, that is present in mission life. He writes, "As for the rest, danger is an element of the life of the missionary. It does not arrest the tireless efforts of the minister of God, but confers on them an aureola of heroism which sustains everything for the interests of Christ."

adventurers. The missionaries, moved by a divine command, go to India with a heart that longs intensely to conquer the whole of it for Christ! Ravalico recalls the enthusiasm that gripped his heart and those of his companions in these words:

We were totally decided; ready for any sacrifice. It was not for nothing that we were recruited among the soldiers of Christ. [...] Apostle is a synonym for martyr. Who ever consecrates himself entirely to the Lord resolutely breaks every worldly bond, and offers himself to God as victim for the conversion of the unbelieving world.³⁷

It was the zeal of the martyrs that animated these young missionaries who left the shores of Europe for diverse missionary lands, with the manifest intention of conquering souls for Christ.

Under the influence of much literature that projected a romanticised image of the missions and of the missionary, the young readers could acquire a notion of the missionary reality in terms of adventures in the forests, encounters with pirates, and so on. A desire to launch out into a land that offered so much by way of adventure could also be guided by that simple love for the unknown and for the adventurous. In the face of such a possible danger, GM, in February 1931, points to the dedication to the kingdom of God as the key motivating factor in the life of a missionary, when it asserts,

For some the missions could mean canibals, brigands, thick forests, inaccessible places, innumerable difficulties or something of that type which immediately capture the juvenile fantasy! But the Missionary is not an adventurer. Instead he is a soul dedicated to Jesus, consecrated to the coming of the reign of Christ.³⁸

Umberto Dalmasso, a missionary in China, through a small write up in August 1931, also bears witness to the profound consciousness of the missionaries of their divine mission. The missionary protests that the mission apostolate is not a work that they have taken on themselves for motives of a human nature.

³⁷ Ravalico L., *Giovani Apostoli*, in GM 8 (1930) 7, 143.

³⁸ ZIO GIGI, *La Vera Gioventù Missionaria*, in GM 9 (1931) 2, 21.

Missionaries are apostles, and like the first apostles, they too are commissioned to preach and to baptise. Their enthusiasm in their mission is nothing but the exterior manifestation of their inner adhesion to Christ himself.³⁹

A column entitled "*Il missionario nelle definizioni degli agmisti del Colle Don Bosco*" in the September 1945 issue of GM, in some way projects the understanding of the young about missions and missionaries. Most of the definitions manifest an understanding of the missions in its intimate connection with the proclamation of the Gospel, the salvation of souls, of planting the Church. The underlying image of the missionary is of a person, who is consumed by a great love for Christ. One of the definitions which express more vividly this aspect is one which defines the missionary as "one who crosses the vast oceans, travels across impenetrable forests and inhospitable regions, consuming his life even to the point of martyrdom to announce the Gospel to all people."⁴⁰

A little article of June 1935 gives an insight into the profound spirituality of the missionary. The article notes that the missionary is not simply a person who is commissioned by Christ to preach the Gospel, and then left to himself. The missionary realises his mission as a simple instrument in the hand of Christ, the true master of the harvest. The awareness that the mission is the Lord's, and that he is just an instrument, that the force comes from the One who sends, requires that the missionary maintains a close relationship with Christ in all his activities. In the words of GM the missionary is profoundly aware that without that close relationship with the lord, "one would experience that sterility of apostolate and as a consequence the impossibility of continuing in a type of life so full of insurmountable difficulties, of immense sacrifices and empty of those spiritual consolations which comfort every one who works for the salvation of souls."⁴¹ Instead, the

³⁹ Cfr. DALMASSO U., *Le Vacanze del Missionario*, in GM 9 (1931) 8, 142.

⁴⁰ *Il Missionario nelle Definizioni degli Agmisti del Colle Don Bosco*, in GM 23 (1945) 9, 95. Evidently the aspect of romanticism is not missing from this definition. But the author has well grasped the profound motivation of the missionary, his primary work, and the ultimate sacrifice that the mission calls for.

⁴¹ *La Forza dei Missionari*, in GM 13 (1935) 6, 102.

missionary who lives in union with the Lord of the harvest, is not carried away by his own popularity and his successes, nor discouraged by the rejection and the failures he meets with.

One of the character traits of the missionary that follows from the consideration of the greatness of the mission entrusted to him, is generosity of heart. One would say that GM projects this as a prerequisite for every one who intends to launch out into the missions. In the editorial of November 1940, GM says,

The missionary is a generous soul. [...] Whoever is called to apostolate must be first of all animated by a great sense of generosity which renders him capable of forgetting himself and disposes him to sacrifice that which is most precious in the world! The separations demanded by this vocation are painful and definitive! [...] The acceptance of a missionary vocation, perhaps, constitutes the greatest victory that a young person can claim.⁴²

Only a noble and generous heart can come to this great victory. The initial sacrifices involved in the separation from one's family and from one's homeland, and that too often definitively, touch certain deep human realities of the young person. GM delineates, in no vague terms, these initial sacrifices when it writes,

To follow this divine invitation, he needs to break the most intimate and significant human bonds! He needs to suffocate the voice of the heart, remain unperturbed by the voices of blood, renounce the vision of things which are most dear to him, sacrifice his affections, strip his youth of those natural flowers of his age so that those of grace sprouts and matures into fruits of sanctity!⁴³

⁴² *L'Araldo di Cristo Re*, in GM 18 (1940) 11, 161.

⁴³ *L'Araldo di Cristo Re*, in GM 18 (1940) 11, 161. In an earlier editorial, that of November 1936, the missionary ideal was projected as a true school of sanctity, something that actuates a true transformation in the person who accepts it whole heartedly. The editor wrote: "The missionary ideal is the school of sanctity because it nourishes and perfects spiritual life, offering occasion for the exercise of the noblest virtues and proposing heroic examples. [...] When the soul is conquered by that fascination for this ideal, it wakes up, elevates itself and transforms itself." *Elevazione*, in GM 14 (1936) 11, 165.

And the editor continues that in the mission lands, the missionary has to have an exceptional temperament, which again guided by that spirit of generosity, is capable of further sacrifices. What awaits him is an inhospitable land, barbarous people, unhealthy climate, an unintelligible language. Often he will find himself all alone, without the nearness of some person dear to him, surrounded by dangers. The world of superstitions will engage in an endless battle against him. Only a generous commitment to the mission, will sustain the missionary in those difficult moments.

GM projects martyrdom not only as the ultimate act of generosity to which the missionary is open, but also as a goal for which he longs. Martyrdom is the crowning of all the sacrifices that the missionary is called to accept. It is his ultimate and most powerful act of proclaiming the Gospel, and often, according to GM, the one which produces abundant fruit.

Missions are the fertile ground that produces these great heroes of faith. The perspective of martyrdom is one that accompanies the whole life of a missionary. GM presents this dimension of the missionary's life through various examples of missionaries who crowned their ministry with the palm of martyrdom.

In the various presentations of the martyrs of the missions, the highlight is not on the sufferings endured, but on the joy, the peace, the sense of glory that these martyrs expressed in their last moments. Thus, presenting the Japanese martyrs of 1613, in the Christmas issue of 1923, what GM highlights is the great heroism of these martyrs, and in a special way their joy and gratitude to God, in being granted the grace of martyrdom. GM notes that even the other Christians who were present at the execution of these martyrs, burst into a hymn of thanksgiving. To convey to the readers the idea that these martyrs are the true victors, GM makes it a point to mention that even the executors ask pardon from the martyrs as they lead these heroes to their glorious end!⁴⁴

In October 1925 GM carries the story of the martyrdom of Mbaga Tuzinde and his 21 companions, pages in the court of the

⁴⁴ Cfr. *Martiri del Giappone*, in GM 1 (1923) 11, 185-186.

king of Uganda in the year 1886. The narration is intended to highlight the courage of these youngsters, most of them of the same age as the readers of GM. They were not frightened by the sufferings that awaited them. They were not even moved by the desperate appeals of their own parents. It was their attachment to Christ, that superseded everything, and they would sacrifice that for nothing on earth. The missionary is moved by the same forceful motivation. He makes every sacrifice required of his missionary vocation because of his great love for Christ. And when he is called to make the ultimate sacrifice of his own life, he accepts it with joy and sees in it the crowning of all his desires.⁴⁵

After the martyrdom of Luigi Versiglia and Callisto Caravario, GM recounts the story of their martyrdom in various issues. In these various narrations of the martyrdom of the two missionaries in China, GM presents martyrdom as a consequence of the missionaries' dedication to the people entrusted to him. As a good shepherd, he not only stays with his flock in times of difficulties, but when necessary makes the supreme sacrifice of his own life for the good of his flock.⁴⁶

According to some of the write ups in GM, it is not only the missionary who actually gives his life for the cause of the Gospel who deserves the name of martyr, but every missionary who is faithful to his mission! The editorial of April 1937, quoting the words of Pius XI, the then reigning Pontiff, "the missionary ideal is the highest and perennial school of sacrifice," affirms that the life of the missionary is a continuous martyrdom. The sacrifices required

⁴⁵ Cfr. *Il Beato Mbaga Tuzinde*, in GM 3 (1925) 10, 222-223.

⁴⁶ Cfr. GARNERI D., *Vittime dell'Apostolato*, in GM 8 (1930) 4, 82-84; *Ricordando i Nostri Cari Martiri della Cina*, in GM 8 (1930) 5, 101-103; DE AMICIS, *Il Motto di Due Apostoli*, in GM 20 (1942) 2, 18-20; *Monsignor Versiglia – Don Caravario*, in GM 37 (1959) 2, 17- 23. The same image of the missionary, the good shepherd who lays down his life for his sheep, is repeated in quite a few of the subsequent issues of GM. So in presenting the three martyrs beatified in 1934, Rocco Gonzales, Giovanni Del Castillo and Alfonso Rodriguez, missionaries in the "Reductions" of Latin America, GM does not fail to assert that all these missionaries laid down their life for the natives who were under their care. Such was their love for the natives. Cfr. *Tre Palme e Tre Aurole*, in GM 12 (1934) 3, 43-44.

of the missionary do not have an end! The present sacrifices only prepare the missionary in some way for those which will be required of him in the future, till he reaches the ultimate sacrifice of his own life. Sacrifice is simply the other side of the coin of his great love for Christ and for souls. According to this editorial, love and sacrifice are just names of a single reality. “Authentic and efficacious love has another name which at the same time expresses its merit and heroism: sacrifice!”⁴⁷ The continuous sacrifices required of the missionary in the day to day living out of his vocation, makes of his life a day to day martyrdom.

A serialised narration for nine months in 1943, of what GM calls the martyrdom of Giovanni Fuchs and Pietro Sacilotti, killed by the Chavantes on November 1 1934, points also to the importance that GM attributed to the dimension of martyrdom in the life of the missionary. These missionaries were killed, in the process of their efforts to make the first contacts with the Chavantes. They did not even have the joy of truly initiating the process of evangelising this tribe. The circumstances of their death point more to a misunderstanding on the part of the tribals than to a purposeful intention to do away with those missionaries of the Gospel. What GM seems to be saying through these narrations is this: that which makes the missionary a martyr, is not only the circumstances of his death, but much more, that radical orientation of a life given over totally to the cause of the Gospel. And in this vision of things, not only these two missionaries can be called martyrs, but every missionary who spends his life for the Gospel has a right to that name.⁴⁸

As noted earlier, in the various reports about China in the post World War II period, it is the aspect of the suffering Church in the country that is highlighted by GM. The periodical speaks of the heroism of the missionaries who stay on willingly among the

⁴⁷ *Tremendo Dilemma*, in GM 15 (1937) 4, 50.

⁴⁸ Cf. DUROURE G., *Sul Fiume della Morte*, in GM 21 (1943) 2, 10-11; 21 (1943) 3, 18-19; 21 (1943) 4, 26-27; 21 (1943) 5, 34-35; 21 (1943) 6, 42-43; 21 (1943) 7, 50-51; 21 (1943) 8, 58-59; 21 (1943) 9, 68-69; 21 (1943) 10, 74-75; 21 (1932) 11, 84-85.

people, in spite of the threats and the cruel treatment meted out to them. Their true joy is to stay with their Christians and to give their life, up to its last breath. From the reports, it would appear that expulsion from China is more painful than all other sufferings that the communist government inflicts on the heroic missionaries.⁴⁹

In June 1961, in a report about the three missionaries martyred in the same year, GM sums up in two sentences its notion of martyrdom in the life of the missionary. It says, “The perspective of martyrdom is therefore always included in the concept of the missionary vocation. Every missionary holds it at the top of all his aspirations as the greatest success of his vocation!”⁵⁰

What GM sought through its various presentations of the stories of the martyrs in the mission lands, was not just to give its readers some historical information. These narrations had the purpose of deepening the readers’ generosity and of inviting them to a height of heroism that in some way resembled the heroism of the martyred missionaries. In fact this is the idea that the editor himself expresses in the same report of June 1961. He writes,

We do not agree with those who would not make known the episodes of extreme sacrifice of the apostles of the faith to the young who are just in the process of a maturation of their missionary vocation. On the contrary, we are of the opinion that the feats of these heroes serve to animate them more towards the missionary ideal. The blood of the martyrs is not only the seed of new Christians, but also of new and more generous apostles.⁵¹

The missionary – the founder of the Church

Yet another image of the missionary very closely connected with his being an apostle of Christ, sent out to save souls, is that of the founder of the Church in foreign lands. There is no departure

⁴⁹ Cfr. ARDUINO M., *La Chiesa in Cina Continua a Scrivere*, in GM 35 (1957) 1, 3. Even the subsequent articles speak about the persecution that raged in China in the period after the World War II.

⁵⁰ *Tempo di martiri*, in GM 39 (1961) 6, 2.

⁵¹ *Tempo di martiri*, in GM 39 (1961) 6, 3.

from the other two images. But this image of the founder of the Church could be seen as a holistic approach to the idea of the mission: not just preaching the Gospel, nor saving souls individually, but founding stable communities of believers capable in turn of becoming missionaries to other regions and other peoples.⁵²

In May 1945, explaining the scope of the missions, the editor emphasises that the only scope of the missions is to found the Church in regions where it does not exist. But here again founding of the Church has its value because the Church is the only means of salvation. So it is not that the dimension of saving souls is side-tracked, but the idea of mission is enlarged to include all the laborious efforts at establishing a strong and stable local community of believers, capable of missionary action in favour of those around them.⁵³

In the editorial of June 1945, in an attempt to clarify the notion of the mission and of the missionary, the editor notes that the true scope of the missions is the “stable foundation of the Church.” And the missionary is “the one who plants the Church. He is the founder of the church in every part of the world.”⁵⁴ According to this editorial, this definition of the missionary sums up everything that the missionary is and does. And it is this aspect of being a founder that distinguishes him from other priests and religious. As founders of the Church they are like the Apostles.⁵⁵

In September 1959, to the simple question “Who is the missionary?” GM simply repeats what had been written in the editorial of June 1945:

⁵² This introduction of this new image is very much in line with the official teachings of the Church, which in these years emphasised very strongly the local aspect of the Church, the need to cater to the promotion of indigenous clergy, to create a self-sufficient church in all aspects possible.

⁵³ Cfr. *Scopo delle Missioni*, in GM 23 (1945) 5, 51.

⁵⁴ *I Missionari*, in GM 23 (1945) 6, 63.

⁵⁵ The importance of founding the Church is again seen in the fact that the Church is the only means of salvation for the world. Therefore the new vision is not a departure from the old.

The missionary is the apostle who labours in the Missions for the scope of planting solidly the Catholic Church. The missionary therefore is one who plants the church where it does not yet exist. He is the founder of the Church in every part of the world. Everything is said in these simple short words. In vain one would search for words which are truer and eulogies greater. It is precisely in this aspect that the missionary distinguishes himself from other priests and is more similar to the Apostles and even to Jesus Christ, the divine founder of the Church. Everything else which could be said about the missionary passes into the secondary sphere or remains just mere poetry!⁵⁶

The missionary – the good shepherd

Yet another image of the missionary, presented by GM, closely connected with his mission of saving souls, being an apostle of Christ, of founding the Church, is that of the good shepherd. This image is used to project the missionary's method of action. He is by no means, just a conqueror, much less a mercenary. He is a friend, a father to the people he serves, not merely because he lives with them, but more because he sacrifices himself for his flock. Unlike the mercenaries, he does not leave his people in their moment of need.

Like the good shepherd, the missionary's primary desire is the good of the flock entrusted to him, and for this he feels that his post is with the people he serves, and has no desire to be separated from his people. At times this desire to spend oneself to the last breath for the people pushes him even to a heroism that would seem absurd to ordinary people. In March 1923 Maria De Angeli presents this aspect in the character of Sr. Modesta Ravazza, a missionary in the leper colony of Contratacion, Colombia. She dedicated herself so whole heartedly to the mission that she wanted nothing to separate her from this difficult and heroic mission, not even holy obedience. Knowing that if she were to be affected by leprosy herself, she would never be taken away from her lepers,

⁵⁶ *Chi è il Missionario?*, in GM 37 (1959) 9, 5.

she prayed for the grace to become a leper herself, and her prayer was answered.⁵⁷

That love of the good shepherd that the missionary nurtures for his people, combined with the apostolic daring, makes him do things which really put his life at risk, things which not even the closest relations of the people themselves would think of doing. Umberto Dalmasso in 1926 May, reporting about the missionary’s efforts to rescue people abducted by the pirates, asserts that it is only the missionary, the good shepherd, who risks his own life in approaching the caves where these pirates live. Often even the path that leads to such habitations of the brigands is full of danger. The missionary purposely remarks that no relations of the captured person would ever undertake such a trip. Yet the missionary does what seems to be the impossible, because he is the good shepherd who is ready to sacrifice everything for his sheep.⁵⁸

Pietro Battezzati, a missionary in China, speaking of the courageous service rendered by the missionaries during the Communist invasion of Twang Tung, in an article published in GM in July 1928, highlights again this trait of the missionaries. According to Battezzati, this selfless, fearless shepherding of the flock, not only impressed the local population, but quite often served to open at least a little more their hearts to the Catholic faith. Battezzati describes the impression of the Chinese people in these words:

In the hour of pain, of despair and of terror, they [the Chinese] see the Catholic Missionary at their side, sharing in their agony, uncertainty, and helping them even to the last grain of rice. He is there to give them courage, illumine and warm their hearts with a ray of hope and divine light. In the missionary they find, not those mercenaries who at the minimal iniiziation of

⁵⁷ Cfr. DE ANGELI M., *Sorriso di Carità*, in GM 1 (1923) 2, 19. Her story is re-told in December 1931 and her heroic sacrifice. Along with her mention is made of two other FMAs who became themselves lepers: Teresa Rota and Domenica Barbero. It was the consequence of their apostolate among the lepers, but something they accepted whole heartedly. GM presents them as true heroines of charity. Cfr. *Comunità delle Eroine*, in GM 9 (1931) 12, 226-227. The same story is repeated in May 1939. Cfr. *Una Eroina della Carità*, in GM 16 (1939) 5, 83-84.

⁵⁸ Cfr. DALMASSO U., *Liberazione di Prigionieri dei Pirati*, in GM 4 (1926) 5, 89-92.

any disorder take their way for America, instead they find men of God, fathers, benefactors who place at their disposal not only all their possessions but above all their heart, their love, their intelligence, their experience and their whole life!⁵⁹

According to a report of Cesare Albisetti, in September 1936, it is the approach of the good shepherd who goes in search of the lost sheep, the sick, the abandoned and the aged, that marks the missionary out as the true minister of God. Speaking about the missionary's visits to the huts of the Bororos, about how he spends time with the sick to comfort and encourage them, Albisetti points to its great missionary efficacy. The people recognise the true missionary from the false from the way that the missionary treats his people. The author reports that the simple fact that he kept on visiting a sick Bororo, was the cause of his accepting baptism. And at his baptism, the Bororo is reported to have said, "All have abandoned me! Only you, the true minister of the good God, always come to visit me. The protestants send me a servant to bring me some gift, but they disdain to enter my little hut."⁶⁰

According to some of the reports of GM, the courageous and selfless service that the missionaries rendered to the people in the missions during the time of war was nothing but a true expression of the fact that they were true shepherds of the people. Thus, in February 1939, describing the difficult situation in which China found itself during the Japanese invasion, the editor notes that the Catholic missionaries in the region continue to succour the suffering people in every way possible. They do not leave the people in these trying moments; instead multiply their works with disinterested charity. The report says,

Truly the missionaries are the most selfless benefactors of the poor and of the suffering multitude. In spite of the difficulties, they keep on multiplying their works of peace and of charity. The same fury of the war, instead of diminishing their zeal, renders it more industrious and attentive to the benefit of so many in situations of misery.⁶¹

⁵⁹ BATTEZZATI P., *Albori di Pace*, in GM 6 (1928) 7, 124.

⁶⁰ ALBISETTI C., *La Vittoria della Sovrana Celeste*, in GM 14 (1936) 9, 145.

⁶¹ *Intenzione Missionaria per Febbraio*, in GM 17 (1939) 2, 22.

It is in moments of suffering of the people that the missionary shows himself a true benefactor, a true defender of his own people and a true shepherd. In March 1946, giving a very sketchy resume of the great sacrifices that the missionaries have made during the time of the War, the editor writes,

If through the centuries, the missionaries have appeared always as the true pioneers of civilization, benefactors of the people, defenders of the weak, good shepherds who give their lives for their sheep, so much more they have been so in these last very difficult years in which they have been involved in the terrible scourge of the war.⁶²

They do not abandon their people in these difficult times, instead share with them their sad plight and do everything to help them in the process of reconstruction.

The ultimate testimony that the missionary is truly the good shepherd is again martyrdom itself. The missionary is conscious that being a good shepherd, defending the flock entrusted to him, can even require the ultimate sacrifice of his own life. But not even the fear of death makes the missionary to abandon the flock. Instead, if his ministry requires this heroic testimony of his love, he joyfully accepts it, and considers martyrdom as the final crowning of all his missionary activity. As noted earlier, the repeated narrations of the martyrdom of Versiglia and Caravario present these two missionaries in this garb of the good shepherd who lays down his life for his sheep.⁶³

The true joys and sorrows of the missionary

It is in this overall projection of the missions and of the missionary in their relationship to salvation, being apostles of Christ, founders of the Church that GM speaks of the intimate joys and also of the true sufferings of the missionary.

⁶² *S'Illustri la Vita... dei Missionari*, in GM 24 (1946) 3, 3.

⁶³ Cf. GARNERI D., *Vittime dell'Apostolato*, in GM 8 (1930) 4, 82-84; *Ricordando i Nostri Cari Martiri della Cina*, in GM 8 (1930) 5, 101-103; CASSANO, *Vedo Sangue*, in GM 12 (1934) 4, 63- 68; DE AMICIS, *Il Motto di Due Apostoli*, in GM 20 (1942) 2, 18-20.

According to GM, the missionary does not long to carry off something from the mission lands, seeks no material rewards for his endless labours. His joy is simply the success of his mission. His greatest joy is to see the establishment and growth of the Church in the area where he works. The conversion of the peoples to faith in Jesus is the fulfilment of his life's dreams. Administering baptism recompenses all the sacrifices required of him.⁶⁴

Once the neophytes are introduced into the faith, and are made enthusiastic by the paternal care the missionary lavishes on them, they too just do not wait for the missionary to come in search of them. Often they too cover long distances, days of journeying, to reach centres where they hear the missionary has reached, to receive the sacraments and be comforted by their true spiritual father. These occasions unite the missionary and the faithful in their spirit of sacrifice! Endless lines of people waiting to make their confessions, the long queues at the communion rails, are veritable sources of satisfaction and spiritual joy to the missionary, not withstanding the added fatigue required from him. In this joyful fatigue the shepherd and the sheep unite in their common search for what contributes to the salvation of their souls.⁶⁵

⁶⁴ Cfr. *Principio d'Anno*, in GM 9 (1931) 6, 104-106. Even in the period after the World War II GM continues to present the spiritual aspect of the missionary's ministry as his true joy. He forgets his personal pains and sacrifices when he sees himself surrounded by his Christians, when he can administer the sacraments to them, assist them with his words of comfort, and recognise their spiritual growth. Cfr. LABRECQUE, *Viaggio nella Savana*, in GM 40 (1962) 5, 21 The missionary's joy is all the greater when even the local people appreciate his ministry, not for the fringe material benefits he brings to them, but for the true spiritual gains. Cfr. BORGATELO M., *Fiorellino Magellanico*, in GM 10 (1932) 4, 73. In the July-August issue of 1948, Mons. Ferando uses another expression to describe the intimate joy of the missionary. After describing the many difficulties that the missionaries have to put up with in the mission of Assam, the Bishop states that the missionaries do not lack that sense of joy and fulfilment. And their joy consists in having broken the chains that kept the local people slaves to the devil, and in having regenerated them in Christ, through baptism. Cfr. FERRANDO S., *Dall Assam, Terra Incomparabile*, in GM 26 (1948) 7-8, 9.

⁶⁵ Cfr. MICHELENS, *Natale Tra gli Igorroiti*, in GM 1 (1923) 12, 187. [«Missioni Cattoliche»]

According to what is projected in GM, even the missionary sister’s greatest joy is to prepare the local people for the various sacraments, especially baptism. Even if they themselves do not baptise, they work with the awareness that every bit of their activity is oriented to saving souls! But the joy of the missionary sister is unbounded when they themselves can baptise a dying child, a dying sick person and thus assure them of eternal salvation.⁶⁶

A small report of Ravalico in June 1941 also speaks of the human joys of the missionary. The missionary finds true satisfaction and joy in meeting the village people who wait eagerly for him. He accepts with joy the little signs of appreciation expressed by the people. He is happy to see the ambience of festivity that envelops his visits to the different Christian communities. The love and sincere affection that the people extend to him as to their own father and friend, lightens the fatigue of the long distances that he has to cover.⁶⁷

In April 1953 GM publishes Carlo Caretto’s report of his visit to the mission of his brother in Thailand. The author was impressed by the life of sacrifice that his brother led, but equally by the simple joys that filled the heart of the missionary. Caretto writes,

Yes, much sacrifice awaits the missionary: his life is hard. But his spirit experiences much joy too. Knowledge of new peoples, discovery of unthought of horizons, the savage life of the forest and of the rivers, joy of the apostolate, prayer

⁶⁶ Palmira Parri reflects the joy of the missionary sister at assisting at the baptism of the indigenous people in her letter published in GM in March 1924: “Oh Mother, what a great comfort one experiences at the baptism of the adults. In those moments every thing else disappears and one tastes the joy of seeing souls going to God.” PARRI P., *Il Primo Natale in Cina*, in GM 2 (1924) 3, 35. And a letter of yet another FMA sister working among the sick in the mission of Madras, published in GM May 1930, reflects the same sentiments: “What a great consolation it is for us to think that our humble work makes us instruments of salvation for so many of God’s creatures who otherwise would not have had the fortune of eternal happiness! Oh, if the good God sends us a little suffering, is it not perhaps, because He wishes us to bring souls to Him through these sufferings?”

MERLO T., *Gioie Tra i Malati di Polur*, in GM 8 (1930) 5, 112.

⁶⁷ Cfr. RAVALICO L., *Le Rose del Missionario*, in GM 19 (1941) 6, 94.

in the little churches constructed with much effort and continual struggle and above all the great feeling of being an agent of extending the kingdom of Christ in the distant lands!⁶⁸

People accustomed to a rather comfortable style of life, would feel a natural sympathy for one of their number who leaves these comforts and accepts the hard life of the missionary. They would be tempted to think that the missionary is truly sad at having to make so much sacrifice, to forgo so much in life. But GM repeatedly highlights the fact that it is not the absence of these material comforts that troubles the missionary. The true torment of the missionary is not the hunger, the thirst, the sufferings, the unhealthy climate, and the wild animals. His sorrow again, flows from his motivation. In October 1943, speaking of the real suffering of the missionary, GM has these beautiful words:

The sorrow of the missionary is in having to say no to a soul who asks that the gates of heaven be opened to him. It consists in watching helplessly with one's hands tied the uninterrupted line of souls who go to eternal death. It is the sense of helplessness at the pitiful cries of little children for a piece of bread and having to forcefully close one's ears to them. This is the most painful torment: that terrible helplessness in mission lands!⁶⁹

The same impression is given by Giovanni Pedrazzini, a missionary in China, when he speaks about the greatest suffering of the missionary. He categorically states that his greatest pain is

⁶⁸ CARETTO C., *Viaggio nel Siam*, in GM 31 (1953) 4, 10. Carlo Caretto himself was not a missionary. He had a brother, Pietro Caretto, a salesian missionary in Thailand. Pietro was later ordained Bishop of Rajaburi on the 29th of June 1951. Carlo visited his brother missionary, and gave a report of the missionary's life.

⁶⁹ *Spunti Missionari*, in GM 21 (1943) 10, 79. One would think that the editors are just being propagandistic. Perhaps that motive cannot be ruled out. But true experience in the missions would certainly verify the truth of the statement too. In front of human misery that the missionary has to face often, it is so painful to realize the limits of one's resourcefulness in all aspects, and to be plagued by the thought that there are so many out there who could contribute so much to alleviate the situation of these people only if they could do just a little. Even that little remains undone! And the missionary is driven to the limits of his capacity to suffer.

caused neither by his nostalgia for his country, nor by the absence of his family and dear ones. Pedrazzini says that all these form part of a missionary's programme, and he accepts them even before leaving for the missions. Instead the missionary's true suffering, according to Pedrazzini, is not to be able to save all who need to be saved, not to have the personnel and the means to expand the activities of the mission. He writes:

The sorrow, the great sorrow of the missionary is the lack of workers in the vineyard; it is the lack of means for the work. It is in seeing so many poor souls asking for the bread of the Word and having no one who breaks it for them! It is in seeing so many souls conquered by ambassadors who are not of Christ, contemplating the vastness of the field, the abundance of the harvest and the scarcity of Missionaries. It is seeing pagans constructing beautiful temples to gods that do not exist, protestants opening hospitals and schools in almost every center, and we poor Catholic Missionaries being constricted to give to our good God just a small hut for his dwelling, limit our works just for lack of personnel and means. [...] This indeed is the most painful torment of the Missionary.⁷⁰

GM's emphasis on the spiritual joys and sorrows of the missionary does not mean its blindness to the human dimension of the missionary's life. Even in an over all romanticised projection of the missions and of the missionary, GM does not seek to hide the hard realities of the missionary life. The spiritual conquests and the consequent joy does not in any way reduce the harshness of the human reality that he is called to live. In March 1927, GM publishes a letter of Maria Troncatti to the Mother General of the FMAs where she gives an insight into some of these human realities of missionary life. Troncatti writes,

⁷⁰ PEDRAZZINI G., *Spunti Missionari*, in GM 21 (1943) 11, 85. The same idea is repeated in the November issue of 1961. It is not the cold, the heat, the hunger, the fatigue and not even the loneliness that really makes the missionary suffer. Instead it is the refusal of his message of salvation, the seeming success of the powers of evil in the different lands. Cfr. *Le Scjerenze del Missionario*, in GM 39 (1961) 11, 7.

Oh Yes! The word ‘missionary’ awakens in the heart something of the poetic which enthuses and attracts the soul in moments of fervent dreams of apostolate and self sacrifice. But in actual life, how it makes one feel a demanding need to exclaim: “Pray, pray that our strength may not fail us!” Many are the moral struggles, material difficulties against which often the nature rebels. One is greatly tempted to discouragement when after weeks or even months of work and sacrifice among these poor savage people one does not manage to make them understand anything, not even a small idea about God and about eternal life!⁷¹

The heroic decision to leave behind family and friends, the ardent desire to launch out into the missions, and the longing to conquer the whole world for Christ, do not reduce the missionary to a man without human sentiments. At his parting from his family and from his own country, like any other person who would set out for a similar type of journey, he feels the intimate pain of that separation, which for most of the missionaries, was decisive and permanent. Ravalico hints at the pain of the young missionaries at the moment of their departure from their homelands, when he writes in July 1930 of his own departure for India. Recalling that moment of departure, he writes,

The ships’ anchor is lifted and we set out for the conquest of distant lands... Aboard one notices a agonizing silence: all are thinking about those loved ones to whom they have said adieu for ever; all eyes in tears are turned towards that little native land which slowly disappears in the distant horizon.⁷²

In December 1936 again, GM tracing the missionary career of Cardinal Guglielmo Massaia, takes pain to point out the human

⁷¹ TRONCATTI M., *Dalle Selve di Macas*, in GM 4 (1927) 3, 46-47. The same missionary gives a further insight into the loneliness and the human fears of the missionaries, when she writes of the life of the missionaries in Ecuador in these terms “imprisoned in these dense forests, and separated by great distances from every one who is dear to us, surrounded by savages who are in constant warfare among themselves and little favourable to us. [...] Here, more than in other places, our life is exposed to the vendetta and cruelty of the savages.” TRONCATTI M., *Dalle Foreste dell’Ecuador*, in GM 7 (1929) 12, 222.

⁷² RAVALICO L., *Giovani Apostoli*, in GM 8 (1930) 7, 142.

sentiments of the great missionary, and how he overcame them. As a young Capuchin when he was asked by his superiors to leave for the mission of Ethiopia, the write up says that even he had his fears and doubts. And the author continues,

It is very easy to think of the missionaries as exceptional creatures, superior and even strangers to the human sentiments of pain and joy! No! The missionary is a human person like any one else with his sensitive nature, with his human heart capable of loving, suffering, rejoicing, fearing, working; with the never absent temptation to sadness, discouragement, inconsistency and lack of trust. And his greatness consists precisely in this: the knowledge that his life is something that must be conquered!⁷³

And the article continues to narrate the experience of Massaia during one of his journeys across the desert, how dejected and lonesome he felt. It was just his faith that kept him going. The report says that although Massaia was also a great explorer and by his many writings has contributed to science, he himself declared that he would never have moved out of his beloved Piedmont, moved only by that urge for exploration or for scientific knowledge. It was only his ardent apostolic zeal that inspired and sustained his missionary activities.

GM presents to the readers, the image of the missionary who is also sensitive to the various human factors that form an inseparable part of his choice. In spite of the fact that he is a great benefactor of the people he serves, in spite of his readiness to sacrifice even his life for the good of his people, in his human experience, he feels the loneliness a foreigner would feel in a strange land. Of this loneliness Ravalico writes in June 1943,

One of the most felt trials of the missionary is loneliness, that is, the distance from confreres and friends, a distance that is at times spread out over weeks and months.⁷⁴

⁷³ PAGANI V., *Un Grande Missionario ed Esploratore dell’Etiopia*, in GM 15 (1936) 12, 192.

⁷⁴ RAVALICO L., *La Vera Prova*, in GM 21 (1943) 6, 45.

The author continues to say that when at times this absence of companions and friends is combined with the rejection and even with the contempt of his person, his ministry and his message, the solitude touches the profound depths of his humanity.⁷⁵

Missionary models cf "saviours cf souls"

In its various presentations of model missionaries, one aspect that GM always highlights is their love for souls, a love so profound that it marked everything that they did, a love that led them to sacrifice their whole life for this great cause.

On the occasion of the silver jubilee of the missionary life of Mons. Mederlet of Madras, a fellow missionary V. Mangiarotti, writes in glowing terms about 25 years spent in India. One sees all through the article the emphasis on "the glory of God", on "baptising" and on "saving souls" that reflects the inner motivation not only of Mons. Mederlet, but also of the other missionaries. Mangiarotti summarises the 25 years in this way:

Twenty five years in India! They are not few: and all of it spent well, all spent for the glory of God, constructing schools and churches, redeeming children to baptize them, racing on bicycles along the roughest roads in search of souls to be saved, sick to be cured, catechumens to be instructed, loved always as a father, esteemed as a great personage, poor as an apostle.⁷⁶

In March 1940, giving a short sketch of the missionary life Giovanni Pedrazzini, Salesian missionary priest in China, GM again points out the missionary's great love for souls, a love that made him accept every sacrifice. GM wrote of the missionary:

⁷⁵ In May 1955, GM publishes a personal testimony of a salesian missionary in the Philippines. He speaks of that acute sense of loneliness that surrounds him in that land that is not his own, among a people who are strangers to him. The missionary feels the absence of his parents and dear ones. Their memory only serves to deepen the pain of his solitude. Even in his missionary labours, in spite of all his generous commitment, he is confronted with a sense of futility. Sickness in such circumstances adds to the already heavy cross that he carries, and proves to be moments of real testing by fire. Cfr. *Questa è la Vita*, in GM 33 (1955) 5, 8-10.

⁷⁶ MANGIAROTTI V., *Il Mio Arcivescovo*, in GM 11 (1933) 3, 70.

Jovial, loving, zealous, he was consecrated to missionary life, disposed to encounter any sacrifice as long as he could gain souls to Christ. He was a missionary profoundly pious and gifted with a natural quality to conquer the heart of any one who approached him.⁷⁷

In April 1944, Zucchetti presents the figure of Domenico Milaneseo, a missionary in Patagonia as the one who went from place to place to preach the Gospel, the good shepherd who went in search of the lost sheep to gather them all into the fold of Christ. It was this love for souls that enabled this pioneering missionary to adapt himself to the customs and patterns of living of the indigenous people as to be considered by them as a true friend, counsellor and a real father.⁷⁸

Zucchetti, again in March 1946, describing the missionary life of Mons. Enrico de Ferrari – missionary and Prefect Apostolic of Alto Orenoco, notes that the great achievement of this missionary consisted in the fact that he truly lived the motto of Don Bosco: *Da mihi animas!* And again this love for souls made him all things to his people: a father, an advocate, a doctor, a teacher and a defender!⁷⁹

Mons. Ignazio Canazei, Bishop of Shiu Chow, successor of Mons. Versiglia, is one of the other missionary figures projected by GM. Zucchetti notes the heroic motto of the missionary: “The Chinese to God, I to the Chinese!” Of his personal traits the following is what the reporter highlights:

Tenacious, persistent in the most difficult study of the Chinese language, he became a figure among the Salesians in China. With the heart of an apostle, he knew how to win over the population especially with the ease with which he adapted to the usage and customs of the land.⁸⁰

In November 1946, GM presents the figure of Sr. Innocenza Vallino, one of the first group of sisters to reach the missions of Assam. She died on 22nd May 1946. At the funeral Mons. Stefano Ferrando is reported to have said,

⁷⁷ *La Scomparsa di uno Zelante Missionario*, in GM 18 (1940) 3, 34.

⁷⁸ Cfr. ZUCCHETTI D., *Gli Itinerari di un Missionario*, in GM 22 (1944) 4, 37.

⁷⁹ Cfr. ZUCCHETTI D., *Monsignor Enrico de Ferrari*, in GM 24 (1946) 3, 6-9.

⁸⁰ ZUCCHETTI D., *I Cinesi a Dio, Io ai Cinesi*, in GM 24 (1946) 11, 139.

She was a true missionary Sister. Her love for souls made her overcome every difficulty. [...] Her heroic poverty, the persecutions endured in the foundation of the mission at Jowai, her missionary tours to the villages where she manifested such an ardent zeal, her large heart will not be easily forgotten.⁸¹

In a write up of Ciro Brugna about Luigi Marchiori, missionary in Patagonia, what the author highlights is again, the tireless search of the missionary for souls to be saved. Speaking of the actual fruits of the missionary labours of Marchiori, the author reports that the missionary had to his credit 8900 persons baptised, 9659 confirmed, 890 couples married, and 425 dying anointed and given the last sacraments!⁸²

In June 1959 GM presents yet another zealous missionary: Leone Piaseski of the Assam plains. GM reports that even among his fellow confreres he was rightly known as “the lion of the Assam plains” for his selfless, sacrificing activity in favour of souls in this vast mission. On his arrival in Assam in 1922 he was entrusted with the evangelisation of the whole of the Assam plains, an area of about 45,000 sq. Kms. By his example, his spirit of sacrifice and untiring zeal he brought thousands to the faith. He pioneered the evangelisation of the Boros, contributed to the development of the mission among the Garos, and started the mission of Dibrugarh. A true apostle, constantly in visit of the villages in search of bringing all to the faith!⁸³

In February 1961 GM presents the missionary figure of Joseph Vaz, the great missionary of Sri Lanka. Highlighting the actual difficulties that this missionary had to affront, GM gives an insight into what actually motivated Vaz. It notes:

The idea of reaching the great island was born in him not from that longing for the unknown or for adventure but from a generous desire for apostolate. Therefore he was not bothered about those difficulties which he met in a land prohibited to Catholic missionaries.⁸⁴

⁸¹ *Suor Innocenza Vallino*, in GM 24 (1946) 11, 144.

⁸² Cfr. BRUGNA CIRO, *Foglio di Servizio Missionario*, in GM 29 (1951) 8-9, 6-7.

⁸³ Cfr. *Il Leone della Pianura*, in GM 37 (1959) 6, 34-35.

⁸⁴ *Il Contrabbandiere di Cristo*, in GM 39 (1961) 2, 30.

For GM, then, the missionary is known for his qualities of head and heart that make him suitable for the mission of saving souls. And this mission is his primary preoccupation, if not the only one, as in the case of many of the missionary models offered by the periodical.

Conclusion

Romanticizing! Yet that is what fired the imagination of the young. That is what helped to set going the hidden powers in the hearts of thousands of boys and girls. It is fire that sets something else blazing. And it is fiery souls who have achieved great goals. Those who dared to dream the impossible, often made the impossible happen. But there was need of a dream!

For those who did not live the missionary reality and preferred the convenience and comfort of home keeping birds, much of the reality of the life of the missionary seemed to belong to another world. But the attitudes and mentalities of the missionaries pictured in GM were those of concrete men and women: not mere aspirations bordering on the wishful thinking. They lived those realities. And precisely because they were lived realities, they had an attraction on others, particularly the young.

Not everything can be just duplicated. Simple replication of realities of past in a context that has in some way departed from the past would make for irrelevancy! But can one afford to throw away powerful motivations and yet expect to live one's life vibrantly and powerfully? What else could these powerful motivations which can sustain life long commitment be when there is constant growing pressure not to seek them in realms of faith? Perhaps what is needed to create great men and women is to return to the core of Christian faith: Jesus Christ, salvation through his redemptive death on the Cross, the divine will to make known to every human being the infinite treasures hidden in Christ.

CHAPTER 9

MISSION: MINISTRY OF SALVATION OF THE WHOLE HUMAN PERSON

In the over-all projection of the missionary as one involved in saving people, with compassion, involvement, dedication and empathy as his predominant characteristics, the missionary's commitment in the field of health care receives much attention on the part of GM. As a saviour, he works not only to save souls, but the whole human person. And the persons most in need of his assistance are the sick and the abandoned. This aspect of the mission is projected more in connection with the ministry of the sisters in the missions, though not as their exclusive terrain. With equal zeal the missionary dedicates himself to the salvation of the soul and to the salvation of the body, because he is the good shepherd, the father, the mother and friend of his people.

Health care – a great need of the mission lands

Adequacy of health services is a true sign of civilisation, progress and development. In the general picture presented by GM of mission lands as uncivilised, under-developed, where often the only doctor is the sorcerer and the only medicines are his supposedly divine powers, the one great need of the local people is health care. Because of their underdeveloped nature, the mission lands just do not have the sufficient number of dispensaries and hospitals that would be necessary to care for the sick.

Often the unhygienic conditions in which the indigenous people live, the un-protected lives they live in forested areas, their unhealthy habits, and even their superstitious beliefs, make them easy prey to various types of sickness.

The absence of refined human sentiments especially among the more savage ethnic groups in the mission lands leaves little hope for the sick, the deformed, the handicapped and the aged. Untouched by Christian charity, the common attitude of the people, especially to the incurably sick, like the lepers, is often one of an abandonment that borders on cruelty. What even the various governments do in regard to the chronically sick, is only to segregate them in colonies of their own and abandon them to their fate!¹

GM's presentation of the missionary's health ministry

GM presents the health ministry as a camp in which the missionaries have been engaged from the beginning of the Church. The missionary, in imitation of Christ, and in obedience to his explicit command "Cure the sick, raise the dead, cleanse the lepers, cast out devils" (Mt 10:8), gives special attention to the sick and the disabled. This ministry, common to all Christian communities, missionary or otherwise, takes on an additional dimension of being an effective agent of evangelisation in the missions.

Care of the sick – means to evangelisation

In the missions, hospitals and dispensaries are precious means of evangelisation of the people. Pestarino A. in November 1925 reporting about the great good that is being done by the St. Joseph's

¹ Vincenzo Barberis in August 1923 writes about the situation of lepers in China. He reports that there is a good portion of the population afflicted by this terrible scourge. As the government does nothing for them, they roam about freely in the towns and villages. All that the Chinese people do to them is to drive them away. In case of leprosy even parents forget their natural parental instincts, and drive their own children afflicted by leprosy out of their homes. The situation of lepers is one of total abandonment. Cfr. BARBERIS V., *I Lebbrosi della Cina*, in GM 1 (1923) 7, 102-105. In November 1928, Garneri speaks of the total abandonment in which the lepers of Colombia found themselves when Don Unia started his apostolate for them. He writes: "Only the missionary of Christ makes himself a friend and consoler of these wretches. He alone shares their continuous anxieties of life, spending himself in a slow martyrdom." GARNERI D., *I Lebbrosi e la Carità Cristiana*, in GM 6 (1928) 11, 202. This type of an abandonment and forced segregation would be to a great extent understandable taking into account the nature of the illness and the fact that it was then considered incurable.

hospital of Viedma in Patagonia, constructed by Cardinal Cagliero, speaks of the missionary efficacy of such institutions. The Catholics who died at the hospital had the great joy to receive the last sacraments. There were extraordinary conversions, especially in the case of Protestants. Their prejudices were broken down by the kind treatment they received in this hospital. Many non-believers received baptism prior to their death and thus claimed heaven. For the missionary, intent on saving souls, illness becomes not only an important moment which requires his intervention, but often a moment of greater openness on the part of the people he serves with paternal care.²

Where hospitals and dispensaries do not exist in the missions, one of the main works of the sisters is to visit the villages and administer medicines to Christians and to non-Christians. Luigina A. writing from the mission of Tanjore in South India, reports about the missionary effectiveness of these medical visits to the interior villages. Even the pagans approach these angels of charity, at first with a certain manifest diffidence, but later on, with much appreciation for the services they render. Whole villages are opened to the missionaries just because of these visits to care for the sick and the aged. As there are no other medical facilities in the interior villages, the sick wait impatiently for the periodical visits of the sisters, as Luigina remarks, "A doctor is never seen in these villages and therefore the Sister's visit is something that everyone waits for with great desire."³ To the helpless people these messengers of Christian charity become true saviours of their lives. And often saving their physical life, the missionaries succeed to save also their souls. Their selfless service to the sick and the abandoned gradually win over the hearts of the people and open them to the message of the Gospel.

It is in the care for the sick and the abandoned that the missionary manifests himself as a true father, mother, brother and sister to the local people. The sick, though at times appear to be

² Cfr. PESTARINO A., *L'Ospedale di Viedma*, in GM 3 (1925) 11, 236.

³ LUIGINA A., *Lavoro per i Corpi e per le Anime*, in GM 3 (1925) 1, 7.

so ungrateful, often are the ones to realise the true greatness of the missionary, and the motives that inspire him. The lepers recognise in the missionaries who care for them, a love greater than that of their own parents! Giovanni Pedrazzini in May 1925, reports a little conversation that he overheard while visiting the lepers in the mission of China. Speaking of the great care that the missionary lavished on them, and the sacrifices he accepted to visit them, one of the lepers is reported to have said to his companion, "Here we are isolated by the world. Neither our fathers nor our mothers ever come to visit us. Every one has forgotten us... except the missionary who is truly inspired by the Lord."⁴

Efficacy of health ministry in primitive and difficult mission areas

The dispensary is an efficacious means of evangelisation especially in regions where other means produce little or no fruit. Elena Bottini, a missionary in China, speaks of this dimension of the dispensary in a report in February 1927. Speaking of the increasing number of patients who come to the dispensary of the FMA sisters, and their ever growing openness to the missionaries, Bottini notes, "This is a prodigious means to attract the poor Chinese. By taking care of their bodily illness one can more easily gain their souls for God."⁵ The same impression is given by a report of Sr. Teresa Merlo from the dispensary at Polur, in South India. She writes in May 1930,

In the missions, and especially in pagan lands, dedication to the sick is one of the most beautiful and holy ministries, very fruitful for heaven, and greatly admired by the same non-believers. The care extended to the poor bodies oppressed by various types of illnesses gain the confidence and affection

⁴ PEDRAZZINI G., *Attraverso l'Isola Don Joao*, in GM 3 (1925) 6, 129. The same idea is expressed in a small write up of Garneri about the leper asylum of Michele Unia in Colombia. The inhabitants of the colony find in its founder a true father and a true mother. The article notes that in that valley of pain and death, it was the fatherly heart of the missionary that brought true relief and comfort. Cfr. GARNERI D., *L'Asilo Michele Unia*, in GM 3, (1925) 9, 197-198.

⁵ BOTTINI E., *Notizie da Shiu Chow*, in GM 5 (1927) 2, 30-31.

of the sick and open the way to their souls, and in this way they come closer to God, to the truth and to faith. How many souls have been delivered from the clutches of the eternal enemy by just this one means!⁶

Giovanni Mazzetti, a missionary in the Assam Missions, writing about the actual efficacy of caring for the sick, goes to say that in the missions this dimension is not only a great help, but an indispensable means. He writes,

To pretend to get many conversions among the poor pagans only by speaking to their scarce intelligence is an utopia! To lead many souls to God, it is necessary to present our religion in its more beautiful form, that of charity, like our Lord himself, who went about doing good and curing all types of diseases.⁷

In the missions, it is the Catholic missionary's care and attention for the sick, especially for the more abandoned among them, that sets him apart from the other religious monks of the region. In February 1943, Antonio Alessi, reports the conversion of a staunch Buddhist leper, who accepted baptism on his death bed just for the difference in the treatment received from the Buddhist monk and from the Catholic missionary. All that the Buddhist monk had to offer the leper were words of condemnation. He was convinced that this terrible illness was the punishment for some grave sin that the poor man had committed. The Buddhist monk did not even offer the prospect of a future rebirth in a better condition. And when the dying person asked the monk for some food, all that the monk did was to tell him to beg for it from some other passers-by! The Catholic missionary instead, because of that innate compassion nurtured by his religion, offered the leper food and drink, approached him, listened to him, spoke to him, and comforted him. And the net result was that the leper, who had earlier not wanted to hear anything about baptism, finally asked for it, and died contented!⁸

⁶ MERLO T., *Gioie tra i Malati di Polur*, in GM 8 (1930) 5, 112

⁷ MAZZETTI G., *Il Miracolo della Carità*, in GM 8 (1930) 10, 212-213.

⁸ Cfr. ALESSI A., *L Anima del Lebbroso*, in GM 21 (1943) 2, 14-15.

Demands of the health ministry on the missionary

Though an excellent means of evangelisation, the care of the sick poses its own challenges to the missionary. The missionary is not a person bereft of human sentiments of attraction and repugnance. As his work does not bring him any material gains, he has to be profoundly motivated by his faith, lest his natural human instinct get the better of him. True, the missionaries are heroes, but their heroism is constantly nourished at the source of evangelical charity! The care of the sick, and of the more abandoned among the sick, is nothing but a manifestation of the love of the missionary for the sick, in imitation of Christ himself. GM speaks of the heroism of the missionaries who care for the lepers in these terms,

These heroes of Christian charity close themselves willingly in leper asylums, are not bothered about the horror they face, the stench of rotting bodies or the danger of contagion. Away from all conveniences of life, every healthy joy, they go about unknown, forgotten like soothing shadows in this place of pain, exposed to a danger that is perennial, sustained only by one force which keeps growing in the love of Christ!⁹

The missionary who decides to dedicate himself to the care of the lepers does so with the consciousness that in some way he is signing his own death warrant! Presenting the heroic figure of Prospero Massari, a salesian missionary priest among the lepers of Colombia, GM states that it was the intention to dedicate himself to the lepers that inspired him to become a Salesian. When, in the course of his ministry to the lepers, he contracted the dreaded disease, he is reported to have said, "When I chose to dedicate myself to the lepers, I foresaw the possibility of contagion."¹⁰ He continued his missionary life as a leper among lepers, but spending himself and sacrificing himself for the others, even to the extent of sacrificing the injections which could have cured him, to give it to some other unfortunate soul, who, according to him, needed the cure more than he did!

⁹ *Lebbrosi e Missionari*, in GM 22 (1944) 7, 69.

¹⁰ *Il Prete... è un Parassita!*, in GM 25 (1947) 3, 8-10.

Rewards of health ministry in the missions

The sacrificing work of the missionary bears abundant fruits in the lives of those he cares for and that is sufficient repayment for the heroic missionary. Speaking of the leper colonies that the Salesians have in Colombia, GM remarks,

Where material and moral misery reigned supreme along with that sense of abandonment, disorder of every type and despair, today one notices order, a sense of propriety, resignation and even joy in the midst of so much pain. Victims of expiation have flowered from among these scourged by so much pain!¹¹

Because of the missionary's¹² dedication to the sick, the local people recognise in them "persons of compassion" as, according to a report in the July-August issue of 1946, the Congolese call the missionary sisters in the Salesian Congo mission!¹³ And the care and self sacrificing attention of the sisters make of the dispensary,

a small harbour where miseries and pains without number find a place of refuge, a point of contact of all type of persons, a silent yet eloquent pulpit of evangelical charity, a place of divine predilection for miracles of grace which are accomplished there.¹⁴

In the context of rising nationalism at the close of the World War II, the missionaries' activities in favour of the sick and the abandoned, served to highlight the relevance and the need of the missionary's presence. Even where there was a general dislike of the foreigners, the missionaries involved in the many hospitals and dispensaries continued to enjoy the respect and appreciation of the local people.¹⁵

¹¹ *Lebbrosi e Missionari*, in GM 22 (1944) 7, 68-69.

¹² The care for the sick is the specialized field of the religious sisters in the mission field. Therefore, much of the write ups about health care in GM speak of the ministry of the sisters. Along side with the Salesian Fathers and Brothers, the sisters play a vital role in the care of the lepers in the various leper asylums in the missions lands.

¹³ Cfr. *Dal Congo Belga*, in GM 26 (1946) 7-8, 4.

¹⁴ *Dal Dispensario di Polur*, in GM 24 (1946) 10, 124.

¹⁵ Cfr. *Le Vie delle Conquiste Missionarie*, in GM 25 (1947) 7, 8-9.

After the foundation of the World day of lepers by Raul Follereau in 1954, this specific section of health care in the mission areas received increased emphasis in the pages of GM. Especially on the occasion of the day, GM carried a message from Follereau himself exhorting the youngsters to volunteer to serve this unhappy section of society, or at least to do what was possible in their capacity to alleviate the suffering of these lepers.¹⁶

Mission – humanitarian assistance to the poor and the underprivileged

Right from the very beginning, GM presents missionary action in its double dimension: “raise the soul to the dignity of Christian moral life with the resources of religion and Christian instruction – alleviate the misery of so many poor people.”¹⁷ This section of the study deals with GM’s projection of the missionary’s engagement to relieve the misery of the poor and the underprivileged people of the mission lands. As a subsequent section will be wholly dedicated to missionary activity in the camp of civilisation, the present section will deal with only those activities of humanitarian assistance that could be considered more in the perspective of “salvation”.

Situation of the people in the missions

The early presentations of GM, especially of the South American missions among the aboriginals, project the mission lands as one untouched by any human activity, vast areas covered with thick forests, and they picture the absolutely primitive style of life of the aboriginals. Thus in the March issue of 1923, GM publishes Mons. Lorenzo Giordano’s report of first exploratory journey in the region of Rio Negro, where he describes the region in this way,

¹⁶ Cfr. *VI Giornata Mondiale dei Lebbrosi*, in GM 37 (1959) 1, 10-11; FACCHINELLI R., *Tra i Lebbrosi della Corea*, in GM 39 (1961) 1, 38-42; *Lo Voglio! Sii mondato!*, in GM 42 (1964) 4, 26- 29; *Un'Intervista con Raul Follereau*, in GM 43 (1965) 1, 14-18; FOLLEREAU R., *XIII Giornata Mondiale dei Lebbrosi*, in GM 44 (1966) 1, 2-3; FOLLEREAU R., *Messaggio alla Gioventù*, in GM 45 (1967) 1, 3-4.

¹⁷ MASSA P., *La missione del Rio Negro*, in GM 1 (1923) 2, 21-22.

All that one beholds is a continuous stretch of forests, without any indication whatsoever of a human hand that has modified the work of nature. [...] As you gaze on, the Indians come out of their little huts, wearing Adam's costumes. [...] The menfolk have practically nothing by way of a dress, and ordinarily the women also do not have anything better than the men. In my encounter with them, even without my wishing it, I experienced a sense of repugnance, seeing in those miserable people what appeared to me to be the contempt of my own humanity. But then I was immediately overwhelmed by a sense of profound compassion.¹⁸

Through various articles and reports, often accompanied by photos, the picture that GM presents of the pagan world, is not only of a world that is uncivilised, but more of a world that is in dire need of help, both spiritual and material. The reports of the missionaries highlight the poverty and misery of the local people and the urgent need to assist them. The photos of the miserable houses of the people, of children poorly clothed and famished, of the sick and the aged, no doubt aimed at evoking sympathy for these people, point equally to GM's vision of the mission and of its people.

The motive of humanitarian assistance

The missionary is a true father to his people, and it is the force of his compassion that drives him in his many activities in favour of the people. He makes his own the joys and sufferings of the people. He is incapable of standing aside and watching in total indifference the sufferings of individuals and much less of a whole group of people. He does all in his power to alleviate the sufferings of the people. In March 1933, GM reports how some of the Salesian missionaries in South India had undertaken a project of digging wells for some villages of the mission, notwithstanding

¹⁸ GIORDANO L., *Primo Viaggio di Esplorazione*, in GM 1 (1923) 2, 22. Certainly the presentation of the other missionary areas differ from this picture. However, in the reports of all mission lands, is noticeable the tendency to highlight the fact of the poor huts in which the people live, the lack of roads in the region, the forests and rivers that the missionary has to cross, the lack of means of travel, and the general poverty that prevails in the region. Even the presence of the wild animals, something quite unthinkable in the Italian context of the period, point to the lack of development of the region, and the primitiveness of the inhabitants.

the fact that the villagers were not all Christians. It is compassion for the suffering people that moves the missionary. This concrete act of compassion that was so beneficial to the people, though not primarily intended as any incentive towards baptism, however, brought many of the villagers to the faith. The simple people do not resist the selfless service of the missionaries, and are wise enough to grasp, in some measure, the beauty of that mysterious force that drives the missionaries. Accepting in gratitude these material services, they are open to accept the faith that the missionaries proclaim to them.¹⁹

Humanitarian assistance – prompted by the actual needs of the people

In his works of development, the missionary is guided by the need of the people. Thus in July 1940 GM reports how the Salesian missionaries in Thailand, to help the poor farmers, have succeeded in bringing thousands of hectares of forest land under cultivation, and established a great agricultural school in the region. The write up remarks that the missionaries are the frontline assistants of the local governments in their effort to improve agriculture and increase the productivity of the land for the greater benefit of the people.²⁰

The missionary does not limit himself to just one field. His preoccupation with the good of the people he serves, leads him to undertake various activities. So in 1944 describing the missionary career of Don Cesare Albisetti, GM notes that one of the great achievements of the missionary was the construction of a great canal

¹⁹ Cfr. *Il Pozzo che Converte*, in GM 11 (1933) 3, 82. In July 1951, yet another write up about the activities of the missionaries in South India, reports that in this region, the missionaries are known as specialists in digging wells. Because of this humanitarian project of the missionaries, they have converted desert areas into cultivable lands. In an area, where due to its total dependence on the monsoons, the people could have just one crop a year, and that too, often very meagre, because of the wells dug by the missionaries, the people can have up to three good crops a year! This report states that this missionary service is done for villages that are Catholics and for others that are formed by low caste Hindus. Cfr. *La Piaga dell'India: la Fame*, in GM 29 (1951) 7, 8-9.

²⁰ Cfr. CASSETTA G., *Thailand*, in GM 18 (1940) 7, 107.

7800 metres long, to bring water to the colony of St. Joseph of Sangradouro.²¹

Even in the post World War II period, where necessary, the missionaries establish colonies and villages to house the poor, who often live in miserable dwellings. In April 1955 GM reports that the missionaries in the Vicariate of Rajburi, Thailand, have cleared a vast forested area in Heui Yank, about 329 kms from Bangkok, to construct a modern village.²² In May 1956 GM reports about the project of Mons. Mathias of Madras to construct low cost houses for the homeless people of certain section of Madras. It is again the compassion for the thousands of families who live in miserable unhygienic conditions that moves the missionary to undertake this humanitarian project.²³ In May 1964 reporting about the missionary activity among the Moro Indian tribal group of Paraguay, GM mentions that the missionaries have constructed for them a permanent colony, with a school, a hospital, a church. This is the first and the basic step to take them out of the forest and lead them to a civilised mode of life.²⁴

Added emphasis on humanitarian assistance in the 1960s

Reports about the missionary activity in India in the 1960s tend to speak more of the missionary commitment in the field of humanitarian assistance than of the missionary's activity in the field of primary evangelisation. Thus Capiagh F., in February 1960, reports the various activities that the missionaries have set in motion in favour of the pariahs of Chetpet mission in South India. The

²¹ Cfr. ZUCCHETTI D., *Don Cesare Albisetti*, in GM 22 (1944) 12, 133. Another report in May 1947 speaks of the plan of the salesian missionaries in the region of Vat Pheng in Thailand, to construct a water canal 8 kms long to supply water for irrigation for the people of the region. And the report concludes asserting that the mission of the Church is not only the care of the soul, but also of the body; the missionary's preoccupation is not only to build the church, but more to provide the faithful with what they need to live decent lives. Cfr. *Apostolato Sociale in Siam*, in GM 25 (1947) 6, 11.

²² Cfr. CARRETTO P., *Campo dell'Aurora*, in GM 33 (1955) 4, 6-7.

²³ Cfr. *Case per i Poveri*, in GM 34 (1956) 6, 8-9.

²⁴ Cfr. RUGGERI A., *Con i Moro dalla Selva del Chaco al Fiume Paraguay*, in GM 42 (1964) 5, 26-31.

missionary's attention is directed first, according to the report, to satisfying basic human needs for food, clothing, housing, education etc.²⁵ In February 1965 speaking of the urgent needs of the people in the mission lands, GM states that what really afflicts these people are famine, sickness, and illiteracy.²⁶ And the missionaries were directly engaged in these fields.

In the closing years of GM, the one Indian Salesian missionary who receives quite a bit of publicity in the pages of the periodical, is Orfeo Mantovani. His ministry simply consisted in feeding the hungry, constructing houses for the homeless and supplying dresses for the poor. He was a great friend of the lepers and established a colony for them. He had a great heart for the abandoned and the dying, and did everything possible to care for them. Because of his committed service to the poor and the miserable, he was rightly called by his people, "the father of the miserable". It was enough for him to know that some one was just poor, to go out to help him. A write up of March 1966 remarks that the only recommendation needed to be admitted to one of his welfare centres was to have a face and a body disfigured by hunger and disease!²⁷

Conclusion

Don Bosco's vision of salvation was in no way restricted to the salvation of souls. No doubt this aspect was first and foremost in his vision of reality. But salvation included very much the good citizen of this earthly city. Salesians inherited this holistic vision of their father and founder and lived it in a worthy manner in the missions. Care for the salvation of the body, though in some way intended to serve as a point of entry into the lives of the indigenous people, was not only a means to an end. It had its own right to being!

²⁵ Cfr. CAPIAGH F., *Tra gli Intoccabili di Cheipet*, in GM 38 (1960) 2, 33-35.

²⁶ Cfr. *Spezziamo la Cintura Nera della Fame*, in GM 43 (1965) 2, 4-5.

²⁷ Cfr. MANTOVANI O., *La Grande Fame*, in GM 43 (1965) 2, 15-19; *Ci Avete Salvati*, in GM 44 (1966) 7-8-9, 16-23; BANKS H., *Raccomandati di Ferro*, in GM 44 (1966) 3, 4-5; *Non Dimenticateci*, in GM 45 (1967) 5, 16-19; BARACCA, *Così l'Abbiamo Sepolto*, in GM 45 (1967) 16.19. Along the same lines, GM publishes a write up of Luigi Arneodo, about the heroic service that Mother Teresa is rendering to the poor and abandoned people of Calcutta. Cfr. ARNEODO L., *Madre Teresa*, in GM 45 (1967) 3, 12-15.

A compassionate approach to a person in need made of the good Samaritan the hero of one of the best parables of Jesus. The same made heroes of missionaries in foreign lands. It is not true that they had an answer for every need, but they had an approach to the persons in need. That burning passion for souls made itself manifest in many missionaries in an equally ardent passion for humankind, and all the more for suffering humankind.

One can only wonder at the capacity of the human person to immolate oneself to alleviate the pains of others. Glorious pages of unbounded humanity have been written by so many missionaries in the different “valleys of pain and despair” all over the world. In this present culture so centered on the self often to its own destruction so as to create a culture of death, these great men and women could point to the path that leads to true self realization and to the culture of life.

CHAPTER 10

MISSION: CIVILISATION

According to the presentation of GM, evangelisation has two complementary aspects: the spiritual, which consists in the salvation of souls, founding of the Church; and the material which consists in the civilisation of the pagan world. The missionary, while working for the salvation of the souls, works also for the welfare of the whole human person. Civilisation, in fact, is considered as a natural consequence of Christianisation. Christianity has been a true agent of civilisation down the centuries, and is itself a very high mode of civilisation.¹

Missionary and local culture

GM presented to the readers both the positive and the negative aspects of the various cultures. Where there have been vicious deviations in human behaviour, even when this formed part of a general behaviour of a people, GM did not hesitate to condemn these practices. But where there were authentic values, GM was also very appreciative of these traits even in non-Christian cultures.

The missionary and the dehumanising aspects of the local cultures

There seems to be an underlying belief behind the various projections of the periodical, that the human misery to which the pagans are subjected is very much the result of their religious beliefs

¹ It is really difficult to draw a clear division between “salvation” and “civilisation” as far as the presentations of GM are concerned as was the case also in the thought of Don Bosco himself. There is a free intermingling of the two dimensions. GM at times tends to view the whole missionary activity in the perspective of “salvation”; while at other times it views the same activities all in the other perspective of “civilisation”. Even when certain activities appear to have little spiritual content, they still retain their missionary character because of their basic orientation to salvation in its wider connotation.

and practices. It is the pagan religion that is primarily responsible for the dehumanising traditions found among the people. And consequently yet another belief that the savage customs can only be uprooted in the measure that the society accepts the rule of the Gospel.

The situation of the pagan world

“Savage”, “uncivilised” and “primitive” are the terms, often used to qualify the aboriginal groups of the various mission lands. Often these terms do not refer to a mere sociological backwardness, nor indicate the material aspect of the poverty of the indigenous people. The dehumanising customs and practices prevalent among the various ethnic groups in the mission lands, makes GM qualify these people as “savage” and “uncivilised”.² Because of the superstitious elements in the religious beliefs of the indigenous people, their primitive style of life and the fact that they are untouched by the civilising agent of Christian faith, following the trend of the times particularly in Europe, GM tends to classify all groups of people in the missions as “uncivilised”.³

In general GM presents the non-Christian religions of the mission lands as a collection of superstitions that keep its believers

² However, quite surprisingly, the term “savage” is not used to qualify the Japanese. The Japanese are presented in a way quite different from all other groups mentioned in GM. The Salesian missionaries found in Japan a culture that almost equalled that of Europe, notwithstanding the fact that it was not Christian. Leone Liviabella, a missionary in Japan wrote in the September 1928 issue of GM, speaking of Japan, “Here, we are not among savages, as in the virgin forests, instead among a pagan people who know every progress of civilization.” Liviabella L., *Nuova Forma d Apostolato*, in GM 6 (1928) 9, 165.

³ It would not be just to the periodical to assert that these terms like “savage”, “uncivilised” etc are used with a pejorative significance. They cannot be taken to point to the contempt that the missionaries had for the local people. The one characteristic that GM takes pain to put in relief in every missionary is his sympathy and love for the people. Therefore when these terms are used, it often refers to the sad plight in which the people find themselves, and the fatigue required from the missionary to deliver them from these customs. Besides, as the reports are meant for the young readers, these terms are used to evoke greater sympathy and greater co-operation in the work for the missions. It would be important to keep in mind that GM is a child of its times, uses the language and thought patterns common in those times.

under the slavery of the evil one. It is the very religious belief of the people which situate them in a context of falsehood, darkness and slavery. In this vision of reality, every group in the mission land is to some extent or other “uncivilised”.⁴

Many of the individual reports of the missionaries speak of the people of the region as living in unapproachable, often forested areas, a very primitive type of life. From these individual presentations, the readers of GM could easily acquire an idea of all people in the missions as “savage”, “uncivilised” and “uncultured”. When GM presents missionary activity as “civilisation” the reader could easily get an impression of the whole non-European world as uncivilised. Individual reports, for example, one like that of Carlo Crespi, who in October 1923 described the missionary work among the Kivaros as “a colossal sustained effort by the missionaries to civilize a proud, cruel, vindictive race, brutalized by hundreds of years of their stay in the forest”⁵ ran the risk of a general application to all lands and all peoples.⁶

The missionary – the true agent of civilisation

In the mind of the missionary there is a natural connection between civilisation and religion. The missionary is convinced that it is the pagan religion that is primarily responsible for the ignorance that is rampant among the people, and for the savage practices blindly accepted by these primitive societies. The editorial of the very second issue of GM, in highlighting the double dimension of the work of the missionaries, reflected the thinking pattern of the times. Civilisation depends on religion. Where the religion is the right one, there exists true civilisation. Therefore the Catholic missionary,

⁴ So, even if there are no serious social evils in the Japanese community, still they need to be civilised in the Christian way, to rid that society of the emptiness of the Shintoism. Like wise, the Thai society has to be liberated from its age old belief in re-incarnation that is the basis of its absurd worship of the white elephant. So too is the case with the Burmese and the Indonesians who have to be freed from the falsities of their religious beliefs.

⁵ CRESPI C., *I Coccodrilli del Guayas*, in GM 1 (1923) 9, 132.

⁶ Even Leone Liviabella’s affirmation that the Japanese were a civilised people, familiar with the advantages of development and progress, in some way points to his intention to forestall the application of the general impression of the mission lands to the particular case of Japan.

engaged in the spread of the one true religion, is the agent of the one true civilisation. The editor wrote in March 1923,

The missionary who converts the souls to the divine religion of Jesus Christ, does not limit his conquests to the spiritual field only. Religion is the animating spirit of true civilization. The missionary, by spreading the true faith, knocks down the savage practices which are opposed to the Christian laws, thus bringing about not only a renewal of the soul, but also a total renewal of the life of the people.⁷

The missionary who set out for the foreign lands was aware of being sent out to a savage people, to baptise and to civilise. The savage practices of the indigenous people were regarded not only as something totally contrary to the Gospel, but also something unbecoming of civilised human beings. Every missionary then setting out for unknown lands, was aware of his primary duty to uproot age old inhuman customs prevalent among the various groups, and introduce them gradually to the civilised mode of living. There would be no compromise with those aspects of the local cultures which were opposed to the Gospel and to the basic civilised modes of behaviour. The words Mons. Cagliari addressed to the benefactors, when he led the 8th missionary expedition to Latin America, are expressive of the intention of all missionaries. He is reported to have said,

We set out with the intention of making Jesus Christ known and accepted even to the extreme ends of the earth. We depart, spurred on by the desire to change the deserts of Patagonia and of the adjacent islands into flourishing gardens of the Catholic Church and of Christian civilization, to the glory of God and the salvation of souls and to the comfort of so many sons and daughters of Adam, immersed up to now in their miserable condition, because of the fact that they have been deprived of the benefits of religion.⁸

⁷ GARNERI D., *B enemerenze dei Missionari*, in GM 1 (1923) 2, 17.

⁸ GARNERI D., *Ricordi della Patagonia e Terra del Fuoco*, in GM 1 (1923) 9, 115. And according to a later report in GM, civilising the indigenous people of South America was exactly what Cardinal Cagliari did along with his missionaries. Well did Cagliari deserve the title bestowed on him by General Rocca, "*il Civilizzatore del Sud*" (the civilizer of the South). GARNERI D., *Il Primo Missionario di Don Bosco*, in GM 4 (1926) 4, 61-67.

This work of an internal transformation of the local customs is a work that requires time and much patience from the part of the missionary. The fact of baptism itself does not simply uproot a person from one context and place him in another. The baptised live alongside with the nonbaptised. Total and immediate separation from age old practices cannot be required from the new converts. Therefore the missionary tolerates the slow transformation of the society. While he continues to insist with the grownups, his true hopes for a true transformation of the society lie in the education of the young ones. The slowness of the progress of his work and the apparent obstinacy of the people in their old ways do not discourage the missionary. It is his insistence and education along with his patience and tolerance which finally bring about the needed change. In the editorial of July 1927, Garneri hints at the patience required of the missionary, and at the final success that crowns his patient work. He writes:

How much sacrifice is required by the work of the missionary, who just because of his desire to redeem those poor people, must tolerate every day the most repugnant of feelings caused by the animal type of a life of the people, and that too under his very eyes! One cannot be silent about the heroic patience of the pioneers of the faith in instructing those stubborn minds and renewing their moral customs. To tear them away from their age old superstitions, their rites and feasts, their savage passions, and silly beliefs so rooted in them, is something that makes one think of a tenacious battle. But in the final count the missionary comes out successful. [...] Transformation takes place under the guidance of the missionary; the habit of stealing, of immorality, of laziness, of superstitions change into love for work and for prayer, into civilized ways of living together and affection for the family. New horizons are open to these souls.⁹

As GM sees in the various superstitious beliefs of the different ethnic and national groups, the root of the dehumanising features of these societies, obviously it considers the conversion of these peoples to the true faith as the one major way of uprooting these evils. In this way the missionary becomes what GM says of him “a pioneer

⁹ GARNERI D., *Percorrendo l'Esposizione Missionaria*, in GM 4 (1926) 7, 122-123.

of civilization".¹⁰ "Civilisation" is projected as the natural consequence of Christianisation. However, civilisation does not stop at baptism, nor is a society considered fully civilised when its members are all baptised. Civilisation is a process that continues after baptism. As noted earlier age old traditions die hard. The one great agent of civilisation is education. It is only through a gradual process of educating the young that the missionary is able to bring about the desired change in the mentality of the whole society.¹¹

The missionary's method in bringing the aboriginal groups to the light of civilisation contrasts him with the coloniser who does not hesitate even to decimate entire groups in the name of civilisation! Moreover, in case of atrocities perpetrated on the indigenous people by the greedy colonisers, it is the missionary that defends the local people! When the colonisers, seemingly in the name of civilisation, have recourse to short-sighted methods, it is the missionary who champions the true cause of the people. In October 1942, speaking of the missionary work among the Indians of Alakaluf, GM highlights the missionary's action to defend the poor aboriginals of the region against what it calls the "advancement of the white people". GM writes:

Poor unhappy inhabitants of Magellan lands! Persecuted by the advance of the Whites, decimated by diseases of all types, projected by the scientists as the refuse of humanity, as lacking in intelligence, cannibals, without any religion, they have found in the missionary the only defenders of their life and of their good name.¹²

Therefore the missionary's interest is not simply the destruction of savage customs and practices, using whatever means available. The missionary is a saviour. He looks at these barbarous customs, not from the point of view of a conqueror, but from that of a saviour. It is the evil customs that need to be destroyed, not the people who practise them. The whole approach of the

¹⁰ ZIO GIGI, *La Vera Gioventù Missionaria*, in GM 9 (1931) 2, 21.

¹¹ As the apostolate of education has been given so much importance in the periodical, it will be taken up in a later section, fully dedicated to it.

¹² *Tra gli Ultimi Indiani Alakaluf*, in GM 20 (1942) 10, 83.

missionary towards the people of the mission lands is one imbued with compassion and sympathy. Therefore, the missionary is the great defender of his own people.

The missionary's attitude to the positive traits of local cultures: adaptation

One of the motives for the numerous reports about various customs and traditions present among the various groups of people in the mission lands was certainly that of exposing the readers of GM to the vast cultural variety that exists in the world. "Countries you travel, customs you find" is an oft repeated saying found in GM. In presenting the various people and their cultures, GM presents elements of these cultures that are obviously evil, others which are in themselves indifferent and others which are evidently rich in human value.

While the missionary combats against the customs that are obviously evil and replaces these with patterns of behaviour based on the Gospel, he respects, accepts and encourages what is of true value in these diverse cultures. Even that which is indifferent, he does not seek to replace them with European counterparts, instead accepts them as the age old heritage of a people and of a land that he has fully adapted and made his own. Therefore, according to the presentation of GM, evangelisation is in no way synonymous with Europeanisation of the local people and their cultural patterns. The missionary who accepts the land of the missions as his second fatherland, and its people as his own people, makes himself one with the local people, accepts their behaviour patterns, when they are not in evident contradiction with the Gospel he preaches.

Learning the local language

The very first thing that the missionary does on his arrival in his mission is to set himself to the arduous task of learning the local language. Especially the eastern languages, with their difficult scripts and structures, quite different from the European languages, pose serious initial problems to the missionary. There are no short-cut methods to these languages. A lot of humility, determination,

and just plain hard work give him that mastery of the local language needed for his ministry.¹³

In spite of the difficulty involved in it, one essential quality of any great missionary is his mastery of the local language. De Amicis, speaking of the many good qualities of Don Caravario, notes that he had a real passion to learn the local language. In his short stay at Timor, he picked up sufficient Portuguese to communicate with the local people. He even made efforts to learn English during that brief period. The first thing that Caravario did on landing in China was to set himself seriously to learn Chinese. Pointing to the interior conviction that guided this zeal of the missionary, De Amicis states,

He applied himself much in the study of the language, with tenacity, method and love. And this he did not for motives of vain glory, but because of that profound conviction that the missionary who does not know the local language is a barbarian to the people just as the people are barbarians to him.¹⁴

¹³ Cfr. *Un Proverbio dell'Uganda*, in GM 1 (1923) 1, 12. Through many reports, GM highlights the absolute necessity of the local language. While in other mission areas, the missionary would normally be required to learn the single language used by the local population, the particular situation of the Assam missions, requires the missionary to be a polyglot! Although there are earlier reports about the existence of many language groups, it is really Mons. Marengo who in an interview with the GM, in 1952, shows the extent of the problem. He says that there are about 145 languages spoken in the Assam missions. And some of these languages are spoken by tribal groups composed of only about 1000 persons. But what makes the situation really exasperating, is that there are no common languages used by these diverse groups. The missionary who wants to evangelise these groups, small or big, has, in some way, to acquire at least the minimum familiarity with these languages. And the difficulty is all the more because most of these languages do not have scripts. Cfr. *Intervista con il Primo Vescovo di Dibrugarh: Mons. O. Marengo*, in GM 30 (1952) 6, 2.

¹⁴ DE AMICIS, *Don Caravario nei Ricordi di un Compagno di Missione*, in GM 17 (1939) 2, 26. In August 1942, Zucchetti writing a short sketch of the missionary life of Don Angelo Rouby, one of the pioneering salesian missionaries among the Kivaros, notes the missionary's great effort in learning the language of the Kivaros as a true expression of his zeal to save the Kivaros. Zucchetti writes of the missionary, "On his arrival at the field of his labours, Don Rouby immediately showed his ardent zeal for the salvation of souls by dedicating himself with true tenacity to the study of the intricate Kivary language which he succeeded in learning marvellously. He acquired such a control of it, with such eloquence and flow of words, that he became very precious to his mission." ZUCCHETTI D., *Un Apostolo dei Kivari: Don Angelo Rouby*, in GM 20 (1942) 8, 68.

Adopting local cultural styles in the proclamation of the Gospel

Repeatedly GM insists that the Christian faith is foreign to no culture, and no culture is so absolutely vitiated that the Gospel cannot be expressed through elements proper to it. The missionary is conscious of the fact that he comes from a culture that is permeated by Christian values. But he does not give into the temptation to absolutise the European culture, nor present it as the one single possible Christian culture. His preoccupation is not with a transportation of the European pattern of living. Instead he is truly preoccupied with planting the Church in the mission lands. And to plant the church in the mission lands, he realises the need of channels of expression which will be easily understood by the local people. As a result he not only accepts the positive elements of the culture of the people, but also uses the various cultural elements to promote his true interests.¹⁵

In December 1940, in a small write up about Christmas in China, the author notes that earlier the Christmas scene was represented in the European style. But of late, the cribs and the statues have acquired a Chinese style. The different personages were given a Chinese face! And the article says that gradually even the church architecture is taking on a Chinese look.¹⁶ And the write up, in pointing to the motive behind such adaptation, stresses that this shows that the Christian faith is not foreign to any culture, on the contrary, it finds its correct expression and becomes truly universal when it is expressed in every culture!¹⁷

Explaining the missionary intention of the month of November 1942, "That indigenous art may be promoted to manifest the true

¹⁵ This pattern of thought adopted by GM is deeply based on the teachings of the magisterium of the Church during those decades.

¹⁶ It would appear appropriate that such kind of adaptations be initiated early enough in China where there was a deep-rooted depreciation for anything that had a merely foreign look. The Boxer's war, though not a popular outbreak against everything that was considered foreign, was in some way, a manifestation of a current of thought among the Chinese. The drastic demand for absolute independence manifested by the threefold freedom proposed by the communist government, again point to that strong anti-foreign current present in the society.

¹⁷ Cfr. *Natale Cinese*, in GM 18 (1940) 12, 185-186.

face of the Catholic religion,” GM stresses the need to develop the indigenous art in the missions. According to the editor, art in general is an interpretation of the cult and religious sentiment of the people, and is also the expression of the religious truth. Christian art, to acquire the true nature of being an expression of a people, must necessarily acquire forms and styles characteristic of the local art. The missionary is involved in a double process of Christianising the local art, and in localising the Christian art.¹⁸

Identification with the local people – Respect for their ways of behaving

The nature of the missionary work demands that the missionary identify himself with the local population. That is the method followed by Jesus himself: the incarnational method. The missionary becomes a true friend of the people only when he whole-heartedly accepts all that is good and healthy in their customs and traditions, and learns to live as one among them.

In April 1946, GM publishes a write up of C. Albisetti where he describes what to the ordinary reader would look like a repugnant ceremony, to which Antonio Colbacchini was subjected by the Bororos. The report says that the Bororos had decided to publicly acknowledge the great missionary as one among them, more, as their true chieftain, father, mother! But he had to pass the test of this ceremony. The Bororos wanted the missionary to take part in their feast. And the participation of the missionary, consisted precisely in drinking a particular fermented drink, one part of the formation of which consisted in the old ladies chewing a particular herb and later spitting the paste into the container where the drink was being boiled. For the Bororos it was more than an act of drinking a special preparation. They required a tangible proof of the solidarity and true friendship of the missionary. Albisetti writes:

¹⁸ Cfr. *Intenzione Missionaria*, in GM 20 (1942) 11, ii. The front cover of the same issue of GM is a Chinese painting of Mary, the star of the sea. The short explanation of the picture, added on the front cover itself, says that it is the reproduction of a painting of Luca Tcheng, a Chinese artist. The explanation notes with evident joy that there are other famous indigenous Christian artists in the other mission areas like Japan, India, Indonesia etc. These artists express the Christian truth using the traditional indigenous style of art and sculpture.

To establish friendship with them and to acquire in a greater way the confidence of the Indians was something that was above all other considerations. I quickly sipped and swallowed that repugnant drink. As soon as the container was empty they filled it again, and then again a third while on the lips of those who sat around, one could notice a smile of approval.¹⁹

In April 1955, GM says that the missionary who leaves his original fatherland, finds in the territory of his apostolate, a second but true fatherland of adoption. And he becomes a true citizen of this land when he accepts the various customs and traditions proper to its people. In this write up, GM projects the example of Mons. Gaetano Pasotti, Vicar Apostolic of Rajaburi in Thailand. As the Thais have the practice of throwing water on each other on New Year's day, as a sign of good wishes for the occasion, the Vicar Apostolic too accepted graciously the water that was thrown on him on his journey on New Year's day.²⁰

Every benefactor who is conscious of the value of his service is at least occasionally tempted to feel superior to the people whom he serves. A person coming from the civilised countries is likewise tempted to consider the simple and primitive practices of the

¹⁹ ALBISSETTI C., *Cerimonia Stingolare*, in GM 24 (1946) 4, 28-29. It is an instance of an extreme case. But the message remains valid: it is through acceptance of the local customs that the missionary becomes one with the people, gains their affection, obtains a gateway to their hearts. In an earlier report in 1926, Domenico Comin had spoken of a kind of a repugnance that the missionary feels at the useless conversations of the tribals. Yet the author says, that in spite of that natural sentiment, the missionary has to demonstrate himself as interested even in the apparently useless things that the people do, with the motive of not losing their friendship, the only way to their heart. Comin wrote in March 1926, "With these poor people one needs to have the patience of Job: to treat them well, take part in their empty conversations showing that one is interested in them. Indifference and much more a type of contempt for their ways would alienate them from us with a resentment which will never disappear." COMIN D., *Nelle Terre dei Kivaros*, in GM 4 (1926) 3, 53.

²⁰ Cfr. *Curiosità Siamese*, in GM 33 (1955) 4, 15. More than the single incidents, what GM intends to project is the figure of the missionary who makes himself one with the local people, accepting all that is good in their cultures, even elements that are contrary to his own European usage, certainly provided that there is nothing morally evil in them. Leaving the shores of Italy, he leaves behind its customs and practices, and makes himself a citizen of the land of his mission!

indigenous people with a tinge of disrespect. The missionary is no exception to this temptation. According to GM, the missionary is often tempted to consider valuable, good, and beautiful those elements in the local cultures which in some way reflect the customs and habits of his own country of origin. A write up in 1961 September, states that the missionary has to learn that every group has a great stock of intellectual and moral riches which need to be appreciated and preserved. Speaking of the duty of the missionary in this regard, the author of the article asserts: "The first law that the missionary needs to observe is respect for the culture of others."²¹ Re-echoing the teachings of the magisterium, the author continues that the Church cannot be considered as bound to one particular culture. Instead, the Church looks with great respect at the true cultural and traditional values of the different people of the world and desires that every effort be made for their permanence and for their promotion.²²

Mons. Luigi Mathias in an article in April 1963 writes that coming to know the local customs and traditions is a life long task. The missionary does not stop at what is merely external or secondary. Adaptation is not just a question of changing some external usage. The one who stops at the external and the secondary is often tempted to substitute the local practices with their European equivalents. To avoid this danger, the missionary has to know the local culture in depth. Mathias writes right at the beginning of the article:

²¹ *Adattamento Missionario*, in GM 39 (1961) 9, 9.

²² The photo of a missionary in India admiring the sculpture of the interior of a Hindu temple, inserted in the write up, emphasises all the more the need to appreciate, not just the art and sculpture, but what is intrinsically good and true in the local religions, and to approach them with the respect due to a religion! At this stage, GM has to some degree grown out of its earlier vision of the local religions as mere devil worship! In October 1961, GM in some way proposes the missionary methodology of Matteo Ricci and his companions in China, one of adaptation of the local customs, as the new methodology of the missions. It remarks that the great zeal and the great love for the people of the missionaries of the previous period, would not be sufficient for a missionary of the present times. Besides competence, culture and knowledge, he has to have the great capacity to convey the message in a language understandable to the local people. Cfr. *Il Saggio dell'Occidente: P. Matteo Ricci*, in GM 39 (1961) 10, 10-12.

In the missions one never stops having new experiences. It is necessary to know in depth the usances and customs of the people whom we mean to evangelize, so that we do not impose on them our European customs, something that is often inopportune, and at times even difficult to realize."²³

The missionary's contribution to local culture

The missionaries not only accept with respect the local cultures and make it their own, but also, especially in the case of missionaries gifted with the due talents, enrich it with their contribution. In December 1963 GM reports about the pioneering work of Antonio Balavoine, a missionary among the Lalungs in Assam, in the field of local literature. With the help of the touring Catechist, the missionary made the first collection of words and phrases in the Lalung language, and after much fatigue, he brought out the first Lalung-Khasi-English dictionary. It was the same missionary who gave the Lalung language the Latin script. He was also the author of a number of text books for the primary schools, and the compiler of the first prayer book in the language. Evidently the motive is not literature for the sake of literature, but literature for the sake of evangelisation.²⁴

Certain missionaries in their capacity of explorers, contribute greatly to expose the region to the outside world, through their various publications. Because of the great journeys that they undertake, they gain first hand knowledge of the geography of the region, and of the various indigenous groups who inhabit these regions, their customs and traditions. In April 1959 GM presents Alberto M. De Agostini, one such salesian missionary, a true student of geography and science. He wrote of his discoveries in the region of the Cordillera that he toured in his book "*I Miei*

²³ MATHIAS L., *Paese che vai*, in GM 41 (1963) 4, 12.

²⁴ Cfr. BALAVOINE A., *Ho Dato la Scrittura ai Lalung*, in GM 41 (1963) 12, 12-16. In an earlier report about the great missionary Antonio Colbacchini, GM highlights the missionary's contribution to the Bororo culture. He not only made a study of their language, customs, myths, songs and music, but he collected all these elements of the Bororo culture in a book for which he was greatly acknowledged both by the civil and the ecclesiastical authorities. Cfr. *Addio Joco-Curi*, in GM 38 (1960) 6, 35.

Viaggi nella Terra del Fuoco” in 1924. The book was so much appreciated even in the circles of students of geography and related sciences that it had to go into four editions within a short period. The missionary’s later travels were published in 1941 in another book entitled, “*Andes Patagonicos*”, which also was a great success and was also translated into Italian in 1949. The missionary while attending to his primary mission of preaching, baptising, saving souls, also contributes to science and to knowledge.²⁵

Besides the contribution of certain missionaries in the field of science, there have been others who have worked in other fields, cultural and developmental, and have rendered yeoman service to the people of the region. Mons. Luigi Lasagna was one such figure. Among his many achievements was the founding of a vast and rich library, the setting up of a museum of natural history, and most noted of all, the construction and equipment of a meteorological observatory. Besides these more noted activities of the missionary, it was Lasagna who was responsible also for the import of good types of vines from Italy! Concluding the list of the great achievements of the great missionary, GM remarks that Lasagna with this varied activities showed to the critics of the Church who thought that the priests were capable of only teaching the indigenous people some little prayers and nothing more, that he knew to combine in a harmonious order, piety and science, and further more, that he was capable of binding both these aspects in an ambient of great joy.²⁶

Education of the young

When GM pictures the pagan world immersed in an ocean of superstitions, when it projects vividly various types of slavery which afflict the people of the missions, when it points out the utter primitiveness of various groups in the missions, one point that the periodical wants to make is to present the great need of these people to be educated. One major reason for the various afflictions of the pagans is their lack of instruction and information.

²⁵ Cfr. *Un Grande Esploratore*, in GM 37 (1959) 4, 34-35.

²⁶ Cfr. *Mons. Luigi Lasagna*, in GM 11 (1933) 4, 92-94.

Ignorance lies at the root of the various superstitions and the practices connected with them. It is education then which is at the same time a means of Christianisation and of civilisation.

Situation cf the pagan world

Evangelisation, and for that matter, civilisation, implies the gradual process of bringing about a change in the pattern of life of the society. But this desired change has to take into account the ground realities: the practical difficulty of changing customs and traditions which have been accepted, sanctioned and lived by generations and generations, and which have become part and parcel of a way of life. The missionary realises that changing age old customs of a people, is not like putting away an old vestment and putting on a new. In the case of the adults and more in that of the aged, the required change of mentality and behavioural patterns, is hard to come by and often requires tireless effort by way of instruction, and patient follow up. It is in the education of the children and of the young that the missionary places his real hopes for a true change in attitudes and modes of living.

Absence cf educational institutes in the missions

The mission world that GM projects, is one where there are no educational facilities at all, and if there are a few, they are in the main towns and cities, beyond the reach of the people who live in the interior. It is the missionary who has to start these educational institutions in these regions. In some mission areas, like Assam, where the Catholic missionaries arrived after the Protestant ones, the educational institutions exist even in many of the centres in the interior, but are used by the Protestant missionaries to further their mission, and often to block the entrance of the Catholic missionaries.

Desire for western knowledge

In most mission lands, the European colonisers preceded the Catholic missionaries. These colonisers, obviously, impressed the local people with their military superiority. The success of the colonisers served to bring home to the indigenous people, the backwardness of their age old methods, military or otherwise. This, in turn, created in the local people the desire to access the know-

how of the colonisers and their science. There was a kind of a turning towards “the white man’s science”.²⁷ From the various reports in GM, one would gather that, in the period after the World War I, there was a general awakening to the need for education in the different mission lands. And in the concrete situation, it meant a turning towards western science.

Wide spread indifference towards education of young

Although one could speak of a general awakening to the need for education in all the mission lands, it was not that universal as to include every tribe, every family and every individual. As in the case of the faith that he preached, so in the case of the education that he brought, there was much indifference from groups and from families, in the actual mission field. It would look that it is the missionary who is convinced of the need of educating the children and the youth, and it is he who wants to establish schools and boarding houses.

In January 1927, GM publishes a letter of Maria Avio, a missionary in Assam, to the Mother General in Turin. The missionary sister speaks of the difficulty of educating the young. The young boys and girls are absorbed into the labour force of the family at a very early age. In the tea gardens, they work side by side with the grown ups. In other communities, they are employed in looking after the cattle. When the parents are out on work, the grown up children are entrusted with the care of the little ones! And on the whole, the young boys and girls are married off at a very early age, reducing further the possibility of education. Often the uneducated parents consider the education of their children as a waste of time! The missionary has to use all his power of persuasion and at times even financial power to get the young boys and girls to come to school, and more to come to stay in the boarding houses of the mission.²⁸

²⁷ A small article in September 1944 hints at this longing for western education when it says, “Especially in new regions, the students are often attracted by the superiority of the Whites, and the elderly parents are of the opinion that their children can make good use of what they call the precious intelligence of the White in their lives.” *Le Missioni e le Scuole*, in GM 22 (1944) 9, 94.

²⁸ Cfr. Avio M., *Ostacoli dell'Apostolato Missionario*, in GM 5 (1927) 1, 24.

GM's projection of the Church as the educator of the nations

An article in the February issue of 1935, says that educative activity has been associated with the Church and its mission of evangelisation from its initiation. Education, even non-religious, has been a major activity of the Church throughout the centuries. Growth of science has been associated with the Church. It is the Church that has made education something accessible to all people. Wherever the missionaries went, education was considered as one of the indispensable means for a true evangelisation of the people. Often in the history of the missions, the missionaries constructed schools even before they could think of constructing the church! In most missions, where there was a church, there was adjacent to it a school.

Purpose of the mission Schools

Through various reports and articles, GM brings out the various motives of establishing Christian schools in the missions. The earlier reports tend to view the schools, and, for that matter, education as a whole, only in their connection with direct evangelisation. However in the latter years there is a shift to consider the schools as valid missionary activity even when not connected with direct evangelisation, but when it caters to a Christian education of even the pagan youth.

GM presents the missionary school, as a direct instrument of evangelisation of those who attend these institutions and of others who in some way are influenced by those who attend them. In the course of teaching to read and write, and the rudiments of Mathematics and the other sciences, the missionary schools teach the faith. It is the young students that open the way to evangelisation. GM makes no secret of the fact that the missionary schools seek to “conquer” the students, and through them, their parents and their whole families. In February 1935, GM writes,

It is exactly through scholastic education that the seekers of souls can attract the little pagans to the mission. These frequent the lessons of the Catholic conquistador and gradually remain conquered also by eternal truths.²⁹

²⁹ *Sulle Orme del Maestro*, in GM 13 (1935) 2, 21.

In the over all desire for education and for knowledge, the people, especially of the interior regions voluntarily turned to the missionary.³⁰ The local people did not turn to the missionary immediately and primarily for the message of salvation that he brought. It was interest in education that often formed the primary motive for invitations made to the missionaries, to start the missions in various centres. And for the missionary, these schools served as a point of entry into a region, and a foothold to launch out his other activities.³¹

Although, according to GM, the missionaries are often invited to various centres to start a school, the missionaries just do not wait for these invitations. It is the need to instruct the people in the Christian faith, and to civilise them, that motivates the missionaries to be pioneers in education in various countries.³² According to a small article in September 1944, it is the preoccupation of the missionary with the Christian formation of the new generations that moves him to establish the school. The article notes,

³⁰ Besides being an expression of their recognition of that care and concern that the missionaries lavished on the local people, in the majority of cases it resulted from the practical situation of the regions. The governments, if there were any, cared little for the education of the interior regions. There was little by way of voluntary organisations which could undertake such a heavy commitment. The educative institutions of the local religions, if they had any, were confined to the monasteries. It was to that person who manifested himself as their father, friend, counsellor and guide that the people naturally turned for the education of their future generations! In many areas, the Catholic missionary alone was considered capable of even bearing the financial burden involved in the foundation and maintenance of a school!

³¹ Stephan Fernando in September 1926, speaking of the effectiveness of the primary schools in the villages reports how the Salesian missionaries got entry into the village of Nongrah through the founding of a primary school there, even though the Protestants already had a school there at the time. The superiority of the Catholic school served to deplete the number of students of the Protestant school. And the esteem in which the villagers held the catholic school served to draw the local population to the missionary, and gradually to the Catholic faith! Cfr. FERRANDO S., *Il Villaggio Maria Ausiliatrice*, in GM 4 (1926) 9, 166-167.

³² Speaking of the missionaries as pioneers of education, GM in July 1940 presents the case of Thailand. According to this report of G. Casetta, the St. Gabriel Brothers, the Sisters of St. Paul of Charters and the Ursuline Sisters were the true pioneers of education in this country. Even the government entered into the field of education long after the missionaries. Cfr. CASETTA G., *Thailand*, in GM 18 (1940) 7, 106-107.

The one preoccupation of all missionaries all over the world is to open schools for the Christians, because if charity attracts them to the Christian faith and catechumenate introduces them to the practice of Christian life especially in the case of the adults, it is the school that forms the new generations.³³

The article continues to say that often the first among the constructions in a mission centre is that of the school, even before that of the church. It points to the missionary's conviction that it is education that paves the way for faith, ignorance being the root cause of all superstitions.

The same article quoted above, highlights yet another scope of the school in the missions, namely, that of forming a Catholic elite in the society. The author writes, "The scope of our schools is to form a chosen class of Catholics."³⁴ Yet again, according to the same article, in the missions, it is the school that sets the tone of the whole Christian community. "In the missions it is the school which creates for the Christians that warm Catholic ambience."³⁵

In the context of rising nationalism that followed the end of the World War II, the various missionary educational institutions projected the relevance of the missionaries, especially in lands where the anti-European, anti-colonialist sentiments soared high. In this context, the Christian faith itself was considered a western product, simply the religious dimension of the colonial powers, and often, as a structure that sought to perpetuate the colonial

³³ *Le Missioni e le Scuole*, in GM 22 (1944) 9, 94.

³⁴ *Le Missioni e le Scuole*, in GM 22 (1944) 9, 95. This would seem all the more important in societies in the grip of a nationalist movement. The church had to form men and women who would insert themselves justly in these movements, maintain Christian values while struggling for independence, and also in the society itself defend the unalienable rights of the Church. In July 1949, speaking of the importance of institutions of higher education in the mission, citing the example of India, GM reports that certain educated Catholics who had passed out from the Catholic institutions of higher education, were invited to form part of the body that drew up the constitution of India. The educated Catholics can influence the life of a nation, even at such high levels! Cfr. *Scuole Superiori ed Università delle Missioni*, in GM 27 (1949) 7, 6.

³⁵ *Le Missioni e le Scuole*, in GM 22 (1944) 9, 95.

domination. The mission's extensive commitment to the education of the local young boys and girls through its numerous institutions: primary, middle and high schools, professional and agricultural schools, universities, offered an undeniable witness of the true commitment of the Church and its missionaries to the welfare of the local people.³⁶

In July 1949, GM again emphasises the importance of sympathy and esteem for the missions and the missionaries in distant lands. In many corners of the world, the national awakening was accompanied by an awakened desire to return to the religion and way of life of the ancestors, a greater attachment to the age old religion of the land. In the general antipathy for Christianity, it was necessary to win the sympathy, not only of the ordinary people, but also of the high class, the group that formed the intelligentsia of the country. It was necessary to expose this group to the profound principles of the Christian faith, and even if their conversion was not forthcoming, win their respect and their sympathy. In this regard GM wrote in July 1949,

Mere works of charity and just ordinary preaching are not sufficient to conquer the more educated sections of society. For this the only efficacious means, after the grace of God, is to open for their children universities, but such as are superior both in standard and fame than those pagan ones. These universities bring the Church both esteem and respect even from the non-Christians.³⁷

Another serious motive for the great percent of missionary personnel and resources engaged in the field of education, that is highlighted by GM especially in the period after the World War II, was the over-all Christian formation of the young. What was intended was not just gaining the sympathy of the educated mass of people, but to instil in them Christian principles. Age old traditions that were so deeply ingrained in the structure of the society could be changed only by this general Christian education.

³⁶ Cfr. *Le Vie delle Conquiste Missionarie*, in GM 25 (1947) 7, 8-9.

³⁷ *Scuole Superiori ed Università delle Missioni*, in GM 27 (1949) 7, 6.

GM makes special reference to the situation of the Hindu society in India with its caste system. No doubt, the formation given to the Hindu students through the numerous Christian educational institutions, contributed to a gradual transformation of the society. GM quotes the remark that an inspector of schools made during his visit to the Salesian School in Madras, “You Catholics have done immensely more than any government legislation in removing the prejudices of caste system and in bringing relief to the people of the low castes.”³⁸ Especially in areas where conversions are difficult, the missionaries continue their engagement in the field of education, with the motive of a Christian formation of the students. What the Christian school seeks therefore is not mere conversion, but a Christian transformation of the society.³⁹

By 1963, according to the presentation of GM, education had become a major missionary activity, absorbing the majority of the missionary personnel and requiring the major part of the resources, especially financial. In December 1963, GM writes,

The school is the major activity of the missionaries in almost all mission territories. It absorbs up to 60% of the missionary personnel and almost 70% of the economic resources of certain missions.⁴⁰

The article asserts that this major activity of the missionaries, though not aimed primarily at the conversion to Christianity, remains a very valid missionary activity, because of the Christian transformation that it brings about in the society. In no way can it be considered as a waste of personnel and of resources. The intellectual and social formation of the students, paves the way for the Christianisation of the society, and in quite a few cases leads the students to embrace the faith. In the mission lands, the Church is recognised and esteemed most for its educational services.

³⁸ *La Piaga dell'India: la Fame*, in GM 29 (1951) 7,9.

³⁹ *Cfr. Scuole e Missioni*, in GM 39 (1961) 6, 11.

⁴⁰ *Scuola e Missioni*, in GM 41 (1963) 12, 3.

Conclusion

In every culture there is so much that is really humanizing and elevating. But often the good is mixed with a sprinkling of elements that are degrading and at times downright evil. Certain primitive cultures have had more elements of evil, due to the ignorance and the superstitions that ruled them. Advance of Christianity has no doubt brought about a cleansing of these cultures. Unfortunately, in certain periods of history and in certain places, some of the primitive cultures have disappeared. While one can always question certain methodologies and attitudes, it would be being uninformed if one denies the purifying effect of the Christian faith on many cultures in many parts of the world. Christianizing and humanizing has often gone hand in hand. And it is meant to be so. Even where there has been direct opposition to the Christianizing efforts of the missionaries, the humanizing dimension has been appreciated and valued. It is not only Christianity that humanizes. Every religion is meant to elevate the human person and put him or her in touch with God. But it is also a simple fact of history that not every religion has played this role correctly. It is also a fact of history that the advance of Christianity has contributed greatly to a greater humanization of the various cultures which have accepted it. Missionary action, aimed at uprooting certain practices which are detrimental to the true development of the person has been valid in itself and brought immense advantage particularly to the weaker and often exploited sections of society.

Today one would call into question the formative value of structured education with its over emphasis on the acquisition of a certificate or a particular qualification. There is rightly a lament over the little impact of education on the formation of the personalities of the students. While calling for a revamping of the existing models and structures of education, one cannot be but lost in admiration at the immense service rendered through education, and reaffirm its value and relevance for the betterment of society. While humbly recognizing the gap that exists between education and evangelization, one still admits a kind of primacy that education still holds as a means of evangelization understood in its more comprehensive meaning.

CHAPTER 11

MISSION – ADVENTURE

The founding fathers of GM, intended the periodical as a substitute to the other romantic literature of adventures then in circulation, to satisfy the natural and legitimate desire of the young for tales of heroism and of adventure. Criticising the common literature that the young tended to devour then, Bartolomeo Fascie called them “volumes of adventures of fantasy which most of the times have nothing to do with reality or even with some semblance of it.” And speaking of the effects of such reading on the young, the author continued to say that they left their readers “tired and dazed, with the mind all excited, populated with those strange fantasies, far away and different from all that which surrounds and touches them in day to day living.” To substitute this type of useless and harmful reading, GM proposed to present in its pages the true and real adventures of the heroic missionaries in foreign lands. Anticipating the fruits of such a literature, Fascie noted,

From such a reading there will well up in hearts of the young a strong enticement and a vigorous urge to good works and an imitation that is motivated by affection which will in turn move them to associate themselves both in desire and in actual deeds with the apostolate of the missionaries so full of what one may call attractive.¹

Missionary’s life – a continuous adventure

According to the projections of GM, the missionary does not go in search for adventures. These adventures simply form part of his life, of the day to day carrying out of his missionary duties. He lives among a primitive people, adopting the primitive styles

¹ FASCIE B., *Il Nostro Programma*, in GM 1 (1923) 1, 2.

of their living. The life of the missionary is first and foremost an adventure in learning about people he serves and their customs. The coming into contact with unknown groups and unknown people increases the element of discovery and of adventure. The primitive conditions in which the missionary himself lives in the mission lands, in dwellings similar to those of the indigenous people, expose him to the same surprises and dangers to which the others are constantly exposed. The extensive forests which he has to cross in his missionary journeys keep in store some element of surprise. And when these forests are the habitations of wild animals, as according to the projections of GM they usually are, then the missionary could foresee some unpleasant encounter with some wild animal before every one of his journeys. In particular areas like the missions of China, there is yet another possible provider for occasions of real adventure: falling into the hands of the pirates and brigands who roam about freely in the region. And to these if one adds the adventure of teaching a new people the Christian faith, and their varied modes of response to the missionary's teaching, then there is no end to adventures in the life of the missionary! In short, what GM seems to say, is that it is the very nature of missionary life that is the source of adventure.²

Missions – a land that offers opportunities for heroic adventures

The October 1923 issue carries a write up of Carlo Crespi about the various types of crocodiles found in the mission of Guayas, in S. America. For those among the readers who love adventure, the missionary notes that one of the favourite sports in the region was that of hunting these terrible monsters.³ For a young boy in Italy, these types of sports would be something of a distant land, something that belonged to the fantastic and the imaginative. But in the mission, it was not only real, but something near at hand!

Along the same style of presentation, GM in August 1926 publishes Ravalico's write up about the various stages of an elephant hunting expedition. It is not that the missionary is engaged in such sport, but such activities are going on in the region where

² Cfr. DEPONTI G., *Avventure Missionarie*, in GM I (1923) 8, 123-125.

³ CRESPI C., *I Coccodrilli del Guayas*, in GM I (1923) 9, 132-133.

he lives and works. These are the types of true diversions that the mission land holds out for the truly adventurous youth.⁴

The October issue of 1932 carries the report of a heroic fight of two young Africans with a leopard in the mission of Kaiambi, in central Africa. The leopard came out from the forest while the young boys were working in the fields and attacked them. The boys, instead of running away fought back the wild animal, till finally, the leopard just gave up and returned to the forest!⁵ So one does not need to enter the forests to have those encounters with the leopards! Although GM does not say that these encounters are common, day to day happenings in the mission lands, the reports point to the fact that they are not that rare either!

In July 1961, GM carries a true narration of the encounter of Mike Tsalikis, a hunter of serpents, with an anaconda, in one of the thick South American forests. The report is accompanied by actual photos of the event! Tsalikis had to have extreme courage and even physical strength not to be overcome by the serpent. The case that GM reports is surely not one of those day to day adventures of the missionaries. But the intention of the article seems to be to challenge the youthful yearning for acts of heroism. And the missions hold out such opportunities.⁶

Missionary journeys – the major provider of opportunities of adventure

According to the numerous accounts of GM, the missionary's constant journeying is the major provider of adventures. Luigi Mathias in July 1923, asserts that "adventures form the life of all missionaries!" He puts forward the following reasons for the presence

⁴ Cfr. RAVALICO L., *La Caccia degli Elefanti*, in GM 4 (1926) 8, 150-152.

⁵ Cfr. EDVIGE, *Fra gli Artigli del Leopardo*, in GM 10 (1932) 10, 183-184. Siro Righetto missionary in Krishnagar in August 1933, narrates the encounter that one of his villagers had with a Bengal tiger. The man was assaulted by the tiger on his way home. But here again, the villager defended himself courageously and desperately with just a big stick, till hearing his loud cries the other villagers and even the missionary who happened to be in that village that day, came to his rescue, and the tiger disappeared in the forest. Cfr. RIGHETTO S., *A Tu per Tu con la Tigre*, in GM 11 (1933) 8, 180.

⁶ Cfr. KURI S., *Un Anaconda, un Cacciatore, una Rolley*, in GM 39 (1961) 7, 22-27.

of adventures in the life of the missionary: the various means that the missionary uses for his regular visits to the villages, the wild animals which roam about in the forests that the missionaries have to cross to reach these settlements, the lack of roads and even paths in interior regions. Mathias goes on to say that adventures do not stop even when the missionary has reached the Catholic village. As Gil, a missionary in Assam, was sleeping in one of the houses in a Catholic village, a tiger came out from the forest and carried away one of the two bulls which were pulling his cart!⁷

The vehicle that the missionary uses, the absence of roads, and their miserable condition when they do exist, prove to be other sources of adventure for the missionary.⁸ At other times, it does not take much to have these adventures. The missionaries loose their way in the thick forests that they have to cross, they are caught in the torrential rains of the region, they have to pass the night in the forests inhabited by various types of wild animals, take shelter at times in some caves and there have the unpleasant experience of some visit of tigers or leopards! Even simple journeys have some store of surprise and adventure for the missionary.⁹

⁷ Cfr. MATHIAS L., *Nelle Piantagioni di Tè*, in GM 1 (1923) 6, 90. The mode of narration is not one that tries to impress upon the readers the great difficulties that the missionaries have to put up with. The remark of Mathias would instead point to the fact that the missionaries do not make a big case of these daily adventures. Instead they take them rather sportively, and even enjoy that adventurous dimension of their life. Obviously the intention of the author is to show how the missions abound in adventure, and to invite the adventure loving youngsters to venture into these lands.

⁸ In November 1928, GM publishes a long and interesting account of the journey of Cesare Albisetti and a few of his Bororo companions in an old vehicle, all the way from Cuyaba to the Bororo colony of Sangradouro. The vehicle has to ford the rivers in the region, pass through trackless terrain. At a point of the road it capsizes! But the group continues to maintain their optimism and manage to get the vehicle moving again and reach their destination. The report really makes interesting reading. Cfr. ALBISETTI C., *Incidenti di Viaggio*, in GM 6 (1928) 11, 215-217.

⁹ Cfr. *Maria Ausiliatrice Accompanya le sue Missionarie*, in GM 6 (1928) 12, 228-229; POGGIORE C., *Sperduti nella Foresta*, in GM 11 (1932) 3, 81; VIGNA G., *Aspetti Poetici della Vita Missionaria nell'Equatore*, in GM 9 (1931) 9, 168-169; ALGERI L., *Notte Memoranda*, in GM 12 (1934) 8, 144-148. CARLETTI E., *Nell'Inferno Verde*, in GM 13 (1935) 7, 133-135; 13 (1935) 8, 148-149; 13 (1935) 9, 174-176; 13 (1935) 10, 192; VIGNA G., *Dalle Ande alle Amazzoni*, in GM 15 (1936) 10, 160-162; *Avventure di Viaggio*, in GM 17 (1939) 8, 154-155; DE AMICIS A., *Missionari in Trappola?*, in GM 18 (1940) 2, 18-19.

The description of A. Pianazzi in July-August issue of 1945, presents a general picture of the missionary's journeys, and the adventure they hold in store. It also points to the ordinariness of these adventures, and the way that the missionary looks at them. Pianazzi writes,

Such excursions are also exciting and enjoyable. The marvelous fertility of the soil, covered with dense forest, always green, has a majestic and solemn look. One journeys whole day through dense and never ending forests, far from all human being, in deep silence broken only by fluttering of the pheasants and other birds of the forests, by the cries of the monkeys and the noise of the running of the deers. Often one finds the footprints of less pleasing inhabitants of the forests; areas of the jungles covered with footprints large and round which point to the passage of entire troops of elephants; half devoured carcasses with the major bones all crushed which indicate the powerful teeth of the tiger. In these journeys it often happens that we come across certain types of animals much less friendly to man like serpents and others. By the grace of God, till now we have managed to escape from any harm.¹⁰

Secondariness of adventures : True heroism of the missionary

Although one could speak of a kind of romanticization of the reports of adventure, GM does not present these adventures as the primary motive for launching out into the missions, or for

¹⁰ Pianazzi A., *Nella Terra dei Garo*, in GM 23 (1945) 7-8, 76. Even in the later period, stories of adventure that come from the missions, especially from Assam, tend to centre on the missionary's or other people's encounter with the wild animals during their long journeys through the forests. At times to save the people from the menace of these wild animals, the missionary himself takes to hunting down these wild beasts, risking his own life. But for the most part, these encounters are neither desired nor sought after by the missionaries. Cfr. RAVALICO L., *Con gli Elefanti dell'Assam*, in GM 14 (1936) 2, 31; *L'Ultimo Addio*, in GM 29 (1950) 1, 10-11; Tognocchi M., *Caccia Grossa*, in GM 32 (1954) 10, 4-7; *L'Attacca del Leopardo*, in GM 33 (1955) 1, 17; Tognocchi M., *La Tigre in Agguato*, in GM 34 (1956) 6, 16-17; Tognocchi M., *A Quattr'Occhi con la Tigre*, in GM 39 (1961) 7, 30-41; *Missionari nei Guai*, in GM 43 (1965) 1, 34; Venturoli G., *La Tigre Rispetta i Cristiani*, in GM 45 (1967) 7, 4-8.

considering the missionaries as true heroes. What makes the missionaries great heroes are not the adventures they have, but the sacrifices they make to respond to their missionary vocation; the privations they accept in the actual mission field; the daily, hard, monotonous and often unnoticed work they carry out; the selfless dedication to the salvation of souls; the slow gradual martyrdom to which they submit themselves!¹¹ In the May 1940 issue of GM, the editor, presenting the missionaries as true heroes, points to what makes them great heroes, when he writes,

The missionaries both men and women are great benefactors of humanity and almost always great heroes; heroes of charity, of love, of service, of compassion, of continuous hard work. But they are humble heroes who engage themselves in doing much good but in a hidden way. Many races owe their civilization to the work of these humble people.¹²

Therefore, the missionary, as presented by GM, is not a man in search of adventures: in the forests and in the rivers, with wild animals and serpents, encountering pirates and brigands. But these events take place in his life, because of his dedication to the salvation of abandoned and helpless people in foreign lands. However these adventures contribute to making the life of the missionary interesting, out of the ordinary, and full of surprises.

¹¹ Cfr. GARNERI D., *L'Eroismo dei Missionari*, in GM 2 (1924) 7, 97-98.

¹² *Nel Dolce Mese*, in GM 18 (1940) 5, 65. In March 1967, on the occasion of the death of the three American astronauts Grissom, White and Chaffee who died in the Appolo mission, speaking of the heroism of these three men, and the sacrifice they made, GM does not hesitate to compare the missionaries with these great heroes. Like these astronauts, the missionaries too are exceptional men, engaged in a risky mission, but dedicated to bring the mission to a successful end. In fact this is what GM writes of the missionaries, "They are also exceptional men, dedicated to a mission very difficult and risky, launching out to the far away lands, often savage and full of difficulties, among people who speak a different language, have customs and ways of thought different from those of the missionaries, often hostile or at least indifferent to the presence of the same missionaries."

Conclusion

Life has its various colours and shades. Not all human beings are attracted by the same colours, or repelled by the same. Each according to one's individuality! It is also true that at times an attraction to great things begin with a fascination for some minor aspects of the same reality. Some how each one has his or her own path to tread even when the goals seem to be the same. And this makes for the beauty of the human mosaic! Many youngsters were perhaps attracted by the adventurous dimension of the life of a missionary to launch into the actual mission field. Later on life would lead them to what was primary!

Presentation of the hardships that the missionary had to encounter in distant lands prepared the minds of the young for such a life. It inculcated in them a mind-set. When in the real field they would meet similar realities, they would not feel cheated, instead they would be prepared to meet them with a measure of courage and adventurous spirit. Life in the missions has never been cosy and comfortable. And therefore these narrations of the adventures of the missionaries, even when romanitised in some way, brought home the actual difficulties and hardships of missionary life, and toughened the spirits of the young. They served a purpose.

Cheer and light-heartedness need not be excluded even from very grave and serious undertakings. A cross that is encountered with an adventurous spirit is not robbed of its merits or of its efficacy. Instead it is made more acceptable and even welcome. Seriousness in commitment certainly does not rob life of cheer, perhaps it adds to it! Even the joys are enjoyed at a deeper level.

CHAPTER 12

SPECIFIC FEATURES OF A SALESIAN MISSION

While the Salesian missionaries worked in the mission lands with a goal common to all other missionaries, of evangelising and civilising the people, according to the projections of GM, certain features set them apart from other Catholic missionaries. They exhibited a special spirit and a special method. Naturally, being a salesian instrument of missionary formation, and that too mainly for the students of the Salesian schools of Italy, much of the reporting was about salesian missionary action, though not blocking out reports from missions of other missionary institutes and congregations. Through the various reports about the salesian missions, GM presents in some way the specific salesian characteristics of a mission.

Attention to youth

The salesian methodology in the missions, as projected by the reports of GM, is very much centred on the care of the youth of the locality. It is to this section of society, that the salesian turns his attention first. To the youth he dedicates the major part of his energies and much of his financial resources. It is in the education of the young that he places his great hopes for the Christianisation of the region. He regards the Christian formation of the young as the foundation of a future vibrant Catholic community.

Care of the young - the Salesian mode of initiating their missions

According to the reports found in GM, the salesian style of initiating the missions is by their immediate attention to the young boys and girls. The mission starts with the various activities in favour of the young: schools, boarding houses, oratories, work rooms etc.

These activities preceded all other activities and served to open out to the others. Evidently this methodology is the practical realisation of the missionary method suggested by Don Bosco himself.

In the very first issue of GM, Maria De Angelis, reporting about their institute in Montevideo, takes care to note that the Salesian Sisters started their apostolate in the foreign lands with an oratory, a work room and a school for the poor children of the locality. Significant is the remark of De Angelis that the institute of the sisters soon turned out to be a true “beehive of children of all ages”.¹

In October 1923, reporting about how the Salesians started their mission in Tanjore, South India, Garneri notes that one of the first things that the Salesians did on their arrival at this mission was to start an orphanage for about 30 children. In the following year, yet another house was constructed to house more orphans from the mission area. Within a short time they started the technical and formal education of the youth of the area.²

Garneri, again in November 1923, introducing the Salesian Congo missions, writes that the Salesians started their mission in Congo with two institutions for the young. They started with a formal school for the children of the white people, and soon after, they initiated a technical school for the children of the local black people. When later on, they opened the centre of Kafubu, the mission there started with an agricultural training centre. In 1915

¹ DE ANGELIS M., *Le Figlie di Maria Ausiliatrice nelle Missioni*, in GM 1 (1923) 1,9. In June of the following year, GM reports about the FMA's apostolate in Viedma, in favour of the abandoned girls, accepting them in their institute, teaching them a useful trade, and forming them to be good Catholics. Of this particular institute of the FMA's, the author remarks, “This work of regeneration of the poor children, abandoned by all, is an apostolate which form the source of great merit for the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians in the vast Patagonian land”.

² Cfr. GARNERI D., *La Missione del South India*, in GM 1 (1923) 9, 130-132. In a later report, Zucchetti, speaking about the prodigious missionary activity of Mons. Mederlet, Archbishop of Madras, stresses that faithful to the missionary project of Don Bosco, Mederlet started his apostolate with various works in favour of the young. He opened schools, hostels, Oratories, professional schools. Cfr. ZUCCHETTI D., *Il Terrore del Diavolo*, in GM 21 (1943) 12, 92-93.

the Salesians opened yet another mission centre at Kiniama where again the work started with caring for the education of the local youth: a primary school and an agricultural school.³

The same style was followed in the salesian missions in China. Pietro Parisi, missionary in China, in May 1928 speaks about the Salesian work in the mission of Schiuchow, in favour of the orphans of the region. Evidently what the missionary presents, is the precedence that the Salesians give to the care of the youth in China. The Salesians collect the poor and abandoned youth in their mission centres, instruct them, baptise them, and form them in the Christian way. The missionary reports that through their activities for these poor orphans in the boarding houses, the Salesians have gained the sympathy of the Chinese population.⁴

One of the common topics of reports, especially coming from the Sisters working in India, is that of the sisters' apostolate in favour of abandoned children, young boys and girls. The sisters go in search of them, gather them in their institutions even when they have neither space nor the means to keep the new comers, regenerate them in the waters of Baptism, and equip them in some way for their life in the society.⁵

This mode of initiating missionary activity, for the Salesians, was not a simple response to the practical exigencies of the locality. It was a method, a salesian method, and recognised as such even in the ecclesiastical circles. In April 1942, Cesare Castellino, giving a small résumé of the beginnings of the Salesian work in Thailand recalls the words that Pius XI said to the missionaries setting out

³ Cfr. GARNERI D., *La Missione del Katanga*, in GM 1 (1923) 11, 164-167. The regular reference to the "technical schools" obviously point to the attention of the Salesian missionaries to the poor youth of their missions. These so called technical schools were only to equip these young people with some useful trade, so that they could make an honest living. GM, obviously wants to highlight the attention on the part of the Salesians to the poor and abandoned youth of the missions!

⁴ Cfr. PARISI P., *Oifani*, in GM 6 (1928) 5, 85-86. Cfr. also GUARONA G., *Loi Hing*, in GM 7 (1929) 8, 154-155.

⁵ Cfr. Cfr. VALLINO I., *Le Due Sorelline*, in GM 9 (1931) 3, 45-46; VALLINO I., *Cipriano, il Piccolo Schiavo*, in GM 9 (1931) 5, 85-87; *Primavera Indiana*, in GM 12 (1934) 3, 54-55; *Abbandonati*, in GM 13 (1935) 1, 13; *Piccola Martire*, in GM 13, (1935) 2, 33; VALLINO I., *Il Piccolo Carlo Salotti*, in GM 13 (1935) 3, 55.

for Thailand, "Following the example of Don Bosco, you will go to the young..." And Castellino continues, "and they, faithful to the programme of the founder, mixed with the young in the schools, in the oratories and in other camps of their work."⁶

In January 1952, speaking of the missionary activity in Ecuador, a report highlights the Salesians' conviction of the importance of paying primary attention to the youth in the missions. The report projects the education of the young as the true hope of a real transformation in the primitive society of the Kivaros. Therefore these children have to be taken out of the forests, their natural habitat, and in the different boarding houses be gradually introduced to the civilised ways of living. The missionary places much hope in these boarding houses, as he views them as nurseries for future catechists, teachers, political leaders, and for future priests and religious.⁷

The constant attention of the Salesians to youth ministry

Paying attention to the youth is not only a method of initiating the salesian mission. It is its continuous characteristic, not only in the sense that once begun, they continue to function, but also in the sense of that alertness of the Salesians to the changing situations of youth, and the new ventures they start to respond adequately to the changed conditions. So a report in September 1954, speaks of the abandoned and dangerous situation of the youth in Thailand after the World War II, and the Salesian projects of homes for these abandoned youth at Banpong, Hua Hin, Bangkok.⁸ Another

⁶ CASTELLINO C., *Thailandia*, in GM 20 (1942) 4, 37.

⁷ Cfr. *Internati Kivari*, in GM 30 (1952) 1, 8-9. In 1963, speaking about the great missionary effectiveness of the method followed by Mons. Domenico Comin with the Kivaros of Ecuador, Zucchetti recalls the words that Benedict XV addressed to Comin, "Follow the method and spirit of Don Bosco." The author says that these words were a true inspiration for the missionary to work in a special way with the young, to bring about the civilisation of the whole tribe. It turned out to be a true turning point in the history of the missions among the Kivaros. It was a sensational discovery that in the course of a few years the face of the Equador mission was totally changed." ZUCCHETTI D., *Il Vescovo dei Kivari*, in GM 41 (1963) 11, 10-11.

⁸ Cfr. CARRETTO P., *Ci Siamo Lavati la Faccia*, in GM 32 (1954) 9, 14-15.

report of P. Cuisset, missionary in Saigon, in March 1963, speaks of the Salesian activity in favour of the street children of the city.⁹ A small report of Van Asperdt from Congo in April 1965 presenting the situation of poverty, ignorance and abandonment in which the youth of the region find itself, presents the Salesian project of a boy's town, with the capacity of housing about 1500 youngsters.¹⁰

Youth of the Salesian boarding schools – apostles of their own people

The expectations of the missionary from the boarding schools go beyond the immediate scope of educating the young, their Christian formation, or even getting an entry into their villages. According to some of the latter presentations of GM, these boarding houses actually produce zealous young apostles, who collaborate directly with the missionaries for the conversion of their own people.

In December 1959, among the news items, GM reports the missionary activity of a group of Naga young boys. They were admitted to the salesian boarding school at Imphal as non-Christians. But in the course of their study they received baptism. When they returned to their village, they became true evangelisers of their village. According to the report, at the time of writing, there were about 600 new Catholics in the village of Punanamai, Manipur, all because of the work of those young students of the salesian school of Imphal. And their zeal for the salvation of souls has become some thing contagious! Other boys and girls of the village, once they become Christians, immediately enrol themselves in groups that go preaching the Gospel to the nearby villages!¹¹

⁹ Cfr. CUISSET P., *I Cow-Boys di Saigon*, in GM 41 (1963) 3, 10-17.

¹⁰ Cfr. VAN ASPERDT G., *Dal Carcere alla Vita*, in GM 43 (1965) 4, 17-19.

¹¹ Cfr. *Radio TV Missionaria*, in GM 37 (1959) 12, 42. A report coming from Luigi Ravalico, in March 1960 speaks of the great missionary effectiveness of the hostel at Imphal. Ravalico writes that when these young boys return to their villages for the holidays, they make a real impression on the other people of the village. And this serves to bring more children to the school and hostel at Imphal, and as a result open them to the Gospel message. Ravalico also in this report speaks of the direct evangelising activity that these young boys undertake during their holidays. The hostel serves to infuse in these young people that great desire to bring their families and villages to the true faith. Cfr. RAVALICO L., *Servizio Missionario dei Giovani*, in GM 38 (1960) 3, 44-45.

In May 1961 Bianchi reports enthusiastically about the direct missionary action of the young students of the Salesian boarding of Imphal. The author reports that in one of his missionary journeys, he had the joy of baptising practically the whole village of Tamenglong, in Manipur. The students from the boarding house of Imphal had evangelised the whole village and prepared it for baptism. In profound appreciation of what the youngsters did, Bianchi wrote, "I would never have imagined that this big village of Tamenglong would become Christian through the work of just five boys!" In continuation, the missionary gives credit to the missionary zeal of all the youngsters in the region, when he writes,

If Catholicism has spread so rapidly among the aboriginal tribes of the mountains of Manipur, it is due in great part to the zeal of the young, and especially the young of Catholic Action. They are the greatest helpers of the missionary.¹²

The Oratory – the method of evangelisation

Among the many activities in favour of the local youth, one which received a precedence in the salesian missions was the oratory. Wherever the Salesians started their missions, in all lands, among all groups of people, in all types of cultures, the one institution that characterised their apostolate was the oratory. The ideal of the Valdocco oratory, and its significance for the missionaries, urged the salesian missionaries to create a replica of that institution wherever they went.¹³

The Oratory that opens the way of evangelisation

GM presents the Oratory not only as a method of starting a mission station, but also as the method of evangelising the villages.

¹² *Gioventù in Azione*, in GM 39 (1961) 5, 10.

¹³ The fact that even the missionaries working in the leper colonies felt the need to establish oratories for the young leper children, could point to the great significance that the oratories had for the salesian missionaries. It formed a vital part of their apostolate, and could not be found missing even among the lepers. In a report of July 1944, presenting the great figure of Michele Unia, the Salesian missionary among the lepers of Colombia, GM notes that even in the leper colony, the Salesians established Oratories for the young, and that too with a musical band, theatre, games and every other activity that could be found in the salesian oratories in Italy. Cfr. *Nelle Valli del Dolore*, in GM 22 (1944) 7, 70-71.

The Oratory is not found only at the mission centre. The Salesians seem to start the process of evangelising a village with a ball, an accordion, some games, some lucky dip, all aimed to conquer first the affection of the children!

Thus in May 1925, Cleric G. Farassino reports, it was the beginning of an oratory at Malki, a village near Shillong, by the clerics of Our Lady's house Shillong, that first attracted the children, and through the children their parents, to the missionaries and to their message. Through games, music, lucky dips, etc the young clerics made themselves welcome in the village, and opened the way to the evangelisation of the village.¹⁴

Through the oratories which the salesian students of theology conducted in the various villages around Laitkynsew, during their winter holidays, the missionaries got a foothold in those villages, and contributed greatly to the establishment of fervent Catholic communities in those villages.¹⁵

The Oratory – method of introducing the young Salesians to the mission

These oratories were often the work of the young clerics in the different stages of formation. It was the group of the zealous young salesians, who ventured out to even pagan villages, and started their apostolate with the young.

The Oratories form part of the life of the studentates. A report of cleric Francesco Fossati from the studentate of Shillong in March 1926, speaks of the oratories as the Sunday recreation of the students. Giving an account of the various activities in which the

¹⁴ Cfr. FARASSINO G., *Il Primo Oratorio in Assam*, in GM 3 (1925) 5, 108. Even in the case of Costantino Vendrame, today commonly known as the Missionary of the Khasis, the beginning of his work of evangelisation of the Khasis was the initiation of the oratory at Laitumkhrah, Shillong. It was through this oratory, that the missionary got an access to the heart of the people of the city, according to the report of Composta Dario, in April 1962. Cfr. COMPOSTA D., *Un Pioniere di Dio*, in GM 40 (1962) 4, 29-34.

¹⁵ Cfr. TOME E., *Foresta Traditrice*, in GM 5 (1927) 6, 109.

students are involved, the cleric writes, "Our principle work was study and prayer. The Sunday recreations were replaced by apostolic journeys, some of which occupied the whole day."¹⁶

These Oratories, according to Fossati help the young clerics to have a first hand knowledge of the local people, their customs and practices. They keep alive the zeal of the young missionaries for the salvation of souls, and serve as a powerful means towards perseverance in their missionary vocation.

Oratories in the mission lands

Besides the Sunday oratories, often managed by the students of theology or of philosophy, the Salesians also had established daily oratories at the mission centres. These Oratories in the Salesian missions, GM presents as often attached to some salesian schools. They are always for the poor and abandoned boys of the region. And often for these boys, these oratories are not only centres of recreation. After the time allotted to some useful recreation, the Oratory becomes a true evening school for the poor boys who otherwise cannot attend any other school because of their work. For those who have no proper facilities in their homes, the oratory is a study centre. And for all, it is a regular parish!¹⁷

As would be expected, the salesian oratories in the missions include youth of all religions and all castes. While the Catholic children do not need too much of a coaxing to make them join these festive oratories, the children of the other religions in the beginning tend to keep themselves at a distance till, finally, the Salesian's kind and friendly ways win them over. At times even

¹⁶ FOSSATI F., *Passeggiate Missionarie in Assam*, in GM 4 (1926) 3, 43. GM presents the oratory activities in favour of the young boys as associated with the houses of formation. Thus in the August-September issue of 1930 there is a small report about how the students of Philosophy in Japan have started an oratory for the pagan young boys around their house in May 1929. And these young boys are welcome in this Salesian institute, and are even treated to some musical evenings at times. Cfr. FLORAN L., *Un Nuovo Oratorio al Giappone*, in GM 8 (1930) 8-9, 176-177.

¹⁷ Cfr. BARACCA G., *L'Oratorio di Madras*, in GM 30 (1952) 7, 5.

when a regular oratory already exists for the Catholic children, a new section is opened only for the non-Christians who in the beginning find it difficult to mix freely with the others.¹⁸

The Salesian attention in the mission land to promoting indigenous vocations

What GM presents as a specific characteristic of the salesian missions is not that the salesians were also engaged in the promotion of local vocations like other missionary institutes and congregations. Though there is little mention made of the activities of the other missionary institutes in this field, from the reports about the indigenous clergy and the situation of the church in different lands, it is clear that GM does not attribute promotion of local vocations as a specific feature of the salesian missions. However, the various presentations of salesian activity in the field of caring for vocations, seem to project a character specifically salesian: namely, the immediacy, the urgency with which the salesians plunged into this aspect of the mission. Evidently, where the other missionary congregations and institutes went along with great caution, the sons of Don Bosco, according to the periodical, manifested a greater spirit of missionary daring, based on that greater trust of the young that formed part of their spirit.

Garneri, in October 1923, presenting a short story of the salesian mission of Tanjore, South India, makes special mention of the small seminary that the Salesians started in the parish entrusted to them. And at the time of writing, there were 12 seminarians at the mission!¹⁹

¹⁸ A report in November 1967, speaks about how the salesians in Thu Duc, Vietnam, opened an Oratory only for the Buddhist children of the region. This oratory, the report says, has won over the Buddhist parents of these poor children, and even gained the sympathy of the Buddhist monks of the place. *I Garelli*, in GM 45 (1967) 11, 1-3.

¹⁹ Cfr. GARNERI D., *La Missione del South India*, in GM 1 (1923) 9, 131. In a later report about the missionary activities of Mons. Mederlet, the Archbishop of Madras, Zucchetti highlights the attention that the missionary paid to the promotion of local vocations. He was the one who initiated a seminary at Madras and an apostolic school at Vellore. Cfr. ZUCCHETTI D., *Il Terrore del Diavolo*, in GM 21 (1943) 12, 92-93.

Garneri again in December 1923, introducing the salesian mission of Congo to the readers of GM, gives a short account of the growth of the original mission of Elisabethville. Speaking about the extension to Kafubu, the author again points to the immediate attention that the Salesians were paying to local vocations, when he writes, "There is a group of students at Kafubu, nine of them for now, who aspire to become teachers, catechists, and if God so wishes, priests: they are the hope of the missions."²⁰

In January 1924, GM publishes part of a letter of Pasotti, missionary in Macao about the salesian efforts to cultivate local vocations among the Chinese boys. The report speaks of the Salesian's effort to gather happy, generous and fervent Chinese boys from the whole district, and form a small seminary for them. Hinting at the suitability of these boys, Pasotti asserts that these young boys are just as generous and fervent as the boys of Valdocco, and more, they manifest a great zeal for the conversion of their families and their countrymen!²¹

The opening lines of a one page report in November 1928, gives an insight into the priority given to the promotion of local vocations by the salesian missionaries in Assam. They read,

The recommendation of the Holy Father to pay zealous attention to the formation of the indigenous clergy in the mission is well known to all. Our Prefect Apostolic, Mons. Mathias, one can rightly say, has thought about this aspect right from the first days of the starting of the mission in Assam.²²

And the little write up continues to say that it is the boarding houses in the different centres of the mission which in some way guide the first steps of the local candidates towards priesthood and

²⁰ GARNERI D., *La Missione di Katanga*, in GM 1 (1923) 11, 166.

²¹ Cfr. PASOTTI G., *Speranze e Difficoltà*, in GM 2 (1924) 1, 3-5. In April 1925, Garneri reports with evident joy the first vows of the first three Chinese Salesians which took place on 29 January 1925. Cfr. GARNERI D., *Un Giorno di Gioia*, in GM 3 (1925) 4, 73-74. Although the report does not make special mention of it, this event spoke of the immediate attention that the Salesian missionaries paid to the promotion of local vocations in China.

²² *Per il Clero Indigeno*, in GM 6 (1928) 11, 213.

religious life. And in the boarding houses, one of the means that gives these young boys a taste for that closeness to the altar and to divine services is the establishment of the association of the alter servers.²³

In June 1939, GM carries Mons. Cimatti's report of the priestly ordination of the first Japanese Salesian. The title itself of the report, points to the importance of the event: "*Una Data Storica nella Missione Salesiana del Giappone*" (A historic date in the salesian mission of Japan). In this report, Cimatti also underlines the great care that the Salesian missionaries in Japan gave to promotion of local vocations, when he writes,

From the very beginning of our work, we tried to search for indigenous vocations to give a solid foundation to our small seminary. [...] This in fact is the goal of the Mission, our first duty, and urgent need of the mission for the purpose of accelerating the movement of conversion, and of safeguarding the fruits of the sacrificing work of the missionaries who have preceded us, in view particularly of political happenings which may even force a most undesirable exodus.²⁴

Cesare Castellino, missionary in Thailand, giving an overall picture of the beginnings of the Salesian missions of Thailand, points to the priority that the pioneering missionaries gave to promoting local vocations also in this country. He writes,

The first and greatest concern of the missionary was to found a small seminary. From an initial group of three, the number of young boys rose to twenty, then forty, forming a beautiful

²³ Promotion of this association of "*Piccolo Clero*" has been a simple, but seemingly efficacious means used by the missionaries to plant in the young boys, the seeds of a priestly and religious vocation. In July 1935, Cleric T. Franchini, a missionary in El-Pan, Ecuador, reports about how he started the group of "*Piccolo Clero*" in his mission, and he states that this simple association has helped to create even in these little ones, the desire to join the group of labourers in the mission field of the Kivaros. Cfr. FRANCHINI T., *Consolanti Promesse*, in GM 13 (1935) 7, 123.

²⁴ CIMATTI V., *Una Data Storica nella Missione Salesiana del Giappone*, in GM 17 (1939) 6, 116-117.

group of aspirants to the priesthood, who tomorrow will be able to work fruitfully among their own people.²⁵

Associations in the Missions

There is little mention of associations in the missions. From a few scattered reports it would appear that the salesian missionaries implanted in their missions the system of associations prevalent in their institutes in Italy.

Garneri in 1923, speaking of the salesian missions of South India, makes special mention of the fact that the Salesians in their mission of Tanjore, have started all the associations found in an ordinary parish in Italy, and among them, two associations for the young. This is what Garneri writes of the salesian parish of Tanjore,

All the associations and sodalities already exist in our parish, as they do in an Italian parish. The association of Dominic Savio with 150 boys from the higher classes, and the group of the Library of Mary Help of Christians with 140 boys from the lower classes give reasons for great hope for the future.²⁶

GM in November 1930 publishes a report of Luigi Ravalico about the starting of the sodality of St. Aloysius among the young boys in Shillong, in the Assam Missions. This association, according to the report, is a great means to instil in these youngsters a great love for Christ, and a firm resolve to persevere in virtue. The enthusiasm of the associates is so great, that they call themselves "soldiers of Christ".²⁷

²⁵ CASTELLINO C., *Thailandia*, in GM 20 (1942) 4, 37-38. Interestingly, the salesian seminary in Thailand had quite a curious start according to an earlier report of Gaetano Pasotti. The missionary reports that one day a group of three Thai boys came to his office with a curious request: "We want to help you!" Initially, the missionary did not understand what they actually wanted. But with their signs and jests, the boys made the missionary understand that they too wanted to become priests to help the missionary in his work. And that offer of these three boys served as the beginning of a small seminary, even in the face of the great poverty in which the missionary found himself." Cfr. PASOTTI G., *Primizie Siamesi*, in GM 6 (1928) 5, 87.

²⁶ GARNERI D., *La Missione del South India*, in GM 1 (1923) 9, 131.

²⁷ Cfr. RAVALICO L., *La Compagnia di San Luigi in Assam*, in GM 8 (1930) 11, 229.

Cesare Castellino, speaks of what the Salesians in the Thailand missions did in this field of Associations in his report in April 1942. He says that in the Christian communities, the missionaries immediately founded the various religious associations, and among them that of the Catholic Action. According to the same report, another group, the organisation of which, received much attention from the missionaries, was that of the altar servers.²⁸

A report in November 1961, speaking of the Salesian technical school at Kigali, Rwanda, notes that the Salesians provide the possibility of various types of associations, suited to their taste and to their culture, even to the students of this technical institute.²⁹

Technical Schools

GM presents the starting of technical institutions in the mission lands, as the concrete expression of the salesian missionary's attention to the poorer and the more abandoned section of the youth of the region. So, as mentioned in the section on "Attention to the young", the Salesians established technical institutions in various missions. As the poorer boys could not have access to formal education, they stood little chance of getting employed and having a decent means of livelihood. The technical institutes of the Salesians were born from the desire to equip these poor boys with a means of livelihood, and almost always had very humble beginnings.³⁰

In the period after the World War II, the Salesians, according to the reports of GM, felt a greater urgency to engage themselves in technical education. This greater urgency was motivated not only

²⁸ Cfr. CASTELLINO C., *Thailandia*, in GM 20 (1942) 4, 38.

²⁹ Cfr. *Una Scuola Professionale nel Ruanda*, in GM 39 (1961) 11, 10-15.

³⁰ In fact in August 1960, speaking of the great need for technical schools in the missions especially in the developing countries, GM hints at this primary motive of the salesians in starting these technical institutions when it writes, "As a good father is happy to see his children becoming capable of honestly gaining their daily bread, so the salesian missionary experiences great joy at the thought that many young people, orphans, abandoned, run-aways from their own homes, will find a way of honest living with the trade they learn in the professional schools of the Salesians." *In Missione Speciale*, in GM 38 (1960) 8, 29.

by the greater number of poor and abandoned youth, but also by the need to influence the field of work in the developing countries. In the context of rising tide of atheism and communism, the missionaries could not be just content with providing a means of livelihood to the poor youth, but had to enter seriously into the camp of technical education also for a qualified technical formation of youth in general.³¹

In the developing countries like India, the missionaries recognised a greater need to give a technical and professional education to the youth in the immediate post-war period. In fact, Correño speaking of the needs of the youth of India, gives top priority to technical education. The salesian missionaries felt that the Church's contribution to the developing nations, could not stop at merely providing an intelligentsia imbued with Christian value, but had also to provide the nation with workers imbued with the same Christian spirit.³²

From the reports of GM during the period after the World War II, especially in the 1960s, one gets the impression that the technical schools came to be considered as a speciality of the salesian missionaries during this period. GM makes direct mention of this mentality when it writes in August 1960, "In the missions entrusted to them and in others in all continents, the salesian missionaries are present with their speciality: professional schools."³³

Quite a few of the reports, especially in the 1960s, speak of the various salesian technical institutions in the missions. Thus in November 1961 GM reports about the technical school at Kigali in Rwanda.³⁴ James Comino, a salesian Coadjutor in Seoul, reports in May 1964, about the construction of a professional school at Seoul, going on at that time.³⁵ In August of the same year there is yet another report about the growth of the salesian professional School at Saigon, upgrading the school to meet the exigencies of

³¹ Cfr. *Tecnica e Fede*, in GM 39 (1961) 11, 9.

³² Cfr. CORREÑO G., *Il Tormento dei Missionari*, in GM 25 (1947) 4, 4.

³³ *In Missione Speciale*, in GM 38 (1960) 8, 28

³⁴ Cfr. *Una Scuola Professionale nel Ruanda*, in GM 39 (1961) 11, 10-15.

³⁵ Cfr. COMINO J., *Mangiano Radici ed Erbe*, in GM 42 (1964) 5, 12- 14.

the times, and to accommodate the increasing demand for professional training.³⁶ In October 1964, Ravalico reports that the Government of Bhutan closed all missionary activities in the region, yet has invited the Salesians to start a technical school at Phuntsholing.³⁷ And a later article of Giuseppe Giaime, salesian missionary in Bhutan, reports about the same technical school and of the great good that the Salesians were able to do for the Bhutanese youth.³⁸

Conclusion

The fact of being commissioned to collaborate in the one mission of the Church, namely that of evangelising the pagan world, does not divest the salesian missionary of his specific nature and charism. While being a missionary, he remains fundamentally a salesian. The true salesian carries with him wherever he goes the Valdoccan heart. And that becomes his special contribution to the missionary enterprise of the church.

A kind of a levelling down of all differences in favour of an unsavoury uniformity seems to be a dangerous trend noticed in many corners of the world today even as regards missionary work. It only contributes to a loss of identity, and consequently loss of that inner core from which one functions. While every one working in the missions collaborate towards the establishment of the kingdom of God, each group brings to this work their particular richness. "Salesianity" is the special contribution of the Salesians to the missions. Bereft of this speciality, the Salesian perhaps loses his right to his presence in the missions.

It is not always a question of replicating external structures and services. It is more the question of the heart and of spirit. And often when the heart and the spirit is there, structures are actually replicated especially when they form essential parts of a way of functioning.

³⁶ Cfr. *Una Scuola Cresce*, in GM 42 (1964) 8, 10-17.

³⁷ Cfr. RAVALICO L., *Nel Paese del Dragone Tonante*, in GM 42 (1964) 10, 3-8.

³⁸ Cfr. GIAIME G., *Il Bhutan Fiorirà*, in GM 44 (1966) 3, 12-15.

CHAPTER 13

GM'S PRESENTATION OF THE SALESIAN SOUTH AMERICAN MISSIONS

GM was born in a period of a great world wide relaunching of the missions. It had its golden period in an era of Church history profoundly marked by the efforts of the missionaries to reach out to new lands and new peoples. The salesian superiors had approved the initiation of the periodical as a preparation for a fitting celebration of the golden jubilee of the first missionary expedition sent out by Don Bosco himself. From its initiation GM was projected as the instrument of information, animation and formation of the members of a missionary movement of the young people. Far from being only an instrument that merely satisfied the natural curiosity of its readers, GM appealed to the heart of the young readers, sought to light the flame of missionary zeal in them, strove to keep it burning, and openly proposed the ideal of the missionary religious and priestly vocation to hearts fired with generosity.

One of the methods used in the missionary animation and formation of its readers, was that of carrying reports of the various missions all over the world. Besides making known the sacrificing work in which the missionaries were involved, these reports exposed the readers to the actual situation in which the missionaries worked. They provided an insight, though limited, into the beliefs, customs and culture of the indigenous people of the various mission areas. These reports, in a way, created a bridge between the readers of the periodical and the various groups of people living in other parts of the world. These narrations increased the readers' compassion for people not yet reached by the Gospel.

The scope of this and the subsequent chapters is to study the content and the manner of presentation of the indigenous people

of the missions made by GM. The questions which this section of the study seeks to address are: How did the missionaries perceive the local reality? What are the features of the local cultures that attracted their attention? What was the mentality of the missionaries towards the local customs? And how does GM present these impressions of the missionaries? In keeping with the general perspective of the research, it is not the actual veracity of the narrations that forms the centre of attention of these chapters, instead, what did the missionaries think of these different people and their cultures, and how did GM eventually present these thought patterns of the missionaries.

GM was not limited to salesians missions only; there is much material published in it on non-salesian missions, however this section of the study is limited to the salesian missions.¹ Lack of sufficient material by way of reports about the beliefs, traditions and culture of the people of all the salesian missions, requires that the present study be further limited to some of them.

From the space that GM dedicated to reports about the mission territories, their people, the beliefs, superstitions, customs and festivals of these people, it becomes obvious that this was not something that was peripheral to the contents of the periodical. From a sampling of a few years, one could easily get an idea of the great space that GM dedicated to such reports. Thus, in 1923 from a total of 240 pages, 32 pages are dedicated to reports about the people of the various missions, the cultural and religious aspects of their life. Out of a total of 86 photos in the same year, 38 depict modes of living of the people in the mission, their culture, their religion. In 1933 from a total of 272 pages, 45 are occupied with reports about the culture and religions of the various ethnic

¹ The immensity of the material found in GM requires a clear demarcation of the limits for a feasible study. This limitation of the study to the salesian missions is motivated by the fact that a major part of the reports on these missions seem to be coming directly from the missionaries themselves, while the reports of the missions of other missionary societies are obviously taken from other existing publications.

groups in the missions, and from a total of 182 photos, 51 are related to such reports. In 1943 from the total of 96 pages, reports about the various groups of people in the mission lands would occupy about 9 pages. And from a total of 102 photos, 14 depict the cultural and religious aspects of these people. In 1953 the number of pages of the review rose to 144 so also the size of these pages. Of these, 19 are dedicated to various reports about the people of the missions. From a total of 237 photos, 52 depict various aspects of the life of the people. In 1963 the total pages rise higher to 576 but the size is reduced. Of this total, reports about the people in the various missions occupy about 70 pages. And from a total of 253 photos, 67 picture the various aspects of the culture, religious beliefs of the people.

The Salesian superiors intended GM as a means to prepare the Salesians and their pupils for the celebration of the golden jubilee of the first salesian missionary expedition. As a result, especially in the initial years, 1923-1924, one notices an evident predominance of the reports about the South American missions in the periodical. However as the missions of the far east develop, and a regular flow of information from the new missions is established, a decrease is noticed in the space occupied by the South American missions. However, they do not disappear from the pages of GM. In their presentation of the salesian activity in the continent, the editors of GM seem to have made a choice in favour of the various missions among the different indigenous groups, almost to the exclusion of any reference to the other works, especially those in favour of the immigrant population.

This section of the study follows a division based on the different tribes, instead of one based on different countries, following the model of presentation in the periodical. For lack of sufficient material in GM on all the ethnic groups with whom the Salesians worked, this study will be limited to three major groups.

Bororos

In May, June and July 1923, GM presents a historical sketch of the beginning of the salesian mission among the Bororos of Matto Grosso. The purpose of these writings seem to be that of

pointing out the missionary reality in the interior forests of the South American missions, the savage nature of this tribe, and the actual difficulties that the missionaries encountered in the evangelisation of the group. Apparently coming from one of the pioneering salesian missionaries in the region, these reports reflect the missionaries' experience with this tribe, and what the missionaries thought of the Bororos.²

The Bari: the chief obstacle to evangelisation of the Bororos

The very first write-up about the Bororos deal with their exaggerated belief in the power of the devil whom they call "*Bope*". The report states: "The Bororos attribute all the evil that come upon the poor children of the forest to this one spirit and to his sad companions."³ And to liberate themselves from these evil spirits their only recourse is to the Bari, (the sorcerer) who is a hypocrite and a liar.

Evidently one of the major obstacles to the progress of the work of evangelisation among the Bororos was the personage of the Bari. "The most fear inspiring person and the most terrible one among the Bororos is their Bari"⁴, wrote an FMA in December 1924. According to the missionary, these know the devil personally and are men of the devil.

The October 1956 issue of GM speaks about how one becomes a bari among the Bororos, and the missionary's way of tackling this fearsome personage. To become a bari, one has to go through a long period of apprenticeship of visions and dreams evidently coming from an evil spirit. At the end of this period, he publicly declares his obedience to this spirit who from that moment takes visible possession of him. And with that, he is considered as a person invested with supernatural powers. The missionary can ill afford to cow down before the overbearing authority of the Bari and the evil power residing in him. When the missionary meets

² Cfr. ALBISETTI C., *La Missione del Matto Grosso*, in GM 1 (1923) 4, 55-56; 1 (1923) 5, 67-69; 1 (1923) 6, 85-86.

³ *Bope e Marebba*, in GM 1 (1923) 6, 87.

⁴ *Lo Stregone dei Bororos*, in GM 2 (1924) 12, 185.

the challenge of the Bari with courage and force, it is the Bari who retraces his steps and disappears from the scene.⁵

Savage nature cf the Bororos : their vindictiveness

The early reports about the nature of the Bororos tend to depict their savage nature and the primitiveness of their society. The missionary's efforts to civilise the group and bring them to accept the Gospel rule of love meets with much resistance from the deeply ingrained vindictiveness that characterises the tribe as a whole. Memories of age old offences are transmitted from parents to their children, and the flame of revenge constantly kept burning. There is an avowed enmity between various groups. It is mistrust and fear that characterises their social relationships. Even in the choice of the village leaders, the man considered capable of destroying the enemy is elected to the post. They have little notion of kindness, affection, love, beauty etc.⁶

Inhuman treatment cf unfortunate children

In October 1945 GM publishes the write-up of a missionary among the Bororos reporting a case of a human sacrifice among the Bororos and the belief behind it. The report says that the Bororos believe that if a pregnant woman, on the eve of giving birth to a child, has a bad dream, the child to be born will bring some kind of evil to the village. To ward off such a disaster to the village, the child is to be suffocated at birth itself. The article narrates an incident in which the mother hid from every one, even from her husband, an evil dream that she had at the birth of her child, and nurtured the child. After four years there was an epidemic in the village. Immediately the attention was turned to the babies born in those years. The lady had to confess to her husband the evil dream she had days before she gave birth to her child.

⁵ Cfr. *Come si Diventa Bari*, in GM 34 (1956) 10, 18; *Il Bari*, in GM 34 (1956) 10, 18. The report seems to be aimed at showing how a society that is controlled by a person so much under the control of the evil power, stands in need of liberation and salvation.

⁶ Cfr. CONGIU F. M., *Insidie di Nemici*, in GM 2, (1924) 7, 103-104; NERIGAR, *Discorso di un Cacico Bororo*, in GM 2 (1924) 12, 184-185; *Mons. Luigi Lasagna*, in GM 11 (1933) 5, 119-121.

According to the requirement of their primitive custom, the child was suffocated.⁷

Funeral rites among the Bororos

In November 1936 GM offers an extract from *Biografia di Don Balzola* written by Cojazzi dealing with the funeral rites of the Bororos. Here again, according to the report, there is little of the human and the beautiful in these rites, instead they reflect the savage nature of the group.

Often, after the Bari has declared that a dying person is definitely going to die, the relations simply cover the face of the dying, close his mouth and nostrils and hasten his death by suffocation. Then they raise a loud cry to signal to the village the death of their relation. All that the dead person possessed and used are gathered, and after the funeral, together with the house in which he lived, are burnt. The relations cut up the body of the dead person, with pieces of glass and some others pluck up his hair. For two days the body is still kept in the house. On the third day the body, covered in a mat is buried in the centre of the village. The grave is never deep.

For twenty days, some ladies go to cry at the grave and pour water over it to quicken the process of decomposition. After this, on a day fixed by the headman, they exhume the body, take it to the river, with sticks and even with the help of dogs, salvage the bones, wash them and take them back to the village. On the third day, the bones are painted, the skull and the major bones covered with multi-coloured feathers. When the celebrations are over, the bones are placed in palm leaves and immersed in the river. Every part of the ritual is accompanied by dancing, songs and great banqueting.⁸

⁷ Cfr. *Un Sacrificio Umano*, in GM 23 (1945) 10, 104-105. Apparently GM is not reporting a recent event. The intention is obviously to show the terrible condition of the Bororos before their evangelisation and civilisation. In fact the concluding words of the article would allude to that: "How terrible and cruel was the authority with which Satan kept the poor Bororos under his spell before the missionary could bring them to the light of faith and civilization."

⁸ Cfr. *Curiosi Riti Funebri tra i Selvaggi*, in GM 14 (1936) 11, 174-176; GM publishes a short summary of the funeral rites of the Bororos again in 1956. Cfr. *La Sepoltura*, in GM 34 (1956) 10, 18.

The Kivaros

The report of Natale Strazzieri, a missionary among the Kivaros, in August 1923 is the first of its type that describes the nature of the Kivaros. He pictures the Kivaros in this way:

The Kivaros are handsome, of medium stature but stout, with a round face. They have thick hair which they care with much attention, but they do not have beards. They are the most intelligent and cunning among the Indians. [...] They are full of sentiments of violence. [...] They are constantly in war among themselves. Offences are washed away only by acts of revenge. And this vindictive instinct is cultivated among them right from infancy.⁹

According to the same report, the Kivari women wear the *Taraci*, a type of gown without hands which arrive up to the knees. The men instead wear the *Itipi*, a type of broad girdle around the waist up to the knees. Both men and women perforate their ears and wear little sticks on which they hang some trinkets.

The savage nature of the Kivaros: Passion for a life without constraints

In September 1923 Garneri offers a picture of the savage life of Kivaros. He starts the report with these words:

The life of the poor Kivaro is all a dreadful slavery. Polygamy, the cult of Passuka (the old one with the black face: the devil), the brujos (the sorcerer-medicine man) who are the perennial trouble makers, and superstitious beliefs foment in the Kivaro a complex of passions which characterize them, and the real vertex of all these is that passion for revenge. It could be

⁹ STRAZZIERI N., *I Jivaros*, in GM 1 (1923) 7, 100-102. Garneri offers a brief history of the salesian mission among the Kivaros in the same number of the periodical. Cfr. Garneri D., *La Missione tra i Jivaros dell'Equatore*, in GM 1 (1923) 7, 98-99. In 1943 Zucchetti again presents a short history of the mission among the Kivaros. The conclusion is totally different from the report of 1923. The salesian apostolate has changed the way of living of these savage tribals. The region has its own churches, schools, hospitals etc. From being head hunters, the Kivaros have become educated, pious, with a different set of values, with a different vision for their future. Cfr. ZUCCHETTI D., *Dopo Cinquant'Anni di Lavoro*, in GM 21 (1943) 10, 76-77.

said that the Kivaro is in this world only for the purpose of taking revenge on his enemies.¹⁰

The missionaries' work of evangelisation and civilisation of this group was further slowed down by yet another of their character traits: their attachment to a life without rules and obligations. Carlo Crespi writes in April 1924:

The characteristic of the Kivaros is unbounded liberty which does not admit any element of oppression or imposition of any type from any person. [...] It is the forest in all its splendour and charm that attracts them; their success at hunting seduces them. Caprice and the animal and sensual instincts are the only norms of their lives. Like birds that have flown away from their nests, they do not recognize paternal or maternal authority.¹¹

And according to the missionary, this is a characteristic that every one picks up from early childhood.

In the context of speaking about educating the Kivaro children an FMA writes in April 1928 of the anxiety of the sisters about the children who are kept in their houses. After saying that some of the children in the house are 8, 9 or 10 years old, the sister continues:

But these give us a lot of cause for worry, because the moment that they are no more under your supervision, even in the middle of the night, they run away into the forest! These Kivaros are so unfaithful to their promises that we can never remain serene. It is so difficult to bring them to civilization and to religion.¹²

¹⁰ GARNERI D., *Tra i Ivaros dell'Equatore*, in GM 1 (1923) 8, 116. To show how deep rooted this trait is in their character, Garneri goes on to describe the Kivaro feast of Shanza. This feast earns them the title of "head-hunters". Treatment of this has been postponed to the section dealing with the various feasts of the Kivaros.

¹¹ CRESPI C., *Per i Piccoli Kivari*, in GM 2 (1924) 4, 54-55. Mgr. Domenico Comin of Mendez and Gualaquiza corroborates what Crespi says of this tribe, in his report of July 1937. Comin speaks of the great difficulty of keeping the children in the mission hostels and imposing on them any rule or regulation. Every thing has to be made to appear to be better than what it was in the forest! Cfr. COMIN D., *I Piccoli Figli della Foresta*, in GM 15 (1937) 7, 100-101.

¹² *Vita Kivara*, in GM 6 (1928) 4, 65.

The family and social life of the Kivaros

According to N. Strazzieri, the father wields absolute authority in the Kivaro family. He has absolute right over his children. He decides the death of unfortunate deformed children. As regards the division of work in the family, the mother does all the house hold chores and the work in the fields while the father engages himself in hunting and fishing.¹³

Although the Kivaros live in the interior forested regions, their society is not one without order, without rules and regulations, without social ties, totally free. G. Ghinassi reports that they have a strict tribal set up. They live in small tribes, all bound to each other by close relationships. In the tribe there is always a tribal leader. Inter tribal rivalry and enmity makes one tribe live far away from another. One tribe does not encroach on the region occupied by another.¹⁴

In March 1936 L. Bogliolo reports that the traditional past times of the Kivaros are hunting and fishing. However, the missionary remarks that the Kivaros engage in these not for the sake of diversion and relaxation, but for the sake of the fish and the meat. Their true pastime is just being idle, stretching themselves out near the fire in their homes. The usual method of fishing is poisoning the water for some considerable course of the river, with some roots found in the area. Their ancient instruments for hunting were the bow and the arrow.¹⁵

Religious notions of the Kivaros

In November 1927 GM publishes a report of Giulio Dati, the provincial superior. In it the author asserts that the Kivaros

¹³ Cfr. STRAZZIERI N., *I Kivaros*, in GM 1 (1923) 7, 100-102; Even in 1962 a missionary working among the Kivaros speak about the absolute power of the father in the family, and how he decides the death of weak or deformed children. Apparently it is a practice against which the missionary has to combat even as late as 1962. Cfr. D'HAENE R., *Kivari*, in GM 40 (1962) 4, 20.

¹⁴ Cfr. GHINASSI G., *Lenta e Difficile Conversione e Civilizzazione dei Kivari*, in GM 9 (1931) 11, 204-206.

¹⁵ Cfr. BOGLIOLO L., *Divertimenti Kivari*, in GM 14 (1936) 3, 48-49.

have very scanty ideas about God, or of His more obvious attributes. Dati highlights the fact that the Kivaros do not even have a word in their language to signify God, while the word for the devil exists: *iuanchi*. This particular fact seems to point to that prevalent neglect of God in the tribe, and their attention to the evil spirit! They do not have altars, statues, images or other sensible representations of any type of divinity. Neither do they have laws, rituals, cult of any kind. They are taken by surprise by the idea of the immortality of the soul! For them, the occasions for joy and for celebration are their various feasts, and the cause of all their evil are their enemies. The *iuanchi* receives their attention before any important action. G. Dati has the following severe condemnation of the religion of the Kivaros: "Unfortunately the simple truth is just this: the Kivaros worship nothing but the devil: in his honour they celebrate various feast and orgies."¹⁶

The Kivaro feasts

The feast of all feasts, one that every Kivaro longs to celebrate once in his life and the most savage of all, is that of the *Shanza*. *Shanza* is the human head dried and reduced to the size of an orange, after the bones of the skull are taken out. Obviously only the person who has taken the head of any enemy, and made the *shanza* can host such a feast. For the Kivaro, it is the feast of the greatest valour. It is Garneri himself in September 1923 who describes the graphic details of the feast. He calls it the glorification of revenge in which the murderer is the king of the feast!

The feast starts with the arrival of the *brujo* (the sorcerer) and of the guests. The *brujo* gives the juice of tobacco to the assassin and to all the rest and all get drunk with it for a few days. After this there is a period of strict fasting. When this is over, the *shanza* is painted black and hung up on a pole, the object of mock veneration. This initial ceremony finishes with distribution of bananas to all present. This gives start to a most savage type of dance in which even the women take part. During the dance, the assassin wears the *shanza* around his neck! The rest of the feast consists in

¹⁶ DATI G., *Tra i Kivaros*, in GM 5 (1927) 11, 212-214.

eating and drinking, and lasts for 5 days. On the 6th night a big number of pigs are butchered and the meat cooked. The *brujo* distributes a big piece of the meat to each one to be taken to their homes and this signals the end of the feast of *shanza*.¹⁷

According to G. Dati's report of February 1928, marriages among the Kivaros are other occasions for social feasting with no religious ceremony attached to it. The marriage rite simply consists in the entrance of the bride into the house of the bridegroom. It is customary to marry at the age of 17 or 18 years. The marriage feast lasts for three days, and consists in eating, drinking and dancing. This report too goes to show the irreligious and materialistic nature of the Kivaro society.

Another of their feasts, mentioned by Dati, is called the feast of the women. This too lasts three days. The occasion of the feast is the harvesting of the yucca and bananas planted by the newly wed. The scope of the feast is to demonstrate that the wife who has been brought to the house is hard working, attentive to the needs of the house, and capable of maintaining it. The feast consists again in much eating and drinking the intoxicating drink made from the yucca. Here again, according to the author, there is nothing of the spiritual, it is just eating and drinking and nothing more!

According to Dati, the feast of the tobacco is yet another of their series of wild orgies, again lasting up to three days. This feast is based on the belief that more tobacco juice is consumed by the participants of the celebration, the greater will be prosperity of the family that hosts the feast. As a result the characteristic feature of the feast is the abundance of the tobacco juice that is served.¹⁸

Burial customs among the Kivaros

Isidoro Formaggio, a missionary among the Kivaros, in speaking about the various ancient customs of the group gives the

¹⁷ Cfr. GARNERI D., *Tra i Jivaros dell'Equatore*, in GM 1 (1923) 8, 118-119; For other references to the existence of the feast among the Kivaros cfr. STRAZZIERI N., *I Jivaros*, in GM 1 (1923) 7, 100-102; DATI G., *Tra i Kivaros*, in GM 6 (1928) 2, 23-24.

¹⁸ Cfr. DATI G., *Tra i Kivaros*, in GM 6 (1928) 2, 23-24

following report of their mode of burial. They bury their dead in their own houses and later abandon these houses. The dead body is placed in a kind of a coffin and placed on a catafalque which is later buried in the ground in such a way that the dead body faces the entrance of the house. The dead bodies of the babies, instead, are often closed in earthen pots and buried in the ground. The fact that the missionary does not mention any religious rite connected with the burial would again point to the great absence of any spiritual element in the culture of the Kivaros.¹⁹

The Chavantes

One of the first notices about the nature of the Chavantes appears in January 1935 in an article published in the context of the inquiries being made into the murder, by some members of this tribe, of two pioneering missionaries: Pietro Sacilotti and Giovanni Fuchs, which took place in November of the previous year. In this article the author describes them in this way:

Terrible Indians! No one knows who they are because no one who has crossed into their territory has returned alive! Certainly, they are savage in the more complete meaning of the term. They are more ferocious than the Bororos, and live exclusively on hunting, procuring their prey through very long journeys through the forest. And they alone know the labyrinths and the complicated twists and turns of the forest tracks.²⁰

Guido Borra writing in GM, August 1959, explains in some way the great hatred and mistrust that the Chavantes nurtured

¹⁹ Cfr. FORMAGGIO I., *I Cacciatori di Teste Umane*, in GM 37 (1959) 1, 18-19.

²⁰ *Pionieri di Fede e di Civiltà Cristiana*, in GM 13 (1935) 1, 4. (3-4). From the report it is obvious that the editors do not know as yet the exact circumstances of the death of the two missionaries. In fact a little write up in February completes the report of January, giving the details of the event. Cfr. *A Caratteri di Sangue*, in GM 13 (1935) 2, 36. Besides highlighting the barbarity of the tribe, the act manifests their basic mistrust of the foreigner. Because of these initial set backs, the real mission among this group could be started only in 1951. In 1952 Zucchetti gives a quite long report about the various efforts at contacting the Chavantes. Cfr. ZUCCHETTI D., *Sulla Pista dei Chavantes*, in GM 30 (1952) 4, 5-7, 13. Guido Borra, a missionary among the Chavantes, gives another version of the beginnings of the mission. Cfr. BORRA G., *Nel Paese dei Xavantes*, in GM 37 (1959) 8, 18-26.

against the white people. At the preaching of the first missionaries who contacted this group, one group among them decided to embrace civilised ways. They arrived in a settlement of the white people. But these white men took fright at the arrival of these savage tribals, and were diffident of their motives. With the intention of killing the whole group, the white settlers prepared a poisoned meal for them. Many died, but a good group escaped back into the forest, with the ferocious intent of avenging the death of their dear ones.²¹

Colbacchini's impression of the Chavantes

In 1953 Antonio Colbacchini, the pioneering Salesian missionary among the Chavantes, presents a picture of the Chavantes, quite opposed to the reports of 1935. He says that the missionaries have managed to establish a friendly and cordial relationship with these savages, "so terrible and feared". Within a short time, the tribe has divested itself of that innate diffidence of the white people. In fact Colbacchini writes, "The expansive cordiality of these savages, freed from all signs of diffidence and suspicion, greatly impresses me."²² The pioneer notes that unlike the Bororos, the Chavantes children flock to the missionary with ease and familiarity. This familiarity is shown not only by the children, but even by the grown ups. The missionary is invited to their homes, and treated with all respect and love. Narrating the different jests of acceptance and of welcome extended to him, Colbacchini says he was profoundly impressed and touched by the sincere affection of these primitive people. The great respect and care for the aged manifested by this group, according to the missionary, point to the basic natural goodness that is in them.

²¹ Cfr. BORRA G., *Nel Paese dei Xavantes*. Evident in the report is a kind of toning down of the guilt of the Chavantes, and a kind of explaining away the hatred nurtured by the group towards the white people. It would seem that Borra is saying, "Had they been treated differently by the white people, they too would have been different in their attitudes."

²² COLBACCHINI A., *La Resa dei Xavantes*, in GM 31 (1953) 7, 12-13.

Family and social life of the Chavantes

Some reports about the Chavantes in the 1950s and the 1960s speak of some of the customs and traditions of these people. In the family, while the daughters remain under the control of the mother till they are married, the sons, on completing 8 or 9 years of age, go to live in the common house of the village. There, they undergo a period of formation at singing, dancing, hunting, etc. During this period they avoid all contacts with girls. When the boy reaches the age for marriage, his ears are perforated and some rustic ornaments are put on them, and a spouse is given to him. And then he leaves this house of formation and goes to live with his wife.

Their houses are round with conical roof. The entrance is just a hole at the base. There are no windows. In the centre of the hut, there is the fire place where fire is kept constantly burning. The inner space is divided into four compartments. They have no cooking utensils, and everything is roasted. They have little by way of dress, and very few ornaments.

Wayà is one of their ritual dances. It re-enacts the victory of the good spirits over the evil spirits. Only men take part in it. The Chavantes believe that this ritual dance has the effect of actually conquering the evil spirits who torment them, individually or socially.²³

Conclusion

Today, perhaps, little is left of these aboriginal tribal groups in South America, and less of their primitive cultures. In every culture there is a mixture of the good and the evil. But in these primitive cultures, seemingly, the elements of evil far outweighed those of the good. Consequently in the process of civilization of these groups, their original forms of life tended to disappear. More than a mere disappearance, it was a kind of a liberation from practices that were definitely not human.

²³ Cfr. COLBACCHINI A., *La Resa dei Xavantes*; FASSO I., *Prima Residenza tra i Xavantes*, in GM 32 (1954) 7, 18-19; BELMONTE E. C. — GIACCARIA B., *La Danza di Waya*, in GM 39 (1961) 11, 29-36.

Particularly in the case of these primitive groups it would be naïve to deny the civilizing effect of Christianity. Today one admires the progress made, and tends to forget the gallant pioneering missionaries who had to meet all types of problems to bring them to Christianity, and teach them civilized modes of living. GM has rendered a great service in keeping alive the memory of these heroes. At the same time it has preserved for later generations records of the cultural patterns of these primitive groups.

The whole of humankind is in a constant process of a greater and more extensive humanization. While one does not deny the importance and the urgency of material progress, the process of civilization is more a question of the formation of the heart of the human person. It is not the person who possesses and controls most the material riches of the world who is most civilized! No doubt, these do play their role in the advancement of civilization. A person living in the most advanced 21st century metropolitan town, possessing and using the most complicated of all gadgets available, symbols of contemporary civilization, can be as “savage” as the aboriginals of South America if the heart is “savage”. Religion plays an important role in the true humanization of the person, putting one in touch with divine realities.

CHAPTER 14

GM'S PRESENTATION OF THE SALESIAN MISSIONS OF CHINA

Obviously the mission of China receives a privileged treatment from the editors of GM. Eugenio Valentini in *Bibliografia generale delle missioni Salesiane* lists a total of about 315 articles on China, published in GM.¹ The vast majority of the articles on China appear before the World War II, and most of these are reports coming from some missionaries working in China itself. The reports during the war are very few, so too the reports after the establishment of the communist government at Peking. Besides the large number of reports spread out in the various issue of GM, four full issues of the periodical are almost entirely dedicated to China: those of August 1952, June 1954, January 1956 and January 1957. Published as they are after the coming to power of the Communists, these issues do not have direct reports from the missionaries working in China at the time. Instead they are practically entirely the work of the editors.

These numerous writings in GM deal with a wide variety of topics: the history of the Church in the region,² the story of the

¹ Valentini has not listed all the reports found in GM on China in his collection. Keeping to his criterion of articles that could be useful for the re-construction of the history of the various missions, he has made a choice of the articles to be listed.

² The first write up about the history of the Catholic missions in China is found in the September 1936 issue of GM. Compiled by the editors, it traces the history of the Church in China from the efforts of various pioneering missionaries, through the great success of Matteo Ricci and his Jesuit companions, through the waves of persecution, to the episcopal ordination of the first Chinese Bishops in October 1926. Cfr. *Pregare per la Conversione della Cina*, in GM 14 (1936) 9,

Salesian works in China,³ the nature and culture of the people, descriptions of various feasts and social events. Reports coming from the missionaries in China speak of their personal missionary experiences in the region and especially of their adventures. Against the background of so much that is disorderly and unappealing, some of the write-ups project the images of some heroic Chinese Catholics, young and old. After the World War II, the attention is focussed more on the Communist persecution of the Church in the country, imprisonment and persecution of the missionaries, the actual state of the Church in Communist China.

China in the period after World War I: a picture of disorder

In the period from 1923 up to the beginning of the World War II, GM publishes quite many write-ups of the salesian missionaries working in China. While these authors write about a variety of topics, it would appear that their intention is to put in relief the traits of the Chinese society that are so divergent from those of the Italian and European society. The report of Giulivo, a missionary in China in November 1923, seems to point to this general orientation. He writes:

We are dealing with a people who have a mentality, a set of convictions, traditions which are wholly opposed to what the

136-137. Yet another article in July-August 1946 treats the same theme of the history of the Chinese missions, but from the perspective of the establishment of the local hierarchy in the country, and to highlight the position of the indigenous clergy in the region. Cfr. *Gerarchia Ecclesiastica in Cina*, in GM 24 (1946) 7-8, 84-85. A report in June 1954 reflects on the actual situation of the Church in China after the establishment of the communist rule. Cfr. *Riflessioni sulla Cina d'Oggi*, in GM 32 (1954) 6, 4-5. And again in February 1960 GM presents a year by year procedure of the systematic persecution of the Church by the communist regime, starting from 1948. Cfr. *Catene per la Chiesa Cattolica in Cina*, in GM 38 (1960) 2, 3-4.

³ In the very first issue of GM, Garneri presents a short history of the beginning of the Salesian missions in China, and the great figure of Msg. Versiglia. The emphasis of the report is on the fact that a whole region of Leng Nam Tou has been entrusted to the Salesians. The salesians have a mission of their own in this vast country! Cfr. GARNERI D., *In Cina*, in GM 1(1923) 1, 4-5. In May 1947, the editors announce the starting of a salesian presence in Peking: the realisation of the missionary dream of DonBosco. Cfr. *Arrivo a Pechino*, in GM 25 (1947) 5, 7.

missionary likes to convey to them. Add to this the difficulty of the language, the climate, the food and other such factors to which the foreigner must adapt himself.⁴

In the early write-ups on China, GM presents it as a very disordered country. Evidently one of the features of the Chinese society in the period after the World War I that certainly made an impression on the Salesian missionaries was the presence of pirates and organised robbers in the country. In fact the initial picture of China that GM projects is that of a land of pirates and robbers!

The very first romance that GM presents to its readers is entitled “*I pirati del Kwang Toung*” by Giovanni Cassano and deals with the pirates of China. In June 1924 GM publishes a first person report of Giovanni Guarona, of some of the adventures with the pirates. In this report Guarona writes about them:

They multiply like mushrooms! I have seen them myself with those grim faces, covered in black mantels, with their masked eyes, lying in ambush among the thick bushes in the high mountains. I came into personal contact with them the very first day on which we were taking possession of our Vicariate with the unforgettable D. Olive. I have tasted their caress when they deprived me of everything that the superiors and friends had provided me with! I was in their mercy, my hands chained at the back! [...] Pirates are found everywhere!⁵

Guarona reflects the great fear that these groups of pirates instil in the local population. And they are no respecters of persons, not even of the missionary who has come from a distant land to do good to the people of China.⁶

⁴ GIULIVO, *Difficoltà delle Missioni*, in GM 1 (1923) 10, 157. Obviously there is the motive of highlighting the difficulties of this mission, to solicit greater support, both spiritual and material. One notices also a kind of a gradual progress in the perception and evaluation of the general Chinese culture.

⁵ GUARONA G, *I Pirati*, in GM 2 (1924) 6, 91.

⁶ Cfr. GUARONA G, *I Pirati*, 91-92. The martyrdom of Luigi Versiglia and Callisto Caravario in February 1930 reported in the April and the May 1930 numbers of GM, goes to substantiate the first impression of the missionaries. Cfr. GARNERI D., *Vittime dell' Apostolato*, in GM 8 (1930) 4, 82-84; *Ricordando i Nostri Cari Martiri della Cina*, in GM 8 (1930) 5, 101-103.

In the same issue of GM, Garneri's editorial on China, reflects the great disorder that pervades the Chinese society, but he sees this unrest as China's searching for a new orientation. The old system of beliefs has crumbled and with it much of the social structure that was bound to those beliefs. There was an eagerness to copy the western mode of living, but at the same time a hidden aversion for anything foreign. He wrote:

Today, China is at a decisive turn of its history and civilization. The anarchy which dominates the whole country points to the efforts on the part of many to bring about a renewal, and of the need felt by the same people, to be in line with the other people of the world on the way of civilization and progress. [...] The ancient missionaries used to ask, "O rock, when will you open yourself?" But since a few decades, the missionaries who follow attentively the happenings in China, cannot but note that the rock is dissolving, crumbling, breaking!⁷

GM projects this situation of anarchy and disorder as a trait that characterised the Chinese society for many decades. In fact in 1942, in the May issue of GM, one reads: "China is a classical case of disorder, misery, war, immense and anonymous crowds, of vast stretches of fields without any paths, of difficulties ever new and ever on the increase."⁸

Two major agents of the social disorder: the soldier and the Mandarin

Two reports in 1925, one of Guarona and another of Vincenzo Barberis throw light on another aspect of the disorder of the Chinese society. Along with the Mandarins, the soldiers exercise unlimited and unquestioned powers over the simple people. They have a kind of an undeclared right to requisition any thing and

⁷ GARNERI D., *La Crociata per la Cina*, in GM 2 (1924) 6, 81-82. Even as the title of the report suggests, the intention of the author is not so much to highlight the disorder in the society in itself, but to show the urgency of helping the Chinese people, to ask for a crusade for China.

⁸ *La Cina e il Clero Indigeno*, in GM 20 (1942) 5, ii. The communist take over of China, and the action of the communist government against the Church, which become the main matter of concern of the various reports of GM after the World War II, are projected as yet other scourges of the Chinese society.

any person for their purposes. Thus they have the right to get the services of any person to carry their heavy baggage from one place to another, and that too without paying any remuneration to those concerned. And in their mode of getting this service, they show themselves absolutely capricious, blind to all human considerations, and deaf to all the pleading of the dear ones. The situation has been brought to the notice of the missionary, because often he is called by the people to plead for some poor man who is subjected to such an ordeal.⁹

The pioneering salesian missionaries do not seem to have much sympathy for the administrative system prevalent in China in the period immediately after the World War I. In their reports, they highlight the corruption that has crept into the system of the Mandarins. As early as October 1926, GM publishes two reports of Giuseppe Cucchiara which speak clearly of the corruption in the administrative system. The first of these speak of the kind of secret agreement that exists between the soldiers and the pirates. Even the highest officers are bought off, and the poor people are just left helpless. No Chinese seems to be capable of resisting the attraction of money. In fact, Cucchiara concludes the first write up in these words,

The Chinese in general, and not few of our Christians and Catechumens even, are a group with a double face! One finds in them that limitless materialism, that contempt of all sense of justice, that agreement with every type of exploitation and abuse of power. They are moved by no other ideal except that of a full stomach and of vice in all its colours and shapes! They renounce the most sacred of realities, the deepest of affections for a piece of flesh, for a handful of coins, or in short, for a nothing!¹⁰

⁹ Cfr. GUARONA G., *Incerti della Guerra... Cinese*, in GM 3(1925) 2, 34; BARBERIS V., *A Tu per Tu con i Cinesi*, in 3 (1925) 9, 191-195. Barberis especially is very straight forward in his criticism of these soldiers. He writes in the article cited above: "The soldiers, with their requisitioning of men, are one of the biggest obstacles to the evangelization of South China."

¹⁰ CUCCHIARA G., *Ta Na Shan*, in GM 4 (1926) 10, 199.

And in the article that immediately follows the one cited above, the same missionary speaks about the mandarins and their offices in these terms:

That which is dirtiest and most dilapidated in any Chinese city, and where grass grows freely is precisely the office of the Mandarin. These have no shelves and registers. Instead you find in them many opium smokers. It is the place which preserves secret diplomacy. After the proclamation of the Republic, the mandarin is a careerist, a swindler who does everything possible to make money and then go away and enjoy it, if he can.¹¹

According to the missionary, most of these mandarins buy their office, paying huge sums to the Generals; and as a result, their only pre-occupation is to make as much money as possible, in the shortest time possible. They grant all kind of illicit licences, and accept all types of bribes. In their tribunals they dispense justice, favouring those who pay them the greater sum of money. Thus the poor people are exploited, and quite often out of despair these take to piracy as a mode of living. There are no higher courts of appeal as these mandarins buy off their senior officials and perpetuate a system of corruption up to the highest officials in the society. The great fear that the Chinese have for prison life, keep them from rebelling against such social exploitation. So the Mandarins thrive on a system of threats, exploitation and corruption.¹²

Ancestor worship and funeral rites in China

In the religious field, one of the great traits of the Chinese society that posed a great obstacle in the work of evangelisation was precisely the cult to the ancestors so deep rooted among the

¹¹ CUCCHIARA G., *Misteri Mandarinali*, in GM 4 (1926) 10, 199.

¹² More than highlighting the corruption of the Mandarins, the intention of GM seems to be that of showing the actual decadence in the Chinese society, the helpless situation in which the people find themselves, and the urgent need to bring some relief to the Chinese people. What China needs is the Christian faith, and for that, it needs missionaries. The concluding words of the article bears this out: "The poor people have a great desire for justice; but this is a fruit which the Christian faith alone can bring about. And China is yet pagan."

people. Evidently the salesian missionaries had to confront the problem. Their various reports, published in GM, reflect their understanding of this practice.

In November 1924, GM carries an article about this Chinese practice, taken from the review «Missioni Francescane», explaining in a very summary way what this cult means. The Chinese as a whole, believe in a life after death where a part of the person continues to live either in joy or in pain. According to the Confucian theory, the soul of the dead wanders around the tomb for some time and then returns to form an invisible part of the original family. Therefore the Chinese maintain in the central room of their homes, the “little table of the soul”, a rectangular piece of wood or of paper. From this table the dead receive the daily cult. Apart from this family cult to the dead, they are also offered special acts of honour almost amounting to worship, in the temples of the ancestors. And every year at the beginning of spring, all the living visit the tombs of their dear dead ones with incense sticks and crackers! The dead have a special place of honour in the Chinese culture and religion. Abandonment of cult to the ancestors is a sacrilege, little tolerated among the Chinese people. It is considered as a desecration and disowning of the family.¹³

According to the account of an FMA missionary in China, this veneration for the dead contains also great element of fear for the dead. The sister notes that there is a great fear among the Chinese that the dead person may return to do some harm to the living members of the family, especially if the due rituals are denied to them. A peculiarity of the Chinese funeral rites, points to this element of fear. When the dead body is taken out of the house for burial, care is taken that it is not taken out through the usual entrance of the house, but through an unknown passage, often

¹³ Cfr. *Il Culto dei Morti in Cina*, in GM 2, (1924)11, 171-172. This exaggerated cult to the dead becomes a true obstacle to conversion because once a person is baptised he no longer renders such a cult to the dead, he no longer worships the ancestors. And according to the Chinese thought, he neglects his filial duty to the dead ancestors; the dead are left uncared for! Therefore especially the parents do not allow the children to be baptised for fear that no one will provide the cult to them when they are dead.

created for that sake. This is to delude the soul of the dead person, which in case it decides to return to its original home, would retrace the path of the funeral procession. But on arriving at the house, would find himself in front of an unfamiliar door, and would be confused and return to the world of the dead.¹⁴

Obviously the other traditions and practices connected with the cult of the ancestors, which reflect the Chinese belief concerning the dead, obstructed the process of conversion to the Catholic faith. Both Cucchiara and Barberis speak of what apparently were the superstitious practices of the Chinese in this regard. The Chinese believe that after death, the person continues to live a life very similar to the life on earth, where they need to eat, to drink, to vest oneself etc. And this belief marks some of the rituals of the funeral rite. The coffin is usually filled with strips of paper which according to the Chinese belief will change into currency for the dead. Two empty egg shells are placed in the coffin to serve as buckets to draw water. One silver coin is placed in the mouth of the dead to pay for his transport to the other side of the river! A few days after the death, the living purchase a set of dress and a paper carton and burn it on the tomb to become for the dead vestment and habitation respectively. On the tomb food is offered regularly to the dead! And besides all these, in every family, an abode, usually with paper, is installed, where the dead who return to the family can find a place of repose!¹⁵

The Chinese' attachment to the family

Faccin Bassano Lareno, a missionary in China, in describing the cult paid to the ancestors especially at the occasion of the New Year's celebration, notes the positive effects of this belief on family life in the region. Respect, reverence and gratitude to the ancestors are traits deeply ingrained in the Chinese family. In fact, this missionary has this comment on the cult offered to the ancestors on New Year's day: "Intimate, beautiful, educative scenes which

¹⁴ *Un Curioso Episodio per Un Morto*, in GM 2 (1924) 10, 153-154.

¹⁵ Cf. CUCCHIARA G., *Santo Stratagemma!*, in GM 3 (1925) 6, 134; BARBERIS V., *A Tu per Tu con i Cinesi*, 191-195.

seem to be inspired by the divine commandment: Honour your father and mother if you wish to live long on this earth!" Continuing on with his report of the family in China, he writes, "The Chinese family is very solid, and if the children ever separate, it is only after the death of the parents."¹⁶ For the author, it is the attachment to their ancestors that keeps the family well knit.

Later on in 1956, taking up the topic of the family in China, GM again puts in relief the great respect and reverence that is manifested towards the parents in the traditional Chinese family. They are considered to be representatives of God himself. Respect for the parents is a constant pre-occupation of every good Chinese. Every effort is made not to damage the good name of the ancestors. The patriarchal Chinese family is the true foundation of the whole society. Even the whole empire in one time, was considered as a big family, where the emperor, the Son of Heaven, was the great father.¹⁷

However, this filial piety in the pagan context contains certain deviations that need to be purified. One such element that the missionaries had to combat right from the beginning seems to be that of avenging the harm done to the ancestors. If a parent was assassinated, it was the duty of the children of the dead person to avenge the death of the parent, and kill the murderer. The soul of the dead person required that! There was no room for forgiveness. The right order would be re-established only at the murder of the assassin. Revenge in this case was just the natural expression of the duty of filial piety! And inter family rivalries could justly be perpetuated for many generations!¹⁸

The Chinese marriage

In the context of the great authority that the parents enjoyed in the Chinese family, it would appear that the missionaries had to intervene in the marriage cases of the children. According to the

¹⁶ BASSANO L. F., *Capodanno nel Sol Levante*, in GM 17 (1939)1, 18.

¹⁷ Cfr. *Religione Naturale*, in GM 34 (1956) 1, 10-11.

¹⁸ Cfr. BOCCASSINO L., *Pietà Filiale Cinese*, in GM 5 (1927) 5, 99-100.

reports of G. Cucchiara and P. Parri, as soon a boy child is born in a family, the pre-occupation of the parents is to acquire for him his future wife. Especially the farming people buy the little girl of the same age and bring her home to bring her up together with their son. The father of the girl receives a document indicating the amount of money and pork that he will receive in the course of time, in exchange for his daughter. And with that the father relinquishes all control over his daughter! All that seems to matter to the family is apparently the money involved in the transaction! This practice often leads to a real exploitation of the poor girls.¹⁹

According to a report of Umberto Dalmaso in 1926, child marriage, though practised among certain sections of the society, is not the norm for marriage in the Chinese society. In his article "*Costumi Nuziali Cinesi*" Dalmaso highlights the following aspects of the Chinese marriage customs. Marriage is not allowed among persons who have the same sir-name, even if there is absolutely no relationship between them. Marriage is something in which the spouses themselves have little say. It is the parents who decide the spouses for their children. Often it is on the wedding day that the spouses see each other for the first time!

When the process of dialogue and bargaining between the two families concerned comes to a close, the first act of the marriage contract takes place: the paying of the dowry by the boy's family to the parents of the girl. The marriage ceremony is very simple. On the day fixed by both the families, the boys' party sends a group of people with a sedan chair to bring the girl. Half way, another group of the boy's friends meet the group returning with the girl and bring the whole group to the house of the boy. The girl does not enter the house together with the rest of the group, but waits outside till everything is ready to receive her. On entrance she genuflects in front of the boy and his parents and then the boy genuflects in front of the wife. After this all the relatives in

¹⁹ Cfr. CUCCHIARA G., *La Fidanata*, in GM 1 (1923) 11, 173. Palmira Parri in August 1929 reports three cases where the Sisters had to intervene to liberate three children given in marriage in their childhood. Cfr. PARRI P., *Storia di Tre Fanciulle*, in GM 7 (1929) 8, 147-148.

turn show their reverence to the couple, offering gifts etc. And then the feast begins with music, games etc. The boy with his companions and friends remain in one room of the house, and the girl with her companions and friends in another. Late in the night, when all are tired, the girl enters the room of the boy to offer him a cup of tea, which serves as a signal for the end of the feast.²⁰

Inhuman aspects of the Chinese society: abandonment of the disabled and the aged

The Chinese practice of abandoning deformed or sick children was already known in Europe through the work of Santa Infanzia. In fact, as noted earlier, the organisation was born to save these helpless children. In February 1937 GM publishes a little write up of Palmira Parri on the subject, along with a photo of a group of little children being cared for by the FMAs. Parri remarks that one of the 5 great joys of the Chinese is to have many children. But this joy is motivated by their egoism: to have a bigger labour force in the family, and also to have a greater number of people who will perform the cult for the dead for them. But when a child is born handicapped and therefore cannot be of great economic utility to the family, they soon think of getting rid of it.²¹

This abandonment is not the fate of only deformed children. It is often the treatment afforded to most sick children. And this is linked with the Chinese belief that a dying child, if left to die in the house could be the cause of misfortune and even of death to the other children. The evil spirit who has taken possession of the dying child, at its death, could carry away other children as well. So if after a period of treatment, there is no hope of recovery, the child is left to die outside in the garbage or near a well!²²

The helpless infants are not the only ones who receive such inhuman treatment from the Chinese society. Another section that is treated with so much inhumanity is the lepers. The Salesians, on their arrival in Macao found a sizeable group of these

²⁰ Cfr. DALMASSO U., *Costumi Nuziali Cinesi*, in GM 4 (1926) 8, 144 -145.

²¹ Cfr. PARRI P., *Fiorellini Oleezzanti*, in GM 15 (1937) 2, 19.

²² Cfr. *Una Vita Salvata*, in GM 9 (1931) 4, 80.

unfortunate people in the region. Evidently, the government did nothing for them. Barberis, writing in 1923 about these lepers, puts in relief the cruel treatment that they receive even from their own families. A leper is never kindly received even by his own family members, often they are simply driven out into the forests. Even the hearts of the parents harden when one of the children becomes affected by leprosy. Fear of contamination almost forces the parents to drive their own children out of their homes. Some even go to the extreme measure of burning down the little huts these manage to construct in the periphery of the villages, and at times even with the lepers in them! It is only the missionary who is a friend of this unfortunate section of society!²³

The missionary's perception of the root cause

These traits of cruelty and lack of human feelings in the people, obviously made deep impression on the missionaries. These pioneers, who had sacrificed everything that could be termed precious in the world, and come to distant China, charged with deeply human and spiritual motivation, discovered in the materialism that pervaded the Chinese society, the reason for its obviously inhuman behaviour. Luigi Boccassino in one of his early reports about the Chinese people, mentions their excessive love for money as a common and dominant vice of these people. Good merchants and business men that the Chinese are, they have a natural preoccupation with profits. But this preoccupation seems to be stretched to such limits that the motive of profit seems to be the only force behind everything that the Chinese do. Boccassino writes: "The Chinese works for nothing else except money! In every circumstance it is this motivating factor that comes forward: money is the god of the Chinese!"²⁴ Giuseppe Cucchiara corroborates the impression of Boccassino when, speaking of the Chinese, he writes in 1926:

In them one finds a great sense of materialism, contempt for any sense of justice, acceptance of all exploitation and abuse of power. They live by no other ideal except that of a full

²³ Cf. BARBERIS V., *I Lebbrosi della Cina*, in GM 1 (1923) 7, 102-105.

²⁴ BOCCASSINO L., *Luei Tchoung Kuong*, in GM 1 (1923) 9, 137.

stomach and of vice in all its shades! They are quick to renounce the most holy of things, the most intimate of affections for a piece of flesh, for a coin, for a nothing! Only the grace of God can win over this pagan world!²⁵

Other evils in the Chinese society

Two other evils in the society which the missionaries regarded as agents which destroyed the Chinese society, were gambling and the habit of smoking opium. Speaking of gambling in China, Cucchiara in GM of October 1925 writes,

I believe that the country where gambling was invented is China. There are infinite varieties of gambling and gamblers here in China. 90 out of 100 Chinese are gamblers! It is this vice, combined with that of opium eating which renders them exceedingly lazy and consequently utterly miserable.²⁶

In the same issue of GM, the article of G. Bardelli, another missionary in China, on the habit of smoking opium among the Chinese, follows the article of Cucchiara. Bardelli pictures this habit as a real curse on the Chinese society. He narrates the fact of a father of a family who even sold one of his children and was on the verge of selling his wife and the other children to acquire the opium he needed! In concluding the little article the missionary writes,

Such stories of misery and shame are not the only ones about opium eaters. Almost all are addicted to this vice, especially the leaders! To satisfy this urge one has recourse to any means. It is not an exaggeration to say that the recurrence of crime is augmented by this passion for opium: at least it has a great role to play in it.²⁷

²⁵ CUCCHIARA G., *Ta Nan Shan*, 199.

²⁶ CUCCHIARA G., *Il Gioco del Lotto in Cina*, in GM 3 (1925) 10, 213.

²⁷ BARDELLI G., *L'Opio*, in GM 3 (1925) 10, 215. In 1932 November, Jos Kvyern too, a missionary in China, presents a small write up about opium and its effects. He notes that the first thing that opium does is to weaken the will and in many cases destroy it completely. Cfr. KVYERN J., *Fumatori d'Opio*, in GM 10 (1932) 11, 210-211.

The missionary's appreciation of the Chinese

Although the various reports of the missionaries highlight the negative traits in the nature of the Chinese people, none of the articles portray any trait of antipathy from the part of the missionaries themselves. Instead, all these evils make them approach the people with greater sympathy and compassion. The missionary considers these evils as the state of slavery to which the society is subjected, and from which they are called to liberate the people. Even more, the missionary is in some way capable of piercing through the apparently hard outer shell of the heart of the Chinese people, and recapture the seeds of basic goodness that lies inactivated there in. Significant indeed is Callisto Caravario's impression of the Chinese, published after his martyrdom. Caravario is reported to have said to one of his companions in the missions:

At first it would appear that the Chinese are insensitive. [...] Instead, after having studied them well enough, one comes to admit that they have a heart of gold. How ever low they may be in civilization and progress, they are convinced that they can arrive at the highest summit of perfection.²⁸

The Chinese New Year's Day

GM publishes at least four different reports of the Chinese New Year's day. Three of these come from three pioneering missionaries in China: Luigi Versiglia, Giovanni Guarona and Giuseppe Cucchiara. The fourth seems to be the compilation of the editorial board.²⁹

²⁸ DE AMICIS, *Don Caravario nei Ricordi di un Compagno di Missione*, in GM 16 (1939) 4, 75.

²⁹ One would think that this repeated treatment of this theme was due to many factors. The Chinese celebrated the New Year's Day in a way totally different from the Europeans. This celebration in some way summarised the religious beliefs of the people. It had very interesting cultural aspects. In some way it highlighted many of the positive elements of the Chinese culture.

Although the report of Mgr. Versiglia is the first of this feast, it seems to be the most comprehensive of the various aspects of the celebration. The other authors add certain details to the general description made by Mgr. Versiglia. For the sake of a flow of argument this paper presents a unified vision of the various reports.

The Chinese New Year's day³⁰ is celebrated on the first day of the moon previous to the equinox of Spring. It is the greatest of all Chinese feasts! According to Guarona it is the only great celebration of the Chinese. It appears that the New Year's celebration dates back to 1200 BC.

The feast has elements that are religious, social and familiar. The preparations for the feast begin one month before the real day, and the festive mood continues right through the first month of the New Year. Three days before the New Year's Day, there is a bidding adieu to the household god who has protected and blessed the family all during the year. This ceremony ends with burning of the effigy of the particular god. All that is necessary for a month or so are bought prior to the New year's day as the shops remain closed for a long period of time. Among the things bought is the effigy of the new god for the New Year!

The Chinese are greatly pre-occupied with how to finish the year. The creditors are allowed to pursue their debtors only till the mid-night of the New Year's Day. Then they are not to be troubled till after two months.

On the last day of the year, the Chinese store water sufficient for three days in their homes. After drawing this quantity of water from the well, they perform the *Fong Cheng* ceremony. It has the scope of taking possession of the well for the coming year. The ritual consists in lighting candles around the well and pasting strips of rose paper on the edge of the well. On the first day of the year, they return to the well, not to draw water, but to make an offering of sweets and fruits to the spirit of the well.

In the evening of the last day of the year, the house is swept, cleaned and decorated. And then the house is not swept for the following three days because of the fear that by doing so they might sweep out of the house the flakes of happiness and prosperity that have fallen on the house during the days of the celebration.

³⁰ Even for the nomenclature there is a slight difference between the various authors. Versiglia does not make any mention of the Chinese name. Guarona calls it "San Nin" while Cucchiara calls it "Kuo-Nien".

A religious tone is attached to the solemn dinner on New Year's eve. When the meal is ready, it is placed on a big tray and taken to the nearby pagoda and placed at the foot of Buddha. Some candles are lit, incense is burnt, some crackers are burst, and after some acts of reverence, it is carried back to the house. During the meal the father of the family gives to each of the children some money, as an expression of his wish for a prosperous new year. After the meal, the family lights two lamps at the door, to clear the way for the year that is passing away. The most solemn moment of the feast is when the whole family prostrates before the new god, installed among the collection of gods and ancestors. And this is done usually at midnight. This act of worship is followed by a general bursting of crackers. After this great pandemonium, a peaceful silence descends on the whole region.

After the general bursting of fire works, the doors of the houses are fastened and no one opens it till the next day for fear that fortune escapes from the house. From this moment on, great care is taken not to utter any thing that would be offensive lest it brings on disaster to the family. One hears only greetings of great fortune and of all that is good, not only during this particular night, but also on the New Year's Day, and for a few successive days. When the children are asleep the mothers hang above their heads oranges, so that on waking up, the children's thought will be automatically directed to things that are pleasant and bring good fortune to the family. The shoes during this night are kept upside down, so that no evil spirit will deposit seeds of sickness and misfortune in them.

In the morning the closed doors are opened with due prayers. The family gathers in the domestic temple for worship. The household gods are worshiped. The more pious go to the pagodas for the prayers. The great meal in the morning gathers the whole family together. Some pious Chinese abstain from meat on that day in honour of Buddha. And after this meal the family goes out to visit their relatives and friends. On the fourth day the newly wedded couples are obliged to visit their distant relatives.

The New Year's Day is essentially a family feast. The whole family reunites in the parental home. Children who live away from

their parents do everything possible to return home for this feast. It is a feast when the ancestors are remembered and venerated.³¹

Other Chinese feasts

Giovanni Guarona in 1924, offers a description of another of the Chinese national feasts, that of the Dragon³² or more precisely, the feast of the Dragon Boat. It is celebrated in the beginning of summer, on the 5th day of the fifth moon. This feast of the boats is a civil feast but with a certain religious over tone. The feast seems to have been instituted to perpetuate the memory of a certain good and just mandarin who lived in central China during the rule of the Hun dynasty. Unable to support the corruption of his fellow mandarins, he jumped into the river Yang Tse Kiang and committed suicide. The people who did not want his body to end in the mouths of the fish tried to save the body by throwing large quantities of rice balls into the river to feed the fish so that they would abstain from touching the corpse of the mandarin. And in the mean time, a number of boats kept searching the river for the body of this just mandarin. The feast is characterised by boat races in different regions of the country. The long boats used for the occasion are decorated in such a way to represent the dragon. And the feast gets its name precisely from these dragon boats.³³

³¹ Cfr. VERSIGLIA L., *Fine e Capo d'Anno Cinese*, in GM 1 (1923) 1, 24-25; GUARONA G., *San Nin*, in GM 6 (1928) 2, 34-35; CUCCHIARA G., *Kuo-Nien: Il Capodanno Cinese*, in GM 15 (1937) 1, 10-11; *Bizzarrie di Capodanno*, in GM 19 (1941) 1, 3-4. The various descriptions point to the sensitiveness of the missionaries to the culture of the place. Obviously the salesians looked at this and other celebrations from the point of view of missionaries, and not just indifferent onlookers. They appreciated elements that contained real human values, and were critical of the superstitious content of the celebrations.

³² According to Vincenzo Barberis, in China the dragon enters all manifestations of life, superstitions, arts, science and even commerce. It is the symbol of the divine omnipotence, the source of all energy. The Dragon (*Lung*) for the Chinese, is the god of the water, symbol of strength and of greatness. It is the symbol most dear to the Chinese people. The dragon produces typhoons, earth quakes, drought, epidemics, birth and death! It is the invincible force! According to the ancient Chinese, the earth is a big carpet held by four huge dragons in the four corners and one dragon in the centre! Cfr. BARBERIS V., *Il Drago Cinese*, in GM 11 (1933) 2, 48-49.

³³ Cfr. GUARONA G., *La Festa della Barca Dragone*, in GM 2 (1924) 9, 129-131.

A small report on the various Chinese feasts in the GM of January 1956, besides giving a very short description of the New Year and the Feast of the Dragon, mention two other national feasts commonly celebrated all over China.

The first of these is the feast of the Moon. The feast seems to have had its beginning some time towards the end of the first millennium AD. It was initially instituted to commemorate the liberation of China from a tyrant. In modern China, the feast is celebrated to keep alive the memory of the many national heroes of the country. The feast gets its name from the fact that the speciality of this feast consists in eating cakes made in the shape of the moon.

The other national feast commonly celebrated is the feast of the Spring. It is a real family feast. Its speciality consists in the children making this feast an occasion of offering special homage to the parents.³⁴

Certain aspects of Chinese culture

While the West follows the solar yearly calendar, the Chinese follow the lunar yearly calendar. According to the reports of V. Barberis and P. Parri in 1925, the ordinary Chinese does not bother much with the division of the days into weeks. While the missionary coming from the West was so much accustomed to the idea of a weekly Sunday rest, he noticed that in China no special importance was given to any particular day of the week. In general the people attach some kind of importance to the 1st and 5th day of the month. These too are days of work like the other days of the month. Their special significance consists in the special rites for the dead performed both in the pagodas and in the houses on such days.³⁵

Another feature peculiar of the Chinese society, that appeared worthy of reporting in the pages of GM was the Chinese theatre.

³⁴ Cfr. *Feste Cinesi*, in GM 34 (1956) 1, 6. In January 1957 GM offers a new list of the main feasts of China. Besides the traditional feasts, the list includes what appears to be feasts instituted by the government in recent times. Cfr. *Feste Cinesi*, in GM 35 (1957) 1, 9.

³⁵ Cfr. BARBERIS V., *A Tu per Tu con i Cinesi*, 191-195; PARRI P., *Il Primo Giorno di Scuola in Cina*, in GM 3 (1925) 9, 195-197.

Huc P. in a report on Chinese Theatre in October 1932, affirms that theatre occupies a very important place in the life of the Chinese, both in the villages and in the cities. There are various groups that make the rounds of the towns and villages with their shows at the invitation of the mandarin or of some rich person of the place. Women do not form part of the troupe. Female parts are acted by young boys. Though theatre is so popular, people who form part of the troupe are held in very low esteem by the society. It is one of the jobs that are despised. Yet, the ancient Chinese theatre had a religious and sacred character. Every village had its musicians and actors. It was their job to put up some shows on the occasion of the various religious feasts of the place, and on special occasions to thank the gods for special favours received. The shows have normally some theme dealing with past heroes, and nothing that is immoral. It would appear that the Chinese theatre had its origin in the reign of Ming Wang who was emperor of China towards the middle of the 16th century AD.³⁶

It is only in the period after the World War II that GM speaks about Chinese art, literature and the great Chinese religions.³⁷ GM notes that the Chinese have a system of art properly their own, distinct from western art and well developed. Usually the painting is done on silk as opposed to the use of canvas in the west. The beauty of Chinese paintings consists in their simplicity and their vivacity. The art of sculpturing is also well developed in China, with characteristics proper to the region.

GM in January 1956 mentions that the Chinese have a special love for music and have a music all their own, distinguishable from Western music. Even Confucius considered music as one of the necessary factors of education and of religion.

³⁶ Cfr. Huc P., *Teatro Giallo*, in GM 9 (1932) 10, 194-195; *Il Teatro Cinese*, in GM 18 (1940) 2, 27.

³⁷ One gets an impression that in the period before the World War II, the reports on China seem to aim at highlighting the urgency to assist this mission, both spiritually and materially. The emphasis of the articles that appear after the World War II, seem to be that of demonstrating the injustice to which the Communist Government is subjecting the whole people of China, who have a great culture, ancient religious traditions, a solid family structure etc. Most of these later write-ups on China are compiled by the editors of GM.

In the same issue there is a write-up about Chinese literature and philosophy. The editors note that Chinese literature is one of the richest in the world and the pride of the Chinese people. Their wise men gave the country a well developed philosophical system, profound and comparable with any other such systems in the world. Chinese philosophy had its golden period between 700 and 200 BC.³⁸

One of the great cause of pride for the Chinese people, that has gradually emerged as the symbol of the nation is the great Chinese wall, constructed for the most part during the rule of the Tsin dynasty, in the 3rd century before Christ, and completed in the 15th century AD. It is about 2400 km long and has a height that varies from 15 metres to 30 metres, and a breadth of about 20 metres at the base. It starts in the Chichli gulf, from the fort of Shanghaikuan and reaches to Kanon, dividing China from Manchuria and Mongolia. For the Chinese people, it is a glorious monument and a testimony of their ancient greatness.³⁹

Chinese religious beliefs

In January 1956 GM projects a very fundamental aspect of the Chinese society: its deep rooted religious structure. The editor notes that the Chinese are a profoundly religious people. The main religions in the region are Confucianism, Buddhism, Taoism and a type of natural religion. Through these various ways, they too are in search for the true God. The article sadly notes that, had it not been for an act of trickery on the part of the Buddhist monks of India, probably China would have been evangelised right from the time of the primitive Christians.⁴⁰

³⁸ Cfr. *Arte Cinese*, in GM 34 (1956) 1, 7; *Una Letteratura di Elevato Valore*, in GM 34 (1956) 1, 8-9; OU KAPPA, *Pittura Cinese*, in GM 35 (1957) 1, 12-13.

³⁹ Cfr. *La Cina*, in GM 29 (1951) 4, 3.

⁴⁰ GM reports that from ancient times the Chinese had a belief that a saviour would come from the west to save them from all evil. Accordingly when in 65 AD, a certain Chinese emperor Mong Ti, came to hear about the new religious movement [Christianity] in the West, he sent a commission of wise men to the west to get to know the new doctrine. Upon reaching India, this group was cheated by the Buddhist monks who presented Buddhism to them as the new religion. On their return to China, these wise men became agents of converting the country to Buddhism. Cfr. *Il Cristianesimo in Cina*, in GM 29 (1951) 4, 5.

In “*Il cristianesimo in Cina*” of April 1951, and in “*Religioni in Cina*” of January 1956, GM speaks highly of the religious beliefs of the China. The Chinese are monotheists. God is the beginning and life of everything. He is the creator of the universe, who is just and omnipotent. He is called by the common name of “Heaven” or simply “Creator”. The Chinese believe that the Creator-God has established an order in the universe that He has created, and this order when applied to mankind is the natural law written in the hearts of every human being. In spite of their different religious allegiances, the people as a whole accept this natural law as the code of human behaviour.⁴¹

Speaking of the morality that flows from the religious beliefs of the Chinese, GM writes in January 1956,

Chinese morality can be brought up as a beautiful example of natural ethics. It is based on a clear and firm belief in divine providence. The central concept of this moral system is the imitation of “Heaven” or the Creator and in a sense of universal charity. Chinese morality is essentially religious.⁴²

Communist China

In the period after World War II, GM apparently takes pains to present to its readers the persecution to which the Church in China is subjected. Catholics are excluded from all political, social and industrial organisations. They are declared traitors of the motherland and subjected to cruel treatment. Missionaries are expelled or imprisoned. Almost all the reports on China in this period are coloured by the preoccupation with its communist government and its maltreatment of the Christian missionaries. But

⁴¹ Cfr. *Religioni in Cina*, in GM 34 (1956) 1, 10-11.

⁴² *Religione Naturale*, in GM 34 (1956) 1, 10-11. Obviously this is a picture quite different from that projected by the letters coming from the missionaries published in GM in the period before the World War II. The imitation of “Heaven” and universal love would have little to do with the wide spread corruption that plagued the Chinese society, the attachment to money that nullified every other human sentiment, or with the apparently common practice of infanticide, or the inhuman treatment of the lepers.

the communist rage is not limited to the Christian faith only. It aims at the destruction of all religious beliefs. Pagodas are destroyed. Monks are sent to work in the labour camps. What is worse, the communist government seems to be intent on undermining even the profound attachment that the Chinese have to their family and to their ancestors.⁴³

A little report in the August-September issue of 1950, sums up the overall irreparable condition, into which the Communist government has plunged the Chinese population.

The Chinese, by nature cheerful and talkative, have forgotten their spontaneity and joviality because it is oppressed by an enormous weight: being accused and in danger of disappearing from circulation. [...] In the name of liberty the sacred domestic hearth is being broken up, destroying the bonds that bind together the family, preaching the freedom of the children from their parents. And the workers, those who should be the future masters of the country, the base of a new life, are those actually most disillusioned. [...] The farmers are perhaps the class of people who are cheated and victimised. [...] People are escaping from the country sides and running into the cities. In the villages there is famine and the imposition of taxes: two enemies of the people, one old and the other new which render the life of the poor farmer impossible. All the farmers have their own stories to tell. [...] Many of them are no longer there to narrate their stories because they tied a noose around their necks and hanged themselves from some trees... led by despair to such an act! Certainly they would not have wished such an end, but they thought it better to put an end to that type of a life made so miserable by the new masters, the communists!⁴⁴

⁴³ Cfr. *Nella Cina Rossa*, in GM 26 (1948) 1, 10; *Trecento Missionari R.fugiati a Pechino*, in GM 26 (1948) 2, 11. *Calvario nella Cina Rossa*, in GM 26 (1948) 12, 10-11; *Così si Vive in Cina*, in GM 28 (1950) 8-9, 10-11; ZUCCHETTI D., *Missioni della Cina nella Tormenta*, in GM 29 (1951) 4, 8-9; *Bilancio di un Anno di Persecuzione in Cina*, in GM 31 (1953) 2, 2; *Riflessioni sulla Cina d'Oggi*, in GM 32 (1954) 6, 4-5; LIN P., *Travaglio di un Popolo*, in GM 43 (1965) 6, 3-5.

⁴⁴ *Così si Vive in Cina*, 10-11.

And a report of May 1954, in some way completes this picture of decadence and helplessness in the following words: "Communist China, [...] has suppressed all fundamental freedom and has become an immense prison, an unlimited camp of marxist re-education, the country of refined tortures."⁴⁵

Conclusion

Certainly the reports found in GM are the impressions of the missionaries, who are in the mission lands with a particular purpose: evangelization. They are not blind to the good elements that are present in the culture of the people. But they are more concerned about the evil, and the ways of uprooting them. They are certainly very critical of social systems that seem to be contrary to the Gospel that they preached, and which also served as great blocks in their missionary work. Admirable indeed is the approach of the missionary: condemnation of that which is evil, but great sympathy for the people who suffer from these evils.

China with its ancient religions and cultures had a fascination for missionaries of all times. Efforts at evangelization of this great land were made from very early times. Surprisingly enough the country has never been given a chance to open itself fully to the work of the missionaries. The self sacrifice of the daring missionaries always met with seemingly insurmountable obstacles, minimising the efficacy of their work. And in some way it continues to be so even today! One cannot take refuge in saying "China's time has not yet come" and be complacent about the present situation. Every people contain even in their own religions and cultures a longing for the fullness of truth. However suppressed the people may be, there should be a way of reaching the Gospel of them too. It could be that what is needed today are missionaries as ardent with zeal as the pioneers who dared to enter the forbidden kingdom.

⁴⁵ *Riflessioni sulla Cina d'Oggi*, 5.

CHAPTER 15

GM'S PROJECTION OF INDIA

During the golden period of Christian missionary undertaking, the eyes of many missionaries and missionary groups were on India, the birthplace of quite a few ancient religions, with its teeming millions. It would appear that the "time" of India had come to turn in a big way to the message of the Gospel, and the Church wanted to avail itself of this opportunity. Besides, India with all that made it so peculiar and distinct from every other nation in the world had a particular fascination for the Europeans.

Reports on India occupy the greatest space in GM. Eugenio Valentini lists about 603 articles found in GM on India.¹ Besides these, GM dedicates 11 issues almost fully to this vast peninsula: June 1951, July 1951, November 1951, February 1952, July 1952, May 1953, January 1954, March 1954, December 1954, September 1955 and April 1958. Three of these eleven issues deal with India in general, while the others deal with certain particular zones.²

The over all presentation of the Indian sub-continent

Within the abundant information on India in GM, a division could be made between articles that deal with India as a whole, and the other articles that deal with specific regions. While the attention of the general type of articles is focussed more on the Hindu India, that of the second category of articles is on the various

¹ As in the case of articles on China, so too in the case of articles on India, not all the articles on India are listed in the collection of Valentini.

² The India of GM includes Burma, Sri Lanka and Pakistan. The Salesian missionaries reached India in 1906, long before Independence and division of the Indian peninsula.

tribal groups, especially those of North East India. Obviously there is a gradual development from depicting individual aspects of the Hindu Society, to projecting an over all picture of the same society.

Caste system in India

One of the features of the Hindu society that is highlighted by GM both in the period before World War II and in the period after it is the existence of the caste system. Though not all the reports come directly from the pen of the salesian missionaries working in India, obviously they reflect the missionary's point of view, as even the articles compiled by the editors are taken from some missionary periodicals.³

In a summary of two articles from two missionary reviews, GM in April 1924 presents the two extremes of the Indian Hindu society: the Brahmins and the Pariahs. The motive is obvious: to put in relief the great difference between the two groups. In the Hindu society, the Brahmins enjoy the highest and the most important status. The Brahmin is considered to be an incarnation of the divinity itself. "The Brahmin is the first creature of God, the master and king of creation, the incarnation of religion. Everything exists for him and he is by law above everything else."⁴ The other castes treat them with due veneration. For the missionary, instead, the article continues, this group is "the true caste of the proud! Rarely does it happen that any of them convert to Catholicism." The pariahs form the other extreme of the caste system. They are employed in doing the meanest of jobs. They are the despised, untouchables of the society. Anyone who comes into direct contact with them incurs religious impurity! As a result

³ The reports offered by GM are in no way scientific presentation of the origin, nature, significance of the caste system. The missionary views this system of social differences between various groups of people as a negation of the basic evangelical values of justice, equality and above all of love. The evil of the system does not consist in the existence of various classes, but in the inhuman treatment of the low caste and the casteless people, and that too for no fault of theirs. There is no other solution for this unjust situation, except the elimination of the system itself! The missionary is the champion of the down-trodden, and the propagandist of a social revolution.

⁴ *Gli estremi dell'India*, in GM 2 (1924) 4, 59.

they live in miserable sheds, segregated from the other castes. Their only friend outside their caste is the Catholic missionary.

In September 1925, in a report again compiled from other missionary reviews, GM asserts that the caste system, in spite of the social chaos it engenders, and the injustice it perpetuates, is the foundation of the social life of India! The distinction of classes does not depend on the religious differences, is instead a social fact. It is so deep rooted that in spite of all efforts by the missionaries, it persists even in the Church.⁵

In August 1927, Garneri focuses on the inhuman treatment afforded to the pariahs. According to the report, the pariahs are the descendants of the ancient inhabitants of the Indian peninsula, who were subjugated, enslaved and gradually hinduized by the Aryans. Garneri paints a vivid picture of the miserable condition of the Pariahs. They own little that they can call their own. They live in ghettos of their own, separated from all other castes. They don't even have access to the temples or to the priests. They are the real untouchables of society.⁶

In 1937, the salesian missionary Cignatta again describes the effects of the caste system on the society of India, especially on the low caste people. He notes that these pariahs cannot pass through certain streets; they cannot even wear a shirt! They are forbidden access to all places used by the other castes, even the temple, the well, the hotels etc. A pariah can never change his caste either through education or by acquiring riches; born a pariah one dies as a pariah!

Cignatta notes that there are four main castes in India: The Brahmins who form the priestly class, the Kshatriyas who form the class of the warriors, the Vaishyas who form the group of merchants and farmers and the Shudras who form the group that

⁵ Cfr. *Le Caste in India*, in GM 3 (1925) 9, 200-201.

⁶ Cfr. GARNERI D., *Un Problema Indiano*, in GM 5 (1927) 8, 141-142. In this particular report, Garneri's attention is turned more to the urgency of the mission among the Pariahs. While the Pariahs respond well to the care of the Catholic missionaries, and there is a movement among them towards the Catholic Church, there are also other missions moving in to this camp: the protestants, the Muslims and even the Hindus themselves.

do the menial jobs.⁷ Besides these four main divisions, each caste has its own subdivisions. The missionary notes that this evidently unjust social structure is what Hinduism has created in India.⁸

Cignatta also speaks about the efforts of Mahatma Gandhi and of Ambedkar in bringing about a social revolution. These untouchables are in search for a religion that would guarantee them justice and equality.⁹

An article in December 1954, though it reasserts the deep roots of the caste system in the Indian society, paints a gentler picture of the Brahmins. Through the various Catholic educational institutions, a new social awareness is created among the children of the high castes. Although the Brahmins do not easily accept baptism, they have a great appreciation and veneration for Christ and the Gospel.¹⁰

This sympathetic attitude towards the Brahmins is also noticed in a small report of January 1955. It notes that often the more intelligent, educated and well-behaved portion of society belongs to the caste of the Brahmins. From infancy a Brahmin is taught to respect himself and be worthy of his high status. Reverence and obedience to the teachers are essential virtues of the Brahmin. They are given an ascetic training in their youth as GM notes, "They are obliged to abstain from all meat, from the use of all perfumes, from the use of sandals, shoes and umbrella, from anger, avarice, dance and songs and from lies."¹¹ According to the report, true to their formation, quite a few of these Brahmins become true ascetics.

⁷ The Shudras and the casteless people form together the group commonly called pariahs.

⁸ Evident exasperation with this "ill-fated institution" created and supported by Hinduism makes the missionary remark that for this social evil created by it, Hinduism does not deserve the name of "religion". He states, "It is not a religion, instead a contagious disease." CIGNATTA, *Un Problema di Strategia Missionaria*, in GM 15 (1937) 1, 12.

⁹ Here again GM, through the writing of Cignatta, highlights the Muslim threat. The author reports that various groups of untouchables have embraced Islam, and the Muslim missionaries are very operative among them. Cfr. CIGNATTA, *Un Problema di Strategia Missionaria*, 12-13.

¹⁰ Cfr. *Le Alte Caste Indiane e il Cristianesimo*, in GM 32 (1954) 12, 2-3.

¹¹ *Il Bramino*, in GM 33 (1955) 1, 17.

In December 1960 Luigi Del Nievo Squeri, a missionary in India again describes the social structure based on caste system, prevalent in India, after the constitution had legally abolished it. The succinct description of the life of a low caste sums up all that GM had said earlier about the same.

The Shudras are the untouchables of the society, and occupy the lowest place in the society. [...] No Shudra has the right to acquire any property. His life is of little value, and his personality does not count. He lives solely to serve those of the higher classes. He is born in a world of degradation and misery, ignorant and without ideals, he dies in that world without any regret or any lament. In the villages, the Shudras live in a separate section practically at the periphery of the village or at times even in a place more distant from the village. Their habitations are humble hovels without light, darkened by smoke. To them are reserved such works as cleaning the roads, cleaning the public toilets, burning or burying the dead, working in the tanneries etc. Their pay is as much as what a stingy man would give in charity.¹²

In the May 1965 issue, where there is quite an extensive write up about Hinduism, the editors present again a short write up about the caste system. According to this report, the Aryans form the three high castes of Brahmins, Kshatriyas and Vaishyas; the Shudras are the Dravidians who were subjugated by the Aryans. Besides these four, this particular report introduces the caste of the Chandalas who are the casteless people commonly known as pariahs, and the Mletchas who are the foreigners. The article also exposes the mythological roots of caste system. According to Hindu mythology, the Brahmins were born from the head of Brahman, the Kshatriyas from the shoulders, the Vaishyas from the stomach and the Shudras from the feet. And the casteless people do not have their origin in Brahman.¹³

¹² DEL NIEVO SQUERI L., *La Dura Vita dell'Intoccabile*, in GM 38 (1960) 12, 6-7.

¹³ Cfr. *La Legge della Casta*, in GM 43 (1965) 5, 22.

The religious division of the Hindu society

One of the curious practices among the Hindus, that GM reported in November 1924, was that of bearing some marks on the foreheads. These marks are not worn as decorations, instead they have a religious significance. Chief among the Hindu gods are Brahma the creator, Vishnu the preserver and Shiva the destroyer. Among the Hindus, some are devotees of Vishnu (Vishnuvite) while others are devotees of Shiva (Shivites). The Vishnuvites have three vertical lines on their foreheads, the lateral lines usually in white and the central line in rose in honour of the goddess Lakshmi, the wife of Vishnu. The Shivites instead have three horizontal lines on the foreheads.¹⁴

Certain features of the Hindu society in India

One of the feature of the Hindu society, which appeared a little ridiculous to the missionary that was picked up and projected in the pages of GM, was the veneration afforded to the cow. Ravalico writing in May 1928 says, "Here in India, the cow is given a veneration which touches the level of fanaticism"¹⁵ The missionary continues to say that there have been so many bloody inter-religious feuds just for a cow. For the Hindu, the cow is the seat of divinity and has an important role to play in all their religious manifestations. About these religious manifestations Ravalico continues in the same report,

The cow is the protagonist of many semi-religious festivals. In these cases the poor beast is subjected to a long and meticulous process of cleansing: horns are adorned with orange blossoms and a garland of jasmine is put around its neck, the back and sides are decorated with paintings which represent all the divinities of the Indian Olympus! So adorned it is lead triumphantly along the paths of the city and made the object of veneration of the passers by who are obliged to

¹⁴ Cfr. *I Contrassegni della Sèeta Hindu*, in GM 2 (1924)11, 169. Besides pointing to the curious practice of drawing these lines on the foreheads, the article points to the divisions in Hinduism itself, the differences that exist in the society, and the difficulty of the missionary in comprehending the Indian mentality and culture.

¹⁵ RAVALICO L., *La Vacca da Punto di Vista Indiano*, in GM 6 (1928) 5, 94.

show their veneration for it by bowing their heads and at times even by prostrating themselves to the ground.¹⁶

Ravalico mentions in the same article that this religious veneration is manifested also in allowing the cow to roam about freely in the streets and to lie down where it wants, even when it obstructs the traffic. The Hindu will neither disturb it nor chase it away! For the Hindu, to kill a cow is a major crime, and only a bath in the Ganges will cleanse such a person from the religious impurity incurred by such an action.

Ravalico, again in July 1928, reports yet another practice in India that for the missionary obviously was ridiculous: the veneration afforded to the monkey. The author writes,

India is a country of contradictions and paradoxes, where side by side with the high philosophical concepts of the Vedas one also finds a flowering of the meanest and most humiliating patterns of thought: among these latter it is enough to remember all the cult given to the animals. [...] After the altar to the cow, the elephant and the serpent there is yet another that is erected to the monkey, this stupid quadruped made to imitate that which is basest and vilest in the human person.¹⁷

The author notes that this worship of the monkey is based on the great Hindu epic: the Ramayana. It is the monkey that helped Rama to liberate his wife Sita from Rabon. In some areas of India, feeding the monkeys, especially those found around the temples, is considered a great act of virtue. As temples constructed and dedicated to other gods and goddesses, they are also dedicated to *Hanuman*, the monkey god. One such temple is found precisely in a small island in the Brahmaputra river, near Guwahati.¹⁸

¹⁶ Ravalico notes the contradiction inherent in this ridiculous practice. While an animal like the cow is favoured with so much respect and veneration, the poor pariah is treated with absolute contempt! An unintelligent animal is more important than man, the king of creation!

¹⁷ RAVALICO L., *La Scimmia dal Punto di Vista Indiano*, in GM 6 (1928) 7, 137.

¹⁸ Cfr also RIGHETTO S., *Un Quadrumane nell'Olimpo Indiano*, in GM 13 (1935) 2, 32. Righetto again puts in relief the treatment that these animals receive from a fervent Hindu as opposed to the treatment that the untouchables receive from the same fervent Hindu. The pariah is left to die abandoned, while the monkey is treated with all care, attention and veneration due to a god!

Another curious feature of the Indian society that GM projected for its readers, is the snake charmer who makes the round of villages and towns. It is something unimaginable that a man with a rudimentary flute can have so much control over these venomous creatures, he can make them swing to the music from his flute, take them in his hands and even wear them around his neck as some would wear a garland! And even when the missionaries have problems with some of these unwanted visitors in their compound, the snake charmer can be of great help to capture them!¹⁹

In December 1930, GM publishes a small report of Ravalico where he speaks of certain common sights in the public squares of the cities and villages of India.²⁰ It is not uncommon in India to see some barber rendering his service in the public square. At the call from the mosque, the Muslim will prostrate himself on the ground even in the market place! A fakir will lie on a bed of nails in a public place! One may even see devotees who have painted their face with cow dung! With all its religious diversities, India is a land of great religious toleration and liberty.²¹

Mendicants and fakirs

Another personage in the Indian society that drew the attention of the missionary was the mendicant.²² According to M. Fossati, besides the common beggars, there are the ascetics who live on the charity of the people, but have a religious role in the society.

¹⁹ Cfr. RAYAPPA S., *Il Signore dei Cobra*, in GM 7 (1929) 9, 177-178. An article from G. Sperindio, missionary in India, in March 1967 speaks of the same practice, and notes that the snake charmer with his collection of snakes, is still a very common sight in the villages and towns of India. Sperindio also notes that in India there is a cult to the snakes, practised by Hindus, Buddhists and animists. There are also temples dedicated to the snake in various corners of India. Cfr. SPERINDIO G., *L'Incantatore di Serpenti*, in GM 45 (1967) 3, 25-27.

²⁰ Obviously the missionary's attention is drawn to these sights precisely because in Italy the things he narrates are done in places assigned to them, and certainly not in public squares.⁷

²¹ Cfr. RAVALICO L., *Il Barbiere in Piazza*, in GM 8 (1930) 12, 246-247.

²² The term "mendicants" has been used here precisely with the intention to distinguish them from the ordinary beggar, who takes to begging because of lack of all means of livelihood.

In general they are clam, happy by nature and contended with little. One meets them almost everywhere: in the cities, in the villages, in the market places. There are various types of these ascetics. There are the *Dasari* who perform some religious ceremonies among the *pariahs*. He is also a kind of a doctor and astronomer for the lower castes. Normally he is a worshipper of Vishnu. The *Panchagas* are the ones consulted to know the propitious time for various undertakings. They instead are worshippers of Shiva. The *Jangama* belongs to the caste of the Shudras and is a worshipper of Shiva. His job is to perform various blessings to the households. The *Jogis* are the real fakirs – the highest class of the mendicants and the true ascetics. They leave all they have and retire to solitude to pass their time in meditation.²³

In March 1934, A. Maschio gives a more detailed description of the fakirs and their life. According to the author, they profess to tend to the highest perfection with methods known to them. Their aim in life is to arrive at a complete absorption in God. The means that they use to arrive at such a sublime goal are: total detachment from the world, severe fasts and penance, and dedication to contemplation.²⁴

A confession of a fakir, reported by Vallino Innocenza, a missionary in Assam, gives an insight into the genuine thirst of these ascetics for God, and the extent to which they push their penance. He is reported to have said,

I am a priest of the pagan gods; I have passed my whole life in sacrifices, prayers and prolonged fasts. Yet nothing had served my poor soul, athirst with a longing for truth, with the comfort of having found it; my heart remained ever so dry and cold. All my life I took upon myself the obligation of making the round of the villages every Saturday, on my naked knees, not bothering about the climate or the inclemency of the weather or for that matter any other obstacle of any type. I did all that with the only motive of knowing the true God at least at the point of my departure from this life.²⁵

²³ Cfr. FOSSATI M., *Mendicanti del India*, in GM 9 (1931) 5, 92-93.

²⁴ Cfr. MASCHIO A., *Una Pittura Indiana di Cristo*, in GM 12 (1934) 3, 45-46.

²⁵ VALLINO I., *Alla ricerca del Vero Dio*, in GM 14 (1936) 3, 57.

The face of independent India

Obviously in the reports on India after the World War II, there is a shift from focussing the attention on mere curiosities to highlighting general trends in the society, evidently with the motive of greater missionary commitment in the region.

India – a country that searches for God

At the threshold of an era of an independent India, GM projects the image of a country that is deeply religious. It asserts that the history of this great nation points to one constant factor: a constant search for God. India is the birth place of two major world religions, Hinduism and Buddhism and of many other religions found in the sub-continent itself. One fourth of humanity has received its religion from India! Sanskrit literature, one of the most ancient in the world, is practically all religious. Ramayana and Mahabaratha continue to be two of the great religious epics of the world. About this deep rooted tendency to the divine, GM notes,

No other nation has searched for God for such a long time and so tenaciously through the mysteries of the universe. India, in its poverty, has populated its plains, mountains, the beaches of its lakes and the banks of its rivers with monuments to the divinity.²⁶

The missionary's perception of Hinduism

It would seem unfortunate, according to GM, that this great nation finds itself enslaved by Hinduism. Even though the great majority of the Indian population draws its religious inspiration from Hinduism, the future of India does not lie in this religion. Hinduism offers little opening to redemption and to hope. The social evils that are apparently the fruits of this belief belie its redemptive character. In April 1947 GM states:

Hinduism does not give any hope of redemption. Thousand years of its history is nothing but a proof of its sterility. What help can one expect from a religion that has produced the

²⁶ *L'India in Cerca di Dio*, in GM 25 (1947) 4, 7.

oppression of the lower caste, the cruel tyranny of untouchability, the horrors of child marriage, the confusion of its temples dedicated to thousands of gods, none of whom offer an example of virtue, instead only shameful scandals? Hinduism has obliged the Hindu to perceive life as an existence without significance, which is prolonged through a series of births and rebirths and ends in the same point of the circle from which it had started. In India love and friendship are nothing more than a dream which is for ever destroyed by death.²⁷

Continuing in the same line, in 1952 GM notes that what the Hindu faith generates in its believers is an over all pessimism and melancholy.

We who live in pagan territories for years now can affirm that the pagan faith is a religion of despair. One searches in vain on the faces of the pagans – be they Hindu, Muslim or Animists - for those expressions of serenity and joy so characteristic of our Christians. The pagan is sad and melancholic. All his action and even his songs are pervaded by that sadness which has its source in that lack of faith and fatalism. He feels himself oppressed by a Being who is cruel and relentless. He is terrified by a multitude of evil spirits who persecute him continuously and whom he does not know to propitiate.²⁸

The developed nature of Hinduism

The reports on Hinduism presented in GM after the World War II, in some way bring to light the underlying tension between presenting its insufficiency as a means of salvation and presenting

²⁷ *L'India in Cerca di Dio*, in GM 25 (1947) 4, 7. Certainly GM does not want to give an impression that, because of such an enslaving religion, the Hindu is a bad person. Instead the editors take pain to report that in spite of his faith, the common Hindu is a good person. There is a natural goodness in the Indian that overcomes the effects of his faith. "But the Hindu is good and better than his religion! The Indian is naturally good and gentle." *L'Induismo*, in GM 25 (1947) 4, 6.

²⁸ *Seminatori di Gioia*, in GM 30 (1952) 7, 4. The author's purpose is show that the missionaries are the true sowers of peace and joy. Although no reference is made directly to Hinduism, the remark applies primarily to Hinduism, that pagan ambience of which the missionary speaks.

what is good and beautiful in it. So Oderico Berti, a missionary in India, in December 1954, observes that Hinduism in India is not just a primitive religion. On the contrary, it is one of the most systematic religions of the world, with its gods, scriptures, sacraments, mysticism, monks, saints, doctors and priests, and with a history of about 5000 years! The popular nature of Hinduism, with its temples, feasts and ceremonies seem to satisfy the religious aspiration of the people. Hindu philosophy, widely praised even by the Westerners, is well developed and on par with any ancient philosophy.²⁹

In May 1965, an article on Hindu theology exposes some of the fundamentals of Hindu faith. The aim of human life on earth, according to Hinduism, is to reach a stage where one is absorbed into the Absolute: Brahman. This stage is called *nirvana* which is a happy state of the soul where there is no more action and no more desires. Only the really perfect arrives at *nirvana* immediately after death. The law of *Karma*, which is basic to Hindu religion, says that a person will merit *nirvana* if he has lived truly according to the divine law, and has reached true perfection even in this life. If not, he will be re-born in the form of some other creature, till he makes reparation for all the mistakes he committed. If one rebirth is not sufficient, the person will be subjected to a series of rebirths, till that required purification is reached. The way to avoid the series of re-incarnations is that of asceticism, meditation, devotion to the various gods and goddesses, and detachment from every earthly thing.³⁰

In the same issue of GM, the editors make a brief presentation of the Hindu Sacraments. As the Christian sacraments accompany a person through the process of his growth, the Hindu religion

²⁹ Cfr. BERTI O., *Il Dramma della Conversione dell'India*, in GM 32 (1954) 12, 4-17. The article is surely not written to praise Hinduism. The adequacy and greatness of the Hindu religion accounts for a greater resistance from the Hindus, and greater fatigue from the part of the missionary.

³⁰ Cfr. *Teologia Indù*, in GM 43 (1965) 5, 18-19. Written for school-going boys and girls, the article does not discuss in depth the Hindu belief. It presents very briefly the general outlines of the ancient belief.

accompanies and marks the different stages of the growth of the person. The Hindus call these sacraments "*Samskara*". They constitute the religious ceremonies for the birth, the infancy, adolescence, man-hood, old-age and death of a person. *Namakarana*, the rite of imposition of the name, is the first of the *Samskaras* and is performed few days after the child is born. *Annaprasana* is the ceremony by which the baby in the sixth month is given solid food for the first time. *Chudakarma* is the first hair cut of the baby that takes place when the child is 3 years old. *Aksharabyasa* is the ceremony of initiation to study, to knowledge and marks the beginning of a period of discipleship with some learned person. *Upanayana* is the rite which consists of consigning the sacred cord at the initiation to the science of the Aryans. At the end of the period of study and discipleship, the boy leaves the guru and re-enters the family and this re-entry into the family is marked by the rite of *Samavartana*. *Vivaha* is the marriage ceremony. And the last rite is *Shraddha*, the rite of funeral.³¹

In the general presentation of the various aspects of Hinduism in May 1965, GM gives a short write up on the Hindu family. The author of the article highlights the religious ambience that reigns in the Hindu family. The family is the centre of the religious life of the practising Hindu. Every event in the family is given a religious overtone. The father of the family, besides being the first in authority, is the object of true veneration, and maintains the family in the ancient traditions. The respect shown to the father obviously has a religious tone. In traditional families, after the ritual bath in the morning, the children bow down in front of the father to touch his feet and take his blessing before setting out for their daily activities. It is customary even to make a ritual offering of flowers to him.³²

³¹ Cfr. "*I Sacramenti Indù*", in GM 43 (1965) 5, 24-26. Here again the point of the author is not to equate the Hindu sacraments with those Christian. The report aims to show the difficulty of converting a Hindu on simplistic arguments like, "We have sacraments, while you don't have them!" The article also seems to point to the need of the missionary to know in depth the Hindu faith and practice, to be able to present the Christian faith in the right light.

³² *Vita Religiosa*, in GM 43 (1965) 5, 28-29.

India the "land of famine"

One of the aspects of the Indian society that has been very much highlighted by the GM in the post World War II period is its poverty.³³ The April issue of 1947 presents a vivid picture of this poverty that pervaded the teeming population of India:

Only 39% of the Indians are sufficiently nourished. 41% of them live on a frugal diet. And 20% are starved! The majority of Indians live on a single meal a day. And if by a "meal" one understands one of our ordinary meals back home, then these do not have even one such meal! The government of Bengal frankly confessed: "The major part of the workers is reduced to a diet with which not even the rats would be able to survive more than five weeks!" In the last quarter of the last century, 32.5 million Indians died of famine. In 1943, only in Bengal famine claimed 3.5 million victims!³⁴

In fact one of the sections of the same article is sub-titled "The land of famine". This same title is used of India in the May issue of 1950, in the article "In India"– the social question".³⁵ Another article in July 1951 asserts that famine is the real wound of India. In fact the article is titled "The wound of India: famine".³⁶

Vanni Desideri Giorgio, in July 1951, writes about his impression of the misery that he encountered on his arrival in India. He says that during his journey from Bombay to Madras he and his companions were literally assaulted, in various railway stations, by groups of young boys begging them for some coins. The journey from the Railway station of Madras to the residence of the Archbishop of Madras served to re-enforce the same impression of poverty and misery of the people of the place. He writes,

³³ One would think that this emphasis on this particular aspect of independent India reflects the true concern of the missionaries with problems that really assailed the Indian society. Poverty and under development were certainly problems that the independent nation had to tackle on a priority basis. From the various reports in GM, one would get an impression that after India's independence, missionary work in the country, tended to emphasise more than before, on this aspect of caring for the poor.

³⁴ *Tre Facce dell'India Misteriosa*, in GM 25 (1947) 4, 5.

³⁵ *In India – la Questione Sociale*, in GM 28 (1950) 5, 8.

³⁶ *La Piaga dell'India: la Fame*, in GM 29 (1951) 7, 8-9.

The face of misery in all its crudeness manifests itself immediately. Along the way hundreds of beggars without a roof over their head, children naked and semi naked lying on the footpaths while the busy and noisy crowd walk along intent on their own business, deaf to every cry of these poor people!³⁷

GM of March 1954 carries a write up of Mons. Marengo Oreste where the Bishop speaks of the miserable condition of the people in his diocese. He speaks of his own personal experiences to impress on the mind of the readers "the bleak and absolute misery which prevails in a good part of my diocese, especially among the tribals of the hills."³⁸

Dances of India

In November 1966, with various photos and illustrations, GM presented a general picture of the various Dances in India. The article notes that in India dances are believed to have had a divine origin. Dance is considered the art of the gods and goddesses. Man learnt the art of dancing from these gods and goddesses. In the earlier times, dances were always connected with the temples and had some religious content and significance. Indian classical dances are not just rhythmic movement of the body; every movement, every gesture conveys a meaning, and the dance in its totality tells a story, often religious in character.

The four main classical dances of India are: Katakali, Bharata Natyam, Manipuri dance and Kathak. Katakali is found mainly in Kerala. It has always a religious theme, and is always connected to the temples. Bharata Natyam was earlier a religious dance, but slowly it lost this religious character and today is a profane dance.

³⁷ VANNI D. G., *Attraverso l'India Misteriosa*, in GM 29(1951) 7, 5.

³⁸ MARENGO O., *Ho Compassione di Questo Popolo*, in GM 32 (1954) 3, 14. Even in the period before the war, there were reports on the poverty that pervaded the Indian society. But the emphasis then was more on the abandonment of children brought about by the misery of the families. Parents were in a way forced to send away their children from their families to find some work and some means of sustenance. Some of the parents were even compelled to sell their children into slavery. Cfr. *Piccola Martire*, in GM 13 (1935) 2, 33; PANCOLINI F., *Il Mio Nome è Soltanto Kim*, in GM 25 (1947) 4, 10.

Manipuri dance is found in the state of Manipur in NE India. It is usually connected to the temples, though the themes of the dance are not always religious. Kathak is the dance of North India, of very ancient origin. Under the Muslim rulers it acquired certain elements of Persian and Arabic cultures and a profane character. Besides these classical dances, there are what are called the popular dances that characterise the various regions and various ethnic groups of India.³⁹

The Assam Missions

The single mission that has received most publicity through the pages of GM is that of Assam. Luigi Ravalico, who has the credit of being the missionary who has written the greatest number of articles for GM, laboured in this mission. Although he did not limit his writings to Assam, the major portion of what has been written by him deals with this region. In all probability the novelty and diversity of the region, and a truly prodigious growth of the mission, accounted for the publicity accorded to Assam.

Assam and its inhabitants

One of the first reports on Assam is a reprint of a write up of Verbockhaven S.J.,⁴⁰ published in «Missioni Belghe della Compagnia di Gesù». The Jesuit missionary highlights the natural beauty and diversity of the region. The Brahmaputra runs across the length of the region from East to West. Great stretches of tea gardens alternate with vast paddy fields. Yet the region preserves much of its rich natural forests. The central valley surrounded by hills presents the picture of a true natural amphitheatre. The footnote to this article by the editors of GM notes that the name "Assam" in Sanskrit means incomparable, without equals. And the footnote continues that Assam, true to its name, is a land of

³⁹ Cfr. *La Danza Indiana*, in GM 44 (1966) 11, 19-23. This write up on the Indian dances, highlights the rich cultural heritage of the nation, and seems to be meant to attract young missionaries to this vast peninsula.

⁴⁰ GM notes that Verbockhaven was a missionary in Assam for many years. The article is definitely written after the Salesians took charge of the mission, as it speaks of the initiation of the Salesian apostolate in the region.

marvels: it has vast forests with various types of costly trees, its flora is perhaps the richest in the Indian peninsula, and it produces a great variety of fruits. It is the home of tigers, elephants, rhinos, wild buffaloes and snakes of all types!⁴¹

Verbockhaven in his write up mentions that various groups belonging to the Mongolian family occupy the mountainous regions of Assam. He makes special mention of only the Khasis. However the editor's footnote mentions that there are about 167 tribal groups in Assam and among them mentions the Garos, the Nagas, the Kukis, the Manipuris, the Bodos, the Mikirs, the Abors, the Khamtis, the Angamis, the Daplas, the Mishnis.⁴² Mons. Fernando writing in November 1946 calls the region a true "paradise of the anthropologist and ethnologist."⁴³ In 1951 presents the region as a "mosaic of races and religions".⁴⁴

In June 1952 Fausto Pancolini a missionary in Assam gives a description of the people of Assam. He divides the whole population of Assam into two broad groups: the Indo-Aryan population of the Assam plains and the many tribal groups of Mongolian origin who occupy the mountainous region. He describes the people of the plains in these terms:

[...] They are noted for the regularity of their complexion and the height of their facial angle. Their face is round and symmetrical, nose slightly aquiline, broad forehead and thin lips. They are short in stature and of a brown complexion. Almost all the people of the plains profess Hinduism. [...] They have a sharp intelligence and love to study.⁴⁵

And this is the way that he gives a general description of the tribals of Assam:

⁴¹ Cfr. VERBOCKHAVEN SJ, *La Prefettura Apostolica dell'Assam*, in GM 1 (1923) 3, 38. The idea of an incomparable land is taken up again by GM in June 1951, and in May 1962. Cfr. *L'Assam. Terra Incomparabile*, in GM 29 (1951) 6, 3; *Paese Senza Eguale*, in GM 40 (1962) 4, 26-28.

⁴² Cfr. VERBOCKHAVEN SJ, *La Prefettura Apostolica dell'Assam*, in GM 1 (1923) 3, 38.

⁴³ FERRANDO S., *Vigorosa Ripresa*, in GM 24 (1946) 11, 106.

⁴⁴ Cfr. *Mosaico di Razze e Religioni*, in GM 29 (1951) 6, 4.

⁴⁵ PANCOLINI F., *Gli Abitanti dell'Assam*, in GM 30 (1952) 6, 6

They are of a faded yellowish complexion, almond shaped eyes, nose small and little flat, projecting cheekbones, broad face, thin lips and black and flowing hair. They are a little smaller than the medium stature and do not have beard at all.⁴⁶

The Khasis

The Khasis are the first tribal group that the Salesians came into contact with in the mission of Assam.⁴⁷ In the May 1923 issue of GM, Gil A., a pioneering missionary of Assam, gives a small general description of the people. He writes,

These people who are the object of the love and care of the Salesians in Assam, have all the characteristics of the Mongolian race: short stature, narrow forehead, small eyes, colour – faded yellow. [...] The Khasis have a quiet and happy character, but they resent any provocation.⁴⁸

Gil continues that little is known about the history of this race before the British occupation of Assam. The author classifies the tribe as idolaters.⁴⁹ They believe in one God, the creator and preserver of the whole universe. Their sacrifices, however, seem to be directed to the evil spirits who they believe are the cause of various illnesses and misfortunes. The Khasis believe in a life after death. Obviously one of the social traits of the group that made easier the work of the missionaries was the fact that the Khasi society was casteless. The strict matriarchal system of family prevalent among the Khasis appeared to the missionaries as a particular characteristic of the tribe. Of this matriarchal system Gil writes:

The woman is the object of much esteem among them. She is the true queen of the family: she rules and governs the homes, while the husband wears more the aspect of a guest.

⁴⁶ PANCOLINI F., *Gli Abitanti dell'Assam*, in GM 30 (1952) 6, 6

⁴⁷ The German Salvatorians established the headquarters of the Assam mission in the hill-station of Shillong, the most important city of Khasi hills. Much of the missionary enterprise of these pioneering missionaries was in favour of the Khasis.

⁴⁸ GIL A., *I Khasi*, in GM 1 (1923) 4, 57.

⁴⁹ This particular remark of the missionary does seem to be true as there are no idols in the Khasi religion.

[...] All the riches of the family are in her hands. [...] Children depend on her always, and in the case of the death of the mother the children are looked after by the family of the mother and do not stay with the father as would be the natural thing.⁵⁰

Certain superstitions and practices of the Khasis

After the general description of the tribe, GM's interest extends more to particular features of its beliefs and customs that could whet the interest of the readers in this people. So, in August 1924 there is a report on the Khasi point of view of the lunar eclipse. The author notes that the Khasis believe that the fading away of the moon during the lunar eclipse, is occasioned by some heavenly monster that is trying to swallow up the moon. To avoid such a universal disaster, during the lunar eclipse, the Khasis come out of their homes, beat drums, tins and anything they can get hold of, and in this way make the maximum noise possible, with the intention of driving away the said dragon.⁵¹

One mysterious and seemingly diabolic aspect of the religious beliefs of the Khasis, practised by a very limited number of families, was the secret worship of "*Thlen*" – a legendary serpent. Stephen Ferrando brings this belief to the notice of the readers of GM in February 1927. He notes that "*Thlen*" – the diabolic serpent, is worshipped with the sole motive of increasing the wealth and material prosperity of the family. What is detestable about this worship is that it consists in offering human blood to this serpent.

⁵⁰ Cfr. GIL A., *I Khasi*, 57-58. Giulio Costa in January 1960, in his general description of the Khasis makes special mention of this matriarchal structure of the Khasi family. Costa writes, "Among the Khasis the woman is the queen and the mistress of the house." The defect of the system consists in the fact that the father of the family exercises little authority over his own family, and over his own children, and in the obvious disparity between the treatment afforded to the female and the male children. However, Costa notes that in the public administration of the society as a whole, it is the men folk only who wield authority. It is the norm that women do not participate in the village assemblies, or other public legislative or administrative assemblies. Cfr. COSTA G., *I Khasi della Terra*, in GM 38 (1960) 1, 26.

⁵¹ Cfr. *Un'Eclissi di Luna tra i Khasi e gli Hindù*, in GM 2 (1924) 8, 116-117.

In case human blood is not available, the worshippers offer hair or even a piece of the dress of an unhappy victim, with the certain effect that the victim falls ill and dies, if not succoured in time and in the right way. Obviously this practice accounts for killings of innocent victims. Even among the Khasis it is considered to be a detestable practice, and when cases of such worship are discovered, severe punishment is meted out to the family that rears the "Thlen".⁵²

Gil A. in 1923 wrote in conclusion of his general presentation of the Khasis, "For their character, their morality, their social life, the Khasis are the more suited to become very good Christians among all the various groups of Assam."⁵³ This belief of the missionaries was further strengthened by certain contents of the religious belief of the Khasis. Thus Mlekus in January 1935, narrating the Khasi legend of the cock, notes that the Khasis have a profound notion of sin and the consequent need for satisfaction for sin. Although the sacrifice of the cock is a reparation for sin, it is only a temporary measure. The Khasi belief already pointed out to a future saviour, who would in some way substitute this temporary measure, and deliver the people from sin and all its effects.⁵⁴

From some of the early reports of the missionaries of Assam, it would appear that the great poverty that existed among the common people, at times drove the families to give their own children as guarantee for loans. These children became the property of the creditors till the family redeemed them by paying back the loan. The poverty of the family often made repayment of the loan impossible, and the child remained a perpetual slave.⁵⁵

One of the interesting feature of the Khasi social life that Ravalico reports in 1927 is their "shifting market" system. The author rightly notes that the market is the synthesis of the Khasi's social life, it is the sum total of all their commerce. The curious thing

⁵² Cfr. FERRANDO S., *Serpenti Assamesi*, in GM 5 (1927) 2, 33.

⁵³ GIL A., *I Khasi*, 58.

⁵⁴ Cfr. MLEKUS, *La Leggenda del Gallo*, in GM 13 (1935) 1, 16-17.

⁵⁵ Cfr. MAZZETTI G., *Piccolo Mandriano*, in GM 4 (1926) 6, 115-116.

about the Khasi market system is that the merchants with their merchandise keep moving from one big centre to another apparently with the motive of reaching all the corners of the region! There are eight such big market centres, and the market makes a round of these centres within the time span of eight days. Every day is a market day, but in a different centre. And this circle continues uninterrupted. No centre will have a daily market. Because of this particular character, the market day is the occasion to meet friends and relations who come together to the market centres. Even the days of the week are named according to the place where the market is held on that day! One could rightly say that the Khasi week has eight days. The principle market is that of Shillong.⁵⁶

Khasi funeral rites

Yet another of the curious practices of the Khasis that definitely drew the attention of the missionaries was the way that they disposed of the dead, and the memorial stones they erected in their honour. In December 1928 Antonio Alessi gives a quite detailed description of the ceremonies that follow the cremation of the dead body. The missionary notes that as a rule, the Khasis cremate their dead. But what is really specific to this tribal group, is the way that they dispose of the few bones that are left behind after the cremation. They are collected usually in earthen pots and placed in a temporary grave for some time. The temporary grave consists of few stones placed above the ground in the form of a small circle. The earthen pot containing the bones is then placed in the middle of this circle. A big round flat stone is then placed on top, resting on the circle of stones below.

The funeral rite does not end with placing the bones to rest in this temporary grave! After the cremation, the relations observe three days of rigorous mourning. Every morning of these three days, they visit the grave and offer rice, banana and beetle nut on it, for the soul of the departed person. These close relations do not even wash themselves during this period. The door of the house is left open day and night in case the departed soul wants to return

⁵⁶ Cfr. RAVALICO LUIGI, *Il Mercato di Shillong*, in GM 5 (1927) 5, 87-88.

to the original home! On the third day, they go through a process of divination by the breaking of eggs, to understand the cause of the death of the person concerned. Then the whole family proceeds to take a bath, and wash the few possessions of the dead person. A month after the cremation the family offers a solemn sacrifice in honour of the departed soul: the rich sacrifice a pig, while the poor offer a cock. And this brings to an end the period of immediate mourning for the dead.

But the bones of the dead cannot be left in these temporary graves. They must one day join the common grave of the family. Alessi reports that among the Khasis, each family had a common depository of bones called "*maw shiing bah*" which means literally the great-bone-stone. When many persons are dead in the same family, and their bones have been buried in the temporary graves, the heads of the family gather to decide on transporting all these bones to the common *maw shiing bah*. On days prefixed by this assembly, each of the families with the dead members, carry the bones of their dead to their own homes. The relations and friends of the dead person arrive at the temporary grave. They collect back the bones that remain in the earthen pot, wash them again and cover them in a mantle. A lady, a close relation of the dead person, carries the bones to the house, paying careful attention never to turn back all during this procession to the house. On their arrival in the house, the bones are placed in a corner prepared for it, and sacrifices are offered to the dead person. The whole family partakes of the meal prepared from the animals offered to the dead. When all the families with dead members, have finished bringing the bones to their homes, on a day fixed by the clan, the bones are brought solemnly to the "*maw shiing bah*" and placed along with the bones of their ancestors, not to be disturbed again. This ceremony is again followed by a great banquet.

Something characteristic of Khasi villages, and of the footpaths leading from one village to another, are the memorial stones erected to the dead in these villages, and along these paths. Alessi says that since the Khasis had no scripture, the only way to transmit the memory of the dead heroes was that of erecting memorial stones in public squares, or along the paths, or in market

places in honour of the dead. Usually there are two memorial stones, one that stands erect and is often considerably tall, and another at the foot of the vertical one, placed in a horizontal position. The ceremony of transporting the bones to the *maw shiing bah* usually ended with the erection of these memorial stones.⁵⁷

The cremation of the king of Cherrapunji

What is described above is the ordinary Khasi funeral rite. It involves the family and the village. But the cremation of the King of Cherrapunji, according to the report of Alessi in 1929 is a Khasi national event. The author writes: "It is an extraordinary event, a ceremony which marks an epoch for the whole Khasi Hills. It is unique for its majesty and grandiosity of ceremonies."⁵⁸

The missionary who worked in the station of Cherrapunji gives a detailed description of this great national event among the Khasis. He remarks that there are two parts in this great ceremony of the cremation of the king of Cherrapunjee: the coronation of the new king which takes place in the evening prior to the day of cremation, and the cremation of the dead king's corpse.

A successor is chosen immediately after the death of the king. Though recognised by the state authorities, for the subjects of the kingdom he remains just an administrator till he is officially crowned. Because of the great expenses involved in the function, this takes place a few years after the death of previous king.

For the period between the death and the official cremation, the corpse is preserved in the royal family. In earlier times the body of the king was preserved in pure honey. At the time of writing the article, Alessi notes that another method is followed to preserve the body. The body is enclosed in the trunk of a tree. Through a small opening, the trunk is then filled with a local alcoholic drink made from fermenting rice. The body is kept enclosed in this alcohol for three days. On the fourth day, it is

⁵⁷ Cfr. ALESSI A., *Monumenti Funerari Khasi*, in GM 12 (1928) 12, 232-233.

⁵⁸ ALESSI A., *La Cremazione del Re di Sohra*, in GM 7 (1929) 9, 174. Sohra is the Khasi name for Cherrapunjee.

taken out, washed and dried in the sun till it is really dry. Then the corpse is immersed in lemon juice, and is finally closed in a coffin and ceremoniously preserved in the royal family, usually in the bed room.

When the successor has collected the finance sufficient for the ceremony, he assembles the *dorbar* (the council of ministers), and the *dorbar* fixes the date for the function, and sends messengers to all parts of the kingdom to announce the event. Then starts the preparation for the event. The days of preparation are days of feasting and dancing for the people of Cherrapunjee.

On the day of the coronation, the king and ministers first offer expiatory sacrifices to placate the dead king. Before the coffin of the dead king, many pigs are sacrificed by the various ministers and the incumbent king. These sacrifices serve to give a final adieu to the dead king, and send his soul to live permanently with his ancestors who have preceded him.

After this great ritual, the whole group enters the house where the religious ceremonies are to be conducted. Only the ministers along with the king enter the house. All the rest remain in the courtyard outside. When everything is ready, the prime minister places on the head of the king elect, the turban, and placing his hands on the head of the king pronounces a formula of coronation. The other ministers then in turn place their hands on the head of the king to confirm what has been said by the first minister. After this the new king recognises the ministers, by giving each one a piece of red wool, a turban, one rupee and a bottle of liquor.

The whole group proceeds to the market place, there to offer a solemn sacrifice of 12 goats. After this sacrifice, the people of the various villages, present at the function, proceed to pay their respects to the king and to the ministers. This is the end of the first part of the ceremony.

In the morning of the next day, the king, the ministers and the people assemble in front of the house where the dead body of the previous king is kept. A group brings what will be the big container in which the corpse will be taken to the place of

cremation, and in which it will be burnt. The container is all decorated for the occasion. Before the procession moves to the hill of cremation, a cock is sacrificed. The body is placed in the container and the last preparations are made for the procession to start. At the start of the procession, a black goat is again sacrificed. The procession slowly winds to the hill of cremation amid loud shouts and frequent bursting of crackers etc.

On reaching the place of cremation, the container is placed on the pyre prepared in anticipation. Here again the ministers renew their allegiance to the new king and the whole group give themselves to dancing around the pyre. Only towards evening, the new king lights the pyre. There is a general shouting, and bursting of crackers again at this solemn moment. The crowd watches for a moment, and then slowly disperses.⁵⁹

The Garos

The reports about the Garos and the Salesian work among this tribe come directly from pioneering missionaries who worked among this group, especially A. Pianazzi and A. Buccieri. Of these, it is Pianazzi who supplies more information about the general characteristics of the Garos, their customs and beliefs. Buccieri tends to project some particular events, or some particular needs of the mission.⁶⁰

In seven subsequent issues of GM starting in May 1945, the editors present a drawn out write up of Pianazzi about the Garos and the missionary work among them. Pianazzi describes the Garos in the following way:

⁵⁹ Cfr. ALESSI A., *La Cremazione del Re di Sohra*, in GM 7 (1929) 9, 174-176; 7 (1929) 10, 196-198.

⁶⁰ In November 1940 Buccieri gives a short history of the initiation of the Salesian mission among the Garos. He describes the difficulties that the first missionaries, Pianazzi and Rocca encountered, especially from the Baptists who had in some way obtained the monopoly of evangelising this tribe. Cfr. BUCCIERI A., *Consolanti Risultati*, in GM 18(1940)11, 168-169. In September 1945, Pianazzi himself describes the initial difficulties that he had to face in his mission among the Garos, and the opposition and persecution by the Baptists. Cfr. PIANAZZI A., *Nella Terra dei Garo*, in GM 23 (1945) 9, 88-90.

Face round, smooth, without beard and moustache, of medium stature, but sturdy and robust; two sparkling almond shaped eyes, a broad blue turban around the forehead, a loin cloth around his waist: the picture of a Garo in the semblance of a mild lamb, not withstanding the double edged sword or the spear which they rarely put away when on a journey. The womenfolk are not very different except for the sword and a little more of garments which however do not in any way obstruct their movement. The showy ornaments of metals which they wear around their neck make up for the scarcity of dress! By character they are jovial, frank and intelligent.⁶¹

According to Pianazzi, "Garo" is the name by which the other groups around them call this tribe. However they call themselves "*Achik*" which means "people of the hills" or simple by "*Mande*" which means human beings.

The report of Pianazzi states that before the British subjection, the Garos were famous warriors, greatly feared by their neighbours, bringing down destruction and death especially on the plains people surrounding them. They were known as ferocious head hunters.⁶²

Certain customs of the Garos

One of the curious practices of the Garos that Pianazzi speaks of, in his report, is that among the Garos one does not ask the name of the other. The father or mother is known as the father or mother of so and so. So a married man who does not have children, does not have a name! It is not strange for the Garos even to change their names occasionally. Even in the case of animals, it is believed to be imprudent and offensive to call an animal by its name.

As for the marriage custom prevalent among the Garos, Pianazzi points out what apparently looked strange in their practice. The girl chooses a boy and makes her choice known to her relatives. One of these makes the proposal to the boy. Even if the proposal is acceptable to the boy, he pretends to refuse it at the beginning and pretends to evade the attempts of the relatives to

⁶¹ PIANAZZI A., *Nella Terra dei Garo*, in GM 23 (1945) 5, 54.

⁶² Cfr. PIANAZZI A., *Nella Terra dei Garo*, in GM 23 (1945) 5, 54-55.

force this relationship on him. A group of friends have to search for him and bring him to the fiancée, and then the marriage takes place. In case of genuine refusal, the boy has to run away thrice from the friends who try to bring him to the girl. After the third time, the boy is left in peace. Among some sections of the Garos the proposal is made in a different way: a relation of the girl offers a plate of cooked rice to the boy desired by the girl. If the boy concerned accepts the offer, he eats this plate of rice, otherwise he refuses it.⁶³

Pianazzi reports that the Garo family is matriarchal. The lady is the only proprietor of the goods of the family. It is her sir-name that the children inherit. The father of the family has the right to administer the goods of the family. But at the death of the wife, the man loses everything, even his children and the whole family: the children are cared for by the close relations of the mother. Often, a short time after the death of the wife, the man remarries, and forms another family.⁶⁴

Garo religious notions

Pianazzi reports that the Garos have an idea of a single God who is good and who has created the universe and everything in it. However, their attention is turned to this good God just once a year, when an annual sacrifice is offered to him. But as for the rest, their whole religious life is centred around placating the hordes of evil spirits who occupy the universe.

Pianazzi again reports a peculiar belief of the Garos concerning salvation. It is the Garo belief, the missionary notes, that the good god saved their tribe by becoming a monkey and dying on a cross! To commemorate this event, annually they have the feast of the monkey, when a monkey is crucified. This type of

⁶³ Cfr. PIANAZZI A., *Nella Terra dei Garo*, in GM 23 (1945) 6, 64-65.

⁶⁴ Cfr. PIANAZZI A., *Nella Terra dei Garo*, in GM 23 (1945) 6, 64-65. The children are considered to be the part of the wealth that belongs to the family of the mother. And for this reason, at the death of the mother, they belong to the same family, and not to the father who is of another family! So at the death of the mother, usually some of her sisters take possession of the children!

crucifixion of the monkey is practised also on other occasions. It is not altogether uncommon to find a monkey crucified at the entrance to a Garo village. The monkey has thus become a sign of good omen for them.⁶⁵

The Garo houses – their food

Speaking of their habitation, Pianazzi says that the Garo villages are invariably found on the slopes of the hills. The houses are all grouped together. These houses are always made of bamboo. The whole house is raised up, and rests on wooden pillars. When the Garo works in the fields, he constructs small houses on top of trees, to protect himself from the wild animals, especially from the elephants which invade his fields. The houses are noted for their cleanliness. In Each village there is what is called the *nokpante*, the dormitory for the young people. The missionary in his visits to the different villages is often housed in the *nokpante*. Usually the Garo villages are very distant one from another, and there are no roads linking up these villages.

Rice is their common food. They do not have elaborate preparations of rice. At times rice with sufficient water is put inside a piece of raw bamboo and closed with some leaf, and then thrown into the fire. When the bamboo is almost burnt, the rice inside is well cooked, and has a taste all its own! Milk is considered as impure. One of their favourite dishes is a plate of dog's meat. They eat even snakes.⁶⁶

The Nagas

It is through the report of Ravalico in 1929 that the readers of GM make their first acquaintance with the Nagas of North East India. The title itself of the article "*I Nagas - Cacciatori di Teste Umane*" (The Nagas – hunters of human heads) reflects the thought pattern behind the report. Ravalico notes that the name "Naga" is probably derived from the Sanskrit word *nanga* which means naked, and adequately reflects their way of dressing. They are a

⁶⁵ Cfr. PIANAZZI A., *Nella Terra dei Garo*, in GM 23 (1945) 6, 65.

⁶⁶ Cfr. PIANAZZI A., *Nella Terra dei Garo*, in GM 23 (1945) 7-8, 76-77.

hardy type of people, with little regard for the beautiful and the aesthetic. Ravalico writes:

The Nagas are not much bothered about natural beauty: they are happy provided they can find some wild meat in the forest, some little fish in the river or a bunch of bananas. They are not worried too much about dress: some tattoo on the face and on the chest is more than sufficient.⁶⁷

Naga – the warrior and head hunter

Their savage nature so much inclined to war, is shown especially in the way that they construct their villages. Ravalico asserts: "The Naga village has a warlike appearance."⁶⁸ In their primitiveness, the Nagas do everything possible to make their villages true impregnable fortresses. Fence of stone blocks and trunks of trees surround the village. To cast fear into the enemy, they display the human heads taken earlier in capture.

Ravalico highlights two characteristics of the Nagas: their sense of vendetta, and their lack of cleanliness. The missionary notes, "Revenge is a sacred thing among the Nagas." Memories of age old offences are maintained in the family, and children are required to avenge the offence received by their ancestors. As regards the second characteristic the missionary writes, "They are the total negation of cleanliness. It is a cause of boasting for them to have over their person a crust of dirt of considerable thickness!"⁶⁹

However, according to Ravalico, the one single tribal trait for which they are greatly feared and hated, is their practice of head hunting. Head hunting is a sport among the Nagas. A young man is considered an adult when he can bring home a human head! And the village headman is invariably elected from among those who have the most number of human heads to their credit. Girls choose their husbands from among those who have greater number of such trophies. Cowardice is a trait so much despised among the Nagas.

⁶⁷ RAVALICO L., *I Nagas Cacciatori di Teste Umane*, in GM 7 (1929) 8, 157.

⁶⁸ RAVALICO L., *I Nagas Cacciatori di Teste Umane*, 157.

⁶⁹ RAVALICO L., *I Nagas Cacciatori di Teste Umane*, 157.

Religious beliefs and social practices of the Nagas

According to Ravalico, the Nagas have some vague ideas of God and of after life. As they believe that even the dead need light and air, they do not bury the dead, instead just expose the body on a tree, or on some platform made for the purpose.⁷⁰

A two page write up on the Nagas, compiled seemingly by the editors, in the May 1948 issue of GM give more information about them. This compilation notes that although the Nagas are a somewhat homogeneous group of people, there are various groups among them with their own proper languages and customs. And often they are in war among themselves.

The Nagas, according to the report of May 1948, are a very democratic people. Even the decisions taken by the village leaders need to be ratified by the village assembly. And in the village assembly every one has the right to speak. Another positive character of the tribe is the great respect paid to the women.⁷¹

Yet another important characteristic of the Naga society reported by GM in May 1948 is the existence of the "Morung" – the hostel for men. When a boy completes six or seven years of age, he is sent to this hostel, which exists in every village. Here these young boys are taught the Naga way of life. Only men are admitted into these hostels for the young boys. The girls too have their own hostels.

Speaking of the religious beliefs of the Nagas, the report of 1948 confirms the report of Ravalico. They believe in one God, in the life after death, in the punishment of the wicked and reward of the just. But their attention is turned to placating the evil spirits who cause them all kinds of harm. One thing peculiar about the

⁷⁰ Cfr. RAVALICO L., *I Nagas Cacciatori di Teste Umane*, 157-158.

⁷¹ In March 1953, Fausto Pancolini, writing about the Nagas, highlights again their democratic society. Quoting a certain professor Davis, the author asserts, "Every village is a small republic and every person has as much value as any other. It would be difficult to find a people more democratic in their nature: leaders are not missing among them, but their authority is very limited." PANCOLINI F., *Le Tribù Aborigene dell'Alto Bramaputra*, in GM 32 (1954) 3, 16.

Naga religion is the fact that they do not have priests and other religious ministers.⁷²

The report of Fausto Pancolini in June 1952 corroborates what Ravalico had written in 1929. Pancolini makes mention of the all out effort of the Nagas to defend their villages from any possible aggression. The missionary asserts that the Nagas do not belong to any recognised religion. Their religious notions are very vague. What has impressed the writer about the Naga society is the state of being in constant conflict among the various groups and villages.⁷³

In December 1957 Umberto Marocchino, a missionary in Nagaland, presents again a short description of the Naga village and the Naga home. Besides confirming the reports of Ravalico and of Pancolini, he mentions that it is the Naga custom to construct the granaries just outside the villages, so that in case of a fire, the grain is not burnt.

According to Marocchino, the Naga house is divided into three parts: the open portico in front, the central room with the fire place, and the dormitory. The front portico is used for pounding and cleaning the paddy. The room with the fire place in the centre is the true heart of the Naga house. In this part are exposed the various trophies of the family, including the human heads. The dormitory is divided into various cubicles, and serves the different members of the family.⁷⁴

The March 1964 issue of GM again carries a report of Umberto Marocchino about the Nagas, and about the state in the Indian Union formed for the Nagas: Nagaland. The missionary notes that about twenty distinct ethnic groups with their own languages and customs form this greater group of Nagas. There are no big cities and towns in the region. The Naga lives in his village, and there are about 860 of them at the time of reporting. Marocchino states that the characteristic of every village is the home for the unmarried boys – the *morung*. The missionary describes the institution in these words:

⁷² Cfr. *Nagas*, in GM 26 (1948) 5, 8-9.

⁷³ Cfr. PANCOLINI F., *Gli Abitanti dell'Assam*, in GM 30 (1952) 6, 6-7.

⁷⁴ Cfr. MAROCCHINO U., *I Villaggi Naga*, in GM 35 (1957) 12, 13.

The morning is the club and the gymnasium of the young people. It is here that they get together for their heated discussions, to learn their songs and their dances, to train themselves in the use of the lance and the knife: the traditional arms of the Nagas. It seems that the Naga youth have a particular inclination towards living together.

This last report of Marocchino in some way contradicts the previous reports in what regards the religious beliefs of the Nagas. Marocchino asserts,

Those who know Nagaland through the descriptions of passing journalists and ethnologists, full of wars and headhunters, will be surprised to know that the Nagas, though they are animists, have a profoundly religious spirit and a very clear concept of God and of eternal life. They call the Supreme Being: Kepenoupfu, which means "one who has generated us".⁷⁵

As regards the disposal of the dead, Marocchino in this report of 1964 says that the Nagas bury their dead with much solemn ceremonies. As they believe that the soul of the dead person will have a long journey to make to the permanent abode of the dead, having to cross rivers and combat various enemies, it is their custom to place in the graves useful instruments, dresses and even a little money.

Manipur

It is in the issue of December 1957, dedicated to the diocese of Dibrugarh, North East India, that GM presents for the first time, the mission of Manipur.⁷⁶ GM presents the state of Manipur in these terms,

Manipur with its beautiful valley of Imphal, its lakes and the unbeatable crown of its mountains is without doubt the most characteristic and picturesque region of East India. A

⁷⁵ MAROCCHINO U., *Nagaland*, in GM 42 (1964) 3, 8-9.

⁷⁶ The salesian missionaries started to visit the villages in Manipur in 1948. In 1953 over 200 Tangkul Nagas were baptised by Ravalico in the village of Hundung. But only in 1956 could the missionaries establish themselves permanently in Imphal. Cfr. *Un Giovane il Primo Missionario del Manipur*, in GM 35 (1957) 12, 6-7.

good 7/8 of the area is occupied by a chain of mountains and hills which surround it on all sides and form its beauty and its enchantment.⁷⁷

The mountains are inhabited by various Naga groups while the central valley is for the most part occupied by the Meitheis. According to the report of December 1957, even these Meitheis were originally of Tibeto-Burmese origin, they were gradually Hinduised, though retaining some elements of their earlier beliefs and customs. Of the people of Manipur, the report states,

They are the most free and happy people of Assam. In this they are very close to the Burmese and like them love gaudy colours, music, song, happy living and dance. They are also the most clean and hardworking of all. Every one works in Manipur: perhaps the womenfolk more than the men. In the fields, at the handlooms, in the markets the Manipuri women bring honour to themselves.⁷⁸

Manipuri dances

According to the same report of December 1957, the one great pastime of the Manipuris is dance. "In Manipur every one dances!" Manipuri dance, in fact, forms a part of the classical dances of India. There are three types of dances in Manipur: "*Thabal Chongba*", "*Lai Harba*", and "*Rash Lila*". "*Thabal Chongba*" is danced during the Hindu festival of Holi. Men, women, young boys and girls and even children dance in circle, accompanied by some singing. "*Lai Harba*" which means joy of the gods, is danced in front of the protecting god of the village and describes the origin of the world and the love affairs of the gods. The third is the *Rash Lila* which is the classical dance of the Manipuris. It describes the love affairs of the god Krishna.

The people of Manipur and their occupation

In February 1966 GM presents a report of Pietro Bianchi with beautiful colour photos about the people of Manipur. The

⁷⁷ *Un Giovane il Primo Missionario del Manipur*, in GM 35 (1957) 12, 6-7

⁷⁸ *Lo Stato del Manipur- Gioiello dell'India*, in GM 35 (1957) 12, 5.

missionary notes that even the very name Manipur signifies "land of jewels". According to Bianchi the Northern hilly tracts are occupied by various Naga groups like the Maos, the Marams, the Zemis, the Tangkuls, the Kabuis and the Marings. In the southern hilly region live other non Naga tribal groups like the Lushai, the Hmars, the Chotes, the Moyons, the Kukis, the Chins. And the central plateau is occupied by the Meitheis.

Bianchi reports that the chief occupation of the people of Manipur is the cultivation of rice. In their families the ladies weave their dresses. The houses of the Meitheis are some what comfortable though made from material available in the forest. But the Naga houses are low and dark, full of smoke because of the lack of any chimney. Often the domestic animals like cows, chickens, ducks, and even pigs find a corner in the Naga house along with human beings. The Meitheis are for the most part vegetarians while the Nagas eat everything; dog meat being one of their specialities.⁷⁹

As regards the passion of these people for dance and song, the author writes:

After their work, the Manipuris give themselves to their hobby of song and dance to which they are deeply attached. Every tribe has its own songs and dances. The traditional patrimony is today enriched with much enthusiasm on the part of the young with western music and dance. The young people pass much time at night in singing and dancing. The dances of the tribal groups of the mountains have a more warlike character, while those of the Meitheis are more rhythmic and refined.⁸⁰

Conclusion

The missionaries were social explorers! Their mission was to preach the Gospel; but like any good farmer, they were well familiar with the land in which the seed had to be sown. They

⁷⁹ Cfr. BIANCHI P., *Manipur, Terra dei Gioielli*, in GM 44 (1966) 2, 8-10.

⁸⁰ BIANCHI P., *Manipur, Terra dei Gioielli*, 10.

differentiated with good soil and bad, and even in the good soil their eyes were open to the weeds which could easily suffocate the wheat. So intent on their mission, they were not great respecters of what they deemed as evil. They were not in the foreign lands to implant a western culture among the indigenous people. But neither were they there to perpetuate the local culture in all its shades and colours. They sought to Christianize the local cultures, and also to localize Christianity.

Objectivity is the mark of good journalism. To a great extent GM possessed this great quality. And in objective reporting of the Indian reality it served as a great instructor of its vast readership. It certainly created and maintained interest in the Indian continent among the young Italian boys and girls. Nay more, it served as a bridge of compassion and good will between the readers and the Indian reality. Creating aversion in the minds of the young readers was not the scope of the periodical. Even reports, which today may seem to be a little disparaging, were printed on the pages of the review to awaken sympathy and impress on the minds of the young the urgency of the mission in this country.

One cannot but be lost in the mine of information contained in the pages of GM. The impact of this information on the readers could not have been just minimal. It exposed the Italian youngster to a world so different in culture, religion and social life. The first hand experiences of the missionaries served as great resource books of information about many tribal groups, particularly in those times when there was practically nothing written about them.

CHAPTER 16

GM'S PRESENTATION OF SOUTH EAST ASIA

For centuries the Far East was untouched by Christianity, and remained a part of the globe unknown to the West. Daring missionaries ventured into this region time and again. But their efforts bore little fruits, and their courageous undertakings were not continued by others. With a greater ease in navigation, and with the European colonization of some of these regions and establishment of trade and commerce with the others, this region opened up also to Christianity. The Salesians in their missionary expansion were aware of the urgency of evangelizing this region, and launched into the Far East with great missionary audacity and daring.

The comparatively new missions of China, Japan, Thailand, Burma, Vietnam and others provided much material for the missionary periodical of the Salesians. Reports coming from them then had a special fascination, particularly due to the diversity of cultures, religions and social habits. Moreover, even the missionary work itself had its own particular characteristics in these regions, encountered peoples so far unknown, therefore posed new problems, and demanded new ways of approach. The missionary undertaking in these regions had a thrill all its own. The salesian missionaries in this region were not slow to send reports of their actual experiences for publication in the pages of GM and thus arouse in the hearts of the young that desire to venture out and join their ranks.

This chapter will deal with the way that GM presents about some of the more important Salesian missions in the Far East.

Burma

Burma got its independence only in 1948. Prior to that, it was a British colony and part of the British Indian Empire. Since

the Salesian presence was initiated in 1939 by the salesian province of Calcutta,¹ GM presents Burma as part of India. However, its charm consists precisely in its being different from India.

Since the initiation of the Burmese mission almost coincided with the outbreak of the World War II, most of the articles on Burma appear in the period after the War. There is much space dedicated to the presentation of the history of the Church in this predominantly Buddhist country. The various reports speak of the great work done by the different religious families in the country.²

Burma and its people

Antonio Alessi, one among the pioneering salesian missionaries in Burma, presents a beautiful picture of Burma in November 1951. He writes:

Burma is called the "land of flowers, colours and smiles". The Burmese are the most affectionate group of people of the East, always smiling and fond of bright colours and beautiful flowers. They call their land "Suè pii do" (an adorned land). This is the impression which a foreigner gets upon entering Burma in autumn when from Bhamo in the North to Victoria Point in the South one contemplates nothing but an immense rice field of golden yellow colour and thousands and thousand of pagodas projecting into the sky with their golden domes.³

¹ In July 1939 GM published the report of Ravalico about the arrival of the Salesians in Mandalay and the start of their work in favour of the young. Cfr. RAVALICO L., *I Salesiani in Birmania*, in GM 17 (1939) 7, 128-129. After the world War II, Antonio Alessi, the missionary in Burma writes again about the arrival of the Salesians in the country, and the hardships they endured during the period of the war. He projected a bright future for the Salesian mission in the country after the war. Cfr. ALESSI A., *Don Bosco in Birmania*, in GM 29 (1951) 11, 2-3. However, a write up from the editorial in 1966 speaks about the communist take over of the country, and the expulsion of the foreign missionaries. Cfr. *Vento Rosso sulla Birmania*, in GM 44 (1966) 7-8, 10-12.

² For notices about the history of the Church in Burma Cfr. *La Croce nel Paese delle Pagode*, in GM 29 (1951) 11, 8-9; DEL NEVO L., *La Croce tra le Pagode della Birmania*, in GM 31 (1953) 3, 6-7; *Crocevia dell'Asia*, in GM 33 (1955) 9, 2-3, 17.

³ ALESSI A., *Il Paese dei Sorrisi*, in GM 29 (1951) 11, 6.

Alessi continues that the Burmese are completely different from the Indians for their race, their religion and their language. The proper Burmese population are of Mongolian origin. Besides this majority group, there are also many tribal groups which live in the mountainous regions of the country.

Yet another report, seemingly coming from a missionary in Burma, of November 1951 speaks about the disastrous effects of World War II on this land. The country which prior to the war gave an impression of an over all well being, after the war presents a picture of desolation. The mines are deserted, the petrol wells abandoned and commerce brought to a stand still.⁴

Burma: the land of pagodas and bonzes

One of the things that caught the attention of the missionary, on arrival in Burma, was the great number of Buddhist pagodas and of the Buddhist monks. In November Giacomo Bertolino, a missionary in Burma writes, "In Burma, hundreds of pagodas project into the blue sky their decorated domes."⁵ In 1953 March GM publishes an article entitled "*Le pagode*", though anonymous, obviously coming from the pen of some missionaries in Burma. It says, "No religion in the world has so many temples as the Buddhists have in Burma. There are regions in which one finds thousands of them!" And the article closes with these words, "It is not for nothing that Burma is called the land of pagodas and monks!"⁶

The article continues that these pagodas are so numerous because of the Burmese Buddhist belief that the most meritorious action that one could perform was the construction of a pagoda. With the construction of a pagoda, one gains the coveted title of *paya-taga* which simply means constructor of pagoda. The *paya-taga* is considered a true saint, and all his sins are pardoned, and he is assured of reaching *nirvana* immediately after his death.

⁴ Cfr. *Ricchezze della Birmania*, in GM 29 (1951) 11, 5.

⁵ BERTOLINO G., *Gli Schiavi della Pagoda*, in GM 29 (1951) 11, 4.

⁶ *Le Pagode*, in GM 31 (1953) 3, 5.

Giacomo Bertolino in November 1951, writes about a quite curious group of people attached to the pagodas, called "the slaves of the Pagoda". The author says that the group had its origin before the British occupation of Burma. The Burmese rulers raided the near by villages of Thailand and brought away men and women, and bound them as slaves of various temples to do the cleaning and other menial jobs connected to the temples. Bertolino does not make any mention of how these slaves are got in the independent Burma, but notes that the group continues to exist.⁷

The Bonzes in Burma form a good portion of the population. Antonio Alessi in March 1953 notes that they are about 120,000 out of a total Buddhist population of 12 million. They are given the title of *pong-gyi* which means great glory, showing the great respect that the group enjoys in the society. One can become a true bonze only after he has completed 20 years of age. They live a life of meditation and asceticism. The bonzes live on the charity of the people, and the Buddhist Burmese considers it a great and meritorious act to give some charity to the bonzes. Alessi also notes that every Buddhist boy passes some time of his life in the monastery as a monk. This explains the great number of monks in the country.⁸

Burmese New Year

In the number of September 1955, which is almost entirely dedicated to Burma, GM presents an interesting report of the Burmese New Year. For the Burmese, the New Year's Day is the biggest national feast. It has a tone that is religious, social and recreational! It is also called the feast of the water. It occurs around the full moon day in April. It is common belief among the Burmese that the prince of the spirits descends to the earth for the inauguration of the New Year, and remains on the earth for three

⁷ Cfr. BERTOLINO G., *Gli Schiavi della Pagoda*, 4-5.

⁸ Cfr. ALESSI A., *I Bonzi*, in GM 31 (1953) 3, 4. In the same issue of GM there is an article of Maddoz-Vaz Viviano, a missionary in Burma, describing the ceremony of *Shinbyu* by which a boy is initiated into the life of the monks. It serves to corroborate what Alessi writes. Cfr. MADDOZ-VAZ V., *Il Shinbyu e il Na Dwin*, in GM 31 (1953) 3, 5.

or four days. The propitious day and hour and moment is announced in time by the monks, even the mode of his coming, and what he brings with him. On all these depends the nature of the New Year. The religious part consists in a visit to the pagoda and the ceremony of washing the statues of Buddha in the temples. However this part is neglected by most Burmese. For the most part the social feast consists in throwing water on each other as a sign of good wishes! No one is spared from this social custom.⁹

Japan

If one were to grade the different nations according to the number of articles written on them in GM, the third position would be occupied by Japan, immediately after India and China. And the credit for this goes first of all to Mons. Cimatti, the leader of the first group of salesian missionaries to Japan. Apparently he has written more in GM than any of the other leaders of the other salesian missions.

The presentation of Japan is evidently different from those of the other mission areas. Much space is dedicated to project the natural beauty of the country, the great qualities of the Japanese people, and there is ample information supplied about the various Japanese feasts. Since Christianity had undergone much persecution and suppression in this country, GM takes great pains to present the heroism of the pioneering missionaries and their flock.¹⁰ In the course of the years, GM also presented the flowering of the salesian mission in Japan.¹¹

⁹ Cfr. *Il Capodanno Birmano*, in GM 33 (1955) 17, 6.

¹⁰ For reports on the Catholic mission in Japan, its initiation, the various waves of persecution to which the Church was subjected, and its final establishment. Cfr. NERIGAR, *Precedendo i Nostri Missionari al Giappone*, in GM 4 (1926) 1, 3-7; CIMATI V., *I Primi Martiri nel Giappone*, in GM 5 (1927) 1, 5-7; NERIGAR, *La Diocesi e il Vescovo di Nagasaki*, in GM 6 (1928) 1, 2-3; ARRI C., *Antichi Supplizi Giapponesi Contro i Cattolici*, in GM 11 (1933) 9, 200-201; *Le Missioni in Giappone*, in GM 27 (1949) 6, 3; *Le Missioni in Giappone*, in GM 29 (1951) 3, 5.

¹¹ Cfr. NERIGAR, *Precedendo i Nostri Missionari al Giappone*, in GM 4 (1926) 1, 3-7; *Echi di Cronaca*, in GM 13 (1935) 3, 56; *Rigogliosa Fioritura*, in GM 18 (1940) 12, 180-181; *Le Missioni Salesiane in Giappone*, in GM 29 (1951) 3, 7; *I Salesiani in Giappone*, in GM 33 (1955) 8, 9.

Japan – the land of the cherry in blossom

In one of his first reports about the country, Vincenzo Cimatti presents Japan as the land of the cherry in blossom. According to the missionary the season of the flowering of the cherry trees makes of the country sides an enchanting sight. It is not only the mere natural beauty that strikes the missionary, but more the attitude of wonder and contemplation manifested even by the young boys and girls in front of the great natural beauty of their land. The Japanese not only appreciate but are proud of their beautiful land.¹²

The Japanese' passion for nature

In August 1931 GM publishes an article of Margiaria, a salesian missionary in Japan, where the author speaks precisely of the passion that the Japanese have for nature. The missionary writes,

Among all people of the earth who love nature and enjoy it, certainly the Japanese hold primacy of place. Starting from the construction of their homes up to their smallest utensils, their dress, there is nothing that does not in some way or other manifest their love for nature.¹³

Not only that they have a great love for nature, but they seem to have a natural gift to produce a marvellous harmony from the correct blending of their houses and especially their temples with their natural surroundings. With their passion for nature, they arrive at not only maintaining the natural form of things, but contribute to make it even more attractive. This love for nature, according to the missionary, is reflected also in the Japanese art and literature. Their most loved pieces of art depict nature in its various aspects: mountains, lakes, flowers, birds etc. Singing the beauty of nature formed the content of some of the highest expressions of their literature. From ancient times it was the Japanese ideal to grasp the charm of every thing in nature. And it was common thought among them that the one who does not know and appreciate the beautiful in nature, does not know the human heart.¹⁴

¹² Cfr. CIMATI V., *Ciliegi in Fiore*, in GM 5 (1927) 5, 90-91.

¹³ MARGIARIA, *Il Giappone e la Natura*, in GM 9 (1931) 8, 149.

¹⁴ Cfr. MARGIARIA, *Il Giappone e la Natura*, in GM 9 (1931) 8, 149. Even an

In an article in March 1940 about the Japanese' love for nature, GM states,

The inhabitants of the "land of the lotus, the cherry tree and chrysanthemum" have such an aesthetic sense, so much so that in the ancient times this was their only guide in their spiritual life. The Japanese almost adore nature! Their country sides are made so attractive with the picturesque plantations of pines and other coniferous trees in such a way that the colours of their leaves form a most delightful range of colours.¹⁵

The same write up continues to say that yet another of the expressions of their love for the beautiful, is their love for floriculture. Every family maintains a little flower garden.

Elements of Japanese character

In January 1927, publishing an interview with a Japanese Jesuit, GM brings to the notice of its readers one great characteristic of the Japanese society, namely, their great respect for authority. In fact the Jesuit states, "They have a great respect for authority – it is the same as that which is inculcated by our faith. [...] They have a great veneration for those in authority especially the Emperor. Children have profound filial love for their parents."¹⁶

Obviously one of the traits of the Japanese which made deep impression on the pioneering missionaries was their sense of belonging to one single nation, and their national pride. Cimatti in 1927 writes that the Japanese are a people who consider themselves members of a single great family, and trace back their origins to their gods. They are strictly united to the authority of the emperor, who, according to the Japanese belief, guides the destiny of this

article in August 1963 speaking of Japanese poetry, notes that the Japanese people seem to have a natural inclination to poetry. The author of the article attributes this national tendency to their love for nature. He writes, "The reason for this poetic inclination of the Japanese is that they are in continual contact with nature, following the dictates of their religion which divinizes the forces of nature. And nature has been an inexhaustible source of poetic inspiration." *La Poesia Giapponese*, in GM 41 (1963) 8, 35.

¹⁵ *Sentimento Estetico in Giappone*, in GM 18 (1940) 3, 35.

¹⁶ *Intervista con un Gesuita Giapponese*, in GM 5 (1927) 1, 7.

great people by divine mandate. They believe that the imperial dynasty is descendant from the sun and the Japanese people are children of this imperial dynasty. They take great pride in an uninterrupted succession of 124 emperors! Their national pride spurs them to defend their land from every external enemy. In fact, Japan has been one of the few eastern nations not subjected to the western colonisers. The missionary says that the Japanese have a great capacity to absorb all that is good in the world, yet remain Japanese in spirit and in ideals. Cimatti writes in the same article:

This beautiful, strong and generous nation, in the midst of a more refined European civilization, maintains tenaciously its traditions in their wholeness, in the details of social etiquette, in their language, their dress and their food habits.¹⁷

In January 1930 GM publishes a write up of Cimatti on the Japanese etiquette. He notes that the natural beauty of the land, the sense of propriety inculcated in the children right from their infancy, contribute to create in the Japanese a profound sense of personal decorum. They display a habitually happy and smiling face. Their gracious and solemn way of greeting one another speak of the delicacy of their manner of life. Concluding the description of some particular ways of greeting etc, Cimatti writes.

In conclusion, one would say, it is a complex of delicate and gentle habits which are performed by the Japanese with such a grace that they are really worthy of admiration and imitation.¹⁸

Cimatti again in March 1930 returns to describe again the aesthetic sense of the Japanese people. He writes,

The aesthetic sense of this people is manifested in many forms, but among them all, in their love for flowers and their music. [...] The Japanese have many types of music. [...] They love to live in their open country sides, and unlike us, they do not like to close themselves up in the cities. On a background of green provided by their pines, cedars, bamboos etc. they love to see flowers, flowers and more flowers! The

¹⁷ CIMATTI V., *I Primi Martiri nel Giappone*, in GM 5 (1927) 1, 5.

¹⁸ CIMATTI V., *Spunti di Educazione Giapponese*, in GM 8 (1930) 1, 16-17.

plum-tree and the cherry-tree of spring, the lotus of summer, the chrysanthemum and rose maple of autumn! [...] Flowers in their homes, flowers in their civil and scholastic feasts, flowers painted and embroidered are simply manifestations of their great love for nature.¹⁹

According to what Albano Cecchetti, a salesian missionary in Japan, writes in July 1936, this extraordinary love of the Japanese for plants, flowers, animals etc. has a basis in the Buddhist belief that these too are re-incarnations of the spirits of the dead. Cecchetti too corroborates what Cimatti had written.

Those who cannot have a vast garden, make a small one in which the trees, the lake, the mountains are all present but in a miniature form. It is almost impossible to find a home without a little garden.²⁰

One great symbol of the unique beauty of Japan is mount Fuji. According to the report of March 1951,

It is the highest and the most characteristic mountain of Japan. It has a height of 3775 meters. It has the form of a solitary corn, majestic and resplendent, which rises above all other mountains. It changes its appearance every season of the year and even every hour of the day! Right from ancient times the Japanese called it "the insuperable, one who does not fear one's rivals". For its unique beauty they have attributed to it a religious significance and made it the symbol of Japan.²¹

The Japanese concept of the year

The missionary coming from the West, certainly discovers many features of the people in the east that are not in agreement with the west. One such feature of the Japanese culture was the Japanese

¹⁹ CIMATTI V., *Fiori e Musica in Giappone*, in GM 8 (1930) 3, 72.

²⁰ CECCHETTI A., *Il Giardino Giapponese*, in GM 14(1936) 7, 110.

²¹ *Il Giappone*, in GM 29 (1951) 3, 3. Evidently, the objective of presenting the natural beauty of the country, and the love of the people for nature, for flowers etc seems to be that of projecting a people with a gentle culture, a people that one would naturally be inclined to love. There are no harsh traits in the Japanese character! Lovers of nature, they could also be great lovers of the One who created nature and all the beauty in it!

concept of the year. In August 1956 GM carries an article of Mario Marega, a salesian missionary in Japan, about the Japanese calculation of the year. The missionary notes that the Japanese like the Chinese calculate time in circles of twelve years. The twelve years of the circle are designated by certain animals: Rat, Cow, Tiger, Leopard, Dragon, Serpent, Horse, Goat, Monkey, Duck, Dog and Wild Boar. There are certain superstitions associated with the various years. So they believe that the year of the monkey brings more misfortunes than the other years. There is a general apprehension for the year of the monkey. As a rule no young man or woman would like to get married in the year of the monkey. The year of the horse too is generally considered inauspicious. It is the common belief that a girl who is born during the year of the Horse will certainly bring death to the husband, when she will be married.²²

Japanese religion

The missionaries did not find the evangelisation of Japan an easy task. It was not the lack of interest of the Japanese in religious matters that accounted for this lack of success; instead, it was the great attachment of the Japanese to their ancient religion and traditions. At the beginning of an article on the religions of Japan in November 1924, one reads, "If there is a nation so attached to its religious traditions and so opposed to the Christian penetration, they say it is Japan."²³

Shintoism in Japan

The article quoted above proceeds to expose the two main religions of Japan: Shintoism and Buddhism. The report notes that Shintoism is the ancient religion of Japan and has about 190,754 temples all over Japan. Of this ancient faith, GM writes,

It is a pagan cult which is exclusively Japanese, the foundation of all sentiments of patriotism and of art, of the cultural ideals of this people as well as their science and progress. It admits an invisible word of mysterious powers who act on the ordinary course of nature and manifests themselves in all

²² Cfr. MAREGA M., *L'Anno della Scimmia*, in GM 34 (1956) 8, 14-15.

²³ *La Religioni nel Giappone*, in GM 2 (1924) 11, 172.

phenomena superior to those of nature. In fact, a storm, a lightening, a volcano, a distorted tree, a wild beast, according to Shintoism can have the importance of a *Kami*, that is an extramundane or divine thing.

But the real peculiarity of Shintoism as projected by GM seems to consist in its ancestor worship. The write up continues,

Shintoism recognizes in a particular way the ancestors as the *Kami*. They direct the major part of their cult to these ancestors and to the imperial dynasty as the descendants of the sun. Thus this religion of the Japanese has given extra weight and sacredness to the natural affection for the family and for the mother land.

The Shintoists are not idol worshippers, and there are no idols in their temples, instead there are some symbolic objects like the sacred mirror. The religious rites in the temples are performed by the bonzes.²⁴

The Shintoist temple

Mario Marega in January 1931 offers to the readers of GM a general description of a Shintoist temple. He says that the whole structure is made of wood. The temple itself had two parts. The first is the great hall called "*haiden*". It is the hall for the great religious reunions. No one enters here except on feast days. The second part is called "*honden*" and is the holy of holies. There is always a series of steps that lead from the "*haiden*" to the "*honden*". There is nothing in this holy of holies except a shelf with a metallic mirror in it. According to the ancient Japanese legend, when Amaterasu, the sun goddess, retired into some grotto and refused to illumine the universe, the mirror was the instrument that the other gods and goddesses used in the trick that these played

²⁴ Writing in the years close to the end of the World War II, C. Martelli, salesian missionary in Japan, also testifies to the great religious spirit of the Japanese and their attachment to their ancient beliefs. The missionary writes, "The Japanese people have a very religious soul. They are very much attached to the faith in which they were born and brought up even if it is false! An example of this one can find particularly in the countryside where Buddhism or Shintoism reigns uncontested." Cfr. MARTELLI C., *Vieni*, in GM 27 (1949) 4, 7.

on Amaterasu to make her come out of the grotto. And that is why the mirror is kept in this shelf.

Another characteristic of the Shintoist temple is that the way leading to the temple, is spotted with arches of wood or of stone, at regular intervals. In front of the temple there is a stone tub filled with water, with a ladle and a small towel placed near it. As they go to the temple to pray, they stop at the tub of water, draw out a little water with the ladle, wash their hands with it, wipe their mouth and proceed to the door of the temple.²⁵ In October 1934 GM publishes a report of Albano Cecchetti. Although the whole report is not dedicated to a description of the Shintoist temple, the author speaks of it in the beginning of the article. In comparison with the richly decorated Churches, with various altars, beautiful paintings and statues, candles and flowers, the Shintoist temple is cold and unattractive. The missionary writes, "Neither candles, nor pictures! No decorations and no altar! Much squalid and cold poverty is the true symbol of this religion without a heart beat, without life and without truth."²⁶

The Shintoist mode of prayer

Even the mode of praying of the people at these temples obviously seemed rather ridiculous to the missionaries. The August-September issue of 1930 carries a small write up on how the Japanese pray. They draw a little water from the stone tub in front of the temple, wash their hands, wipe their mouth and proceed to the door of the temple. At the door, they clap their hands to call the spirit who lives in that temple, make a profound bow and leave convinced that they have prayed!²⁷

Japanese Feasts

Among the elements of Japanese culture, obviously it was the various feasts of these people that occupied the greater space

²⁵ Cfr. MAREGA M., *Il Tempio Shintoista*, in GM 9 (1931) 1, 9-10.

²⁶ CECCHETTI A., *Tenebre e Luce*, in GM 12 (1934) 10, 195.

²⁷ Cfr. *Come Pregano i Giapponesi*, in GM 8 (1930) 8-9, 172. The article points to the lack of substance of this type of prayer. While there is a ritual preparation for the prayers, the act of praying itself seems to be absent. The purpose evidently seems to be to show up the emptiness of the pagan Japanese religion.

in GM. Description of these feasts of Japan is a recurrent theme in GM. The first report of the Japanese feasts start in 1928 and the last report is found in 1966, a year before the closure of the periodical. These write ups come from many of the salesian missionaries in Japan. Although at times, the various reports deal with the same theme, one notices that the latter reports in some way compliment the former ones.

The Japanese New Year

It is Mons. Cimatti who in April 1928 initiates what could be considered as a series of descriptions of the various feasts of the Japanese people, with a brief description of the Japanese' New Year's day. Cimatti says this "feast of all feasts" is marked by much activity both in the family and in the society at large. The houses, the shops and even the streets are beautifully decorated for the occasion. It is customary that every family plants branches of pine and of bamboo in front of the house. The pine and the bamboo stand for long life. Symbols of a long and happy old age like the lobster, fern and coal are kept suspended on a cord made of paddy straw, which is believed to keep away all evil spirit. Visit to relations and friends, exchange of gifts and preparation of special dishes, especially of *moci* – a Japanese rice cake - form part of this feast. The celebration last for three days.²⁸

The feast of "Koinobori"

Another Japanese feast of which Cimatti speaks is that of "*koinobori*". This is, according to the missionary, the Japanese feast of the children, and is celebrated some time in May. The mothers plant long bamboos in front of their homes. Big fishes of cloth or

²⁸ Cfr. CIMATTI V., *Le Feste Giaponesi*, in GM 6 (1928) 4, 71-72. The last report on the New Year's celebration is found in January 1966. This write up stresses that the Japanese New year is essentially a feast of friendship. And its peculiarity obviously consists in the traditional decoration of the house. Besides the lobster, the fern and the coal hung up on the doors of the houses, the article also mentions orange which again stands for continued happiness. According to this last report, the feast lasts for seven days, and on the seventh day the decorations are all taken down and are either burnt at the bank of some near by river, or thrown into the river. Cfr. *Buon Anno, Giappone*, in GM 44 (1966) 1, 1

of paper, all stuffed with gifts for the children, are hung up on top of these bamboos. When the gentle breeze fills up these fishes, the whole country side appears to be filled with flying fishes! For the Japanese these fishes are symbols of great vivacity and energy.²⁹

The feast of "Tanabata"

It is again Mons. Cimatti who gives the first description of the feast of "Tanabata". He simply states that it is a festival of Chinese origin, held in August, to celebrate the meeting of the stars of the constellation Vega. In front of their house, the Japanese, plant a bamboo and on its branches hang strips of coloured paper on which are written the wishes for the prosperity of the two stars which meet on the feast to celebrate their wedding. According to Cimatti it is essentially a family feast.³⁰

A cleric, Luigi Floran, missionary in Japan, in August 1933 explains the belief behind the meeting of the two stars. He says that there are two special stars, one that seems to travel from east to west, and the other that seems to move from west to east. And for laws of nature on a particular day of the year they come together. This meeting of the two stars was in the earlier times considered very propitious, good omen of great happiness and prosperity for the Japanese people. However later on, with the coming of various types of contagious diseases, the meeting of these two stars was considered responsible for these diseases. According to Floran, in the earlier times the feast was celebrated with great joy, while in the later period, it became an occasion to plead for rain so that the meeting of the two stars would not take place.³¹

²⁹ Cfr. CIMATTI V., *La Festa del Koinobori*, in GM 6 (1928) 9, 167. Cimatti himself in another article in March 1929, says that one of the specialities of this feast of the children consist in eating mutton, which for the Japanese is symbol of strength and prosperity. Cfr. CIMATTI V., *Piatti Speciali Giapponesi*, in GM 7 (1929) 3, 53. This feast is also mentioned by P. Escursell in March 1936 in his article that describes the great love and care that the Japanese lavish on their children. Cfr. ESCURSELL P., *Fanciullezza Giapponese*, in GM 14 (1936) 3, 40-41.

³⁰ Cfr. CIMATTI V., *La Festa di Tanabata*, in GM 6 (1928) 11, 207-208.

³¹ Cfr. FLORAN L., *Festa del Tannabata*, in GM 11 (1933) 8, 181. This second aspect of the meeting of the two stars being a bad omen, and the prayers being sent up for rain that such a meeting does not take place, is mentioned only by Floran.

Oreste Cosio, in the summer issue of 1966 gives a few more details of the feast that he calls "*Tanabata Matsuri*". He says that the feast is held on the 7th of July, and celebrates the nuptial of two stars: Arturo and Vega. For the Japanese Vega is the princess Shokuio and Arturo is her husband Kengyu. According to the Japanese legend, Shokuio was a royal princess, excellent at the art of weaving. While she was weaving a dress for her father, the king, she fell in love with a handsome young man, a guardian of cows. Out of his bounty, the king allowed their marriage. But they were so inseparable that the princess left off her weaving and the young man, his guarding the cows. Exasperated, the king separated them both and they were allowed to meet each other just once a year. This meeting takes place due to the kind favour of the magpies who construct the bridge between the two stars. But these cannot make the bridge in the rain! According to Cosio, on this feast the princess grants the prayers of those who wish to improve their skill at all fine arts. On this feast, the Japanese plant long branches of bamboos in front of their homes and on its branches hang strips of paper with some poetry written for the occasion. It is not uncommon to see hung up on these bamboos kimono in paper, in honour of the princess and models of cows in honour of her husband.³²

The feast of the dead

Although A. Margiaria makes a mention of the Japanese feast of the dead in his report "*Usanze Buddistiche in Giappone*" in November 1927, he does not give the details of the feast.³³ Luigi Floran too makes a mention of the feast in his write up on the feasts of Japan in August 1933.³⁴ It is P. Escursell who in November 1933 gives some details of the celebration. Escursell states that it is a feast celebrated by all Japanese, even though it seems to be of Buddhist

³² Cfr. COSIO O., *La Festa delle Stelle Filanti*, in GM 44 (1966) 7-8, 24-26.

³³ Cfr. MARGIARIA A., *Usanze Buddistiche in Giappone*, in GM 5 (1927) 11, 203. Margiaria mentions that the cemeteries are all cleaned up for the feast and the individual tombs decorated. In different parts of the city, platforms are raised, where traditional dances are performed in honour of the dead.

³⁴ The only detail that he highlights is the belief that after the feast the dead return to the land of the dead riding a dragonfly. Cfr. FLORAN L., *Festa del Tannabata*, in GM 11 (1933) 8, 181.

origin. He says that the Japanese call this feast "*Bon*". More than a commemoration of the dead, it is a true feast of the dead because as the missionary says, "the memory of the dead brings joy to the Japanese!"³⁵ Days before the feast, the shops put on sale various types of little lanterns that are needed for decorating the room with the altar to the dead found in every Japanese home, and for the procession intended to accompany the dead back to their original homes. According to Escursell this feast which lasts up to three days, is celebrated in honour of the dead, who according to the Japanese belief, return to their earthly homes on the days of this feast.

In November 1963 GM carries again an article on the feast of the dead in Japan, called "*Obon*". The report says that this feast is normally celebrated in July, the date depending on the moon, and lasts for three days at least. The cemeteries are all cleaned up and the tombs decorated for the occasion. On the evening of the first day the whole family goes to the tomb of their dead dear ones with a lighted lantern to accompany the dead back to their old homes. On reaching back to the house, where in the main room, the paintings of the dead are spread out on a mat; the dead are welcomed back to the family with all respect and reverence. And this atmosphere of profound respect for the dead is maintained for the rest of the feast. After the ceremony of welcoming the dead into their old homes, they are invited to participate in the family banquet. Plates are placed in front of the paintings of the dead. Portions of the meal are served in those plates too. During the meal, there are even lively conversations with the dead persons. At the end of the feast, the family makes a miniature boat and fills it with all kind of goodies and sends it down the river, to the sea and to the world of the dead!"³⁶

³⁵ ESCURSELL P., *Il Bon*, in GM 11 (1933) 11, 235

³⁶ There is an evident departure from looking at this celebration as a mere superstitious practice to considering it as an expression of a gentle soul and of a profound sense of veneration of the dead. The author writes, "The Japanese commemorate their dead with ceremonies and rites which to us appear strange, but which reveal a gentle soul and a profound sense of veneration for the departed souls." And explaining the scope of the feast, he notes, "And the principle scope of it all is to perpetuate the memory of the ancestors and to stimulate filial piety." *Obon: la Festa dei Morti in Giappone*, in GM 41 (1963) 11, 34. (34-37). Strangely enough, Cimatti does not make any mention of this feast of the dead."

The feast of "Mamemaki"

In February 1935 GM publishes a small write up of Piacenza, missionary in Japan, describing the feast of "mamemaki". It is a feast to bid adieu to winter and welcome Spring. The feature specific to this feast is the throwing of a type of beans called "mame". The Japanese believe that the evil spirits are driven away by this throwing of these beans, and in their place the spirit of fortune and prosperity enters the house. It is done in every family. After the ceremony of throwing "mame" out of the house, the rest of the roasted "mame" is eaten by the family members. In the temples this ceremony is done on a greater scale.³⁷

The feast of "Hina Matsuri"

Although Cimatti makes a mention of the feast of the dolls in his write up about the various Japanese dishes,³⁸ it is only in March 1962 that GM presents a report about this feast. According to this report "Hina Matsuri" or the feast of the dolls is celebrated in every Japanese family with a baby, on the third day of the third month of the Japanese year. The child is the centre of the feast. The parents prepare the special sweets for the feast and buy the dolls. The dolls are exposed in the house on a decorated stand. They are not the ordinary dolls, but often are of great value, preserved for generations in the house. In ancient times the feast had a religious significance. It was believed that the sins of the owners of the dolls, pass on that day to the dolls and were carried away when these dolls were either put away or thrown into the river. It is a feast of the family, a time for the parents to manifest their love for the children, and a time for the children to grow in their filial affection for their parents. The feast seems to be of Chinese origin and in the earlier times, was celebrated only in the royal family.³⁹

³⁷ Cfr. PIACENZA, *Feste Giapponesi*, in GM 13 (1935) 2, 28.

³⁸ Cfr. CIMATTI V., *Piatti Speciali Giapponesi*, 53.

³⁹ Cfr. *Hina Matsuri*, in GM 40 (1962) 3, 40-43.

Indonesia

The first salesian mission in the Indonesian islands was started in 1927 at Timor. But two years later the Salesians had to retreat from this station. The mission of Timor was started again in 1948. GM offers much information about Indonesia, its people, their customs and beliefs.⁴⁰ The bulk of information about Indonesia is found in the period after the second initiation of the Salesian mission in Timor after the World War II. The two issues dedicated more to Indonesia are those of May 1951 and of November 1956.

Indonesia - the belt of emerald

Through various reports in the 1950s, GM presents the natural beauty and riches of the Indonesian archipelago. The periodical compares this chain of islands to a belt of emerald, for its luxuriant vegetation and for its immense natural riches. It notes that this belt of emerald is studded with a total of about 3000 islands, small and big, and has a total area, six times that of Italy. The climate is described as typically tropical, hot and humid, but not excessive. The island nation has only two seasons: the rainy and the dry. The island of Java, the most important of the islands, is the land of perpetual summer! The various products of the country are: rice, rubber, sugar cane, tea, coffee, tobacco, palm oil, pepper, and various types of spices. Fishing industry is well developed. Indonesia is also rich in petroleum, coal and other minerals.⁴¹

⁴⁰ GM presents a brief historical sketch of Indonesia, tracing back the origin of the main ethnic groups found in the nation to the three main migrations into these islands: the Malaysian, the Indian and the Arab. Mention is made of how the island nation was subjected to different European colonising powers: the Portuguese, the Dutch, the French, the British and again the Dutch. GM contains also reports about the efforts of the pioneering Catholic missionaries at evangelising the people of these islands. Cfr. *Andiamo in Indonesia*, in GM 29 (1951) 5, 3; *Cenni Storici e Influssi Esterni*, in GM 34 (1956) 11, 12-13; *Il Cristianesimo in Indonesia*, in GM 29 (1951) 5, 4; *Il Cristianesimo in Indonesia*, in GM 34 (1956) 11, 16-17; *Le Isole della Speranza*, in GM 41 (1963) 8, 7-11.

⁴¹ Cfr. *Giava, Isola dell'Eterna Estate*, in GM 29 (1951) 5, 10; *Indonesia*, in GM 34 (1956) 11, 8-9; *Produzione*, in GM 34 (1956) 11, 10-11; *L'Indonesia*, in GM 36 (1958) 3, 8-9.

To the lovers of nature and especially of forest life, GM presents the rich fauna of Indonesia. 68% of its total area of the country is covered with forest. Wild animals like elephants, tigers, monkeys, serpents of over 500 species, and crocodiles populate these forests. With its more than 350 species of birds, this country is a paradise for lovers of birds. The very rare species of the bird of paradise with its splendid mantle, found in some of the islands of Indonesia, makes the call to these islands all the more inviting.⁴²

The Indonesian population and their general characteristics

A report of May 1951 says that the major part of the population is Malaysian. There are sizeable groups of Indians, Chinese, Europeans, and Japanese.⁴³ The reporter describes the Malaysian section of the population in these terms,

The Malaysians are distinguished from the others for the shortness of their stature and for their physical vigour. [...] They are well-mannered even if not too talkative, respective of the thought and liberty of the others. Intelligence wise they are not too bright, and initiative wise they are timid. They lack resistance, are easily lazy and non-caring. They are cruel and superstitious at times even to excess.⁴⁴

The same report continues to say that the main aboriginal tribes of Indonesia are the Dayaks of Borneo, the Battas of Sumatra, the Alfurus of Celebes. These live in their semi-civilised state.

A report of August 1963 notes that every region has its own dialect. But the only language that has some literature is that spoken in Java. The common language imposed on the people is Indonesian Bahasa. According to the same report, more than 85% of the Indonesian population is Muslim, though for a good portion of this people their Muslim faith is nothing more than an external etiquette.⁴⁵

⁴² Cfr. *La Fauna*, in GM 29 (1951) 5, 7; *Uno Sguardo sull'Indonesia*, in GM 41 (1963) 8, 10-11.

⁴³ In November 1956 GM speaks of the various waves of migrations into these islands: the Malaysian, the Indian, the Arab, the European. Cfr. *Cenni Storici e Influssi Esterni*, in GM 34 (1956) 11, 12-13. These various immigrations explain the presence of various ethnic groups in the island nation.

⁴⁴ *Da Roma a Diakarta (Indonesia) in 63 Ore*, in GM 29 (1951) 5, 8-9.

⁴⁵ Cfr. *Uno Sguardo sull'Indonesia*, 10-11.

Indonesian Dance

A particular character of the Indonesian people reported in an article in November 1956 is their love for dance and song. The compiler of the write up states that dance and music occupy a place of great importance in the Indonesian culture. Indonesian dances seem to have drawn inspiration from the ancient Hindu epics ever since the Indian migration into the islands. In the course of the years, these themes have undergone certain changes to introduce the heroes and heroines of the nation into the otherwise totally Hindu religious themes. According to this report, there are four classical types of dances in Indonesia. *Halus* is the dance of those who belong to the class of nobility; it is the dance of the royal court. The movements are moderate and very gracious. The *Gagah* dance has as its theme the life and achievements of national heroes and of gods and goddesses. The movements are more rapid but still gracious. The *Kasar* dance instead depicts devils, demons and giants. Movements are fast and disordered. And the fourth class are the comical dances, where the movements are quite out of the ordinary, imperfect and often ridiculous. Besides these, there are also dances for various occasions like harvest, in different parts of the country.⁴⁶

Funeral rites in Indonesia

It is in the November 1956 issue of GM that the editors present the funeral rites of Indonesia. While in their religious components, these rites are faithful to the various religions of the country, the external rites acquire characteristics that could be called Indonesian.

The Indonesian Muslims have a funeral rite that manifests also elements of Hinduism and also of ancient animist religions of the islands. When a person dies, the body is laid out in such a way that the head is placed in the direction of the holy city of Mecca. Following a Hindu custom, incense sticks are kept burning near the dead body. When any one visits the dead, he vests always in black. Usually the visitors bring some gifts to the family by way of rice, or money according to the local use. When the relations and friends have reached, the body is washed. For the

⁴⁶ Cfr. *Danze Indonesiane*, in GM 34 (1956) 11, 14-15.

men folk the body is washed by the sons and the male relations, for the women folk instead, by the daughters and the female relations. The washed body is covered with a white cotton sheet and placed in the coffin while those around recite the prayers according to the Muslim rite.

At the time fixed by the family, the body is taken out of the house, but stops at the entrance for sufficient time for the young relations of the dead to make three rounds around the coffin. On the way to the cemetery prayers are said, and at the cross road coins are thrown in the air. One of those who accompany the body holds an umbrella opened, to protect the head of the dead from the sun! Among the things carried to the cemetery are a box of betel, a spittoon and a sleeping mat.

The body is not buried in the coffin! When the procession reaches the grave, the body is taken out of the coffin and placed directly in the grave. Often a niche is dug out in one of the side walls and the body is placed in that niche in such a way that the earth that is thrown into the grave, does not fall directly on the body itself!

The Muslims in Indonesia believe that the dead will have to undergo an examination of all what they have done on the earth. To help the dead person in this exam, before the grave is filled with the earth, those around the grave recite a series of pertinent questions and their answers. When the grave is finally filled with the earth, wooden markings are kept on the grave to mark the head and the feet. On fixed days after the death, the parents and relations gather to pray for the dead person.

The same amalgamation of rites and ceremonies has taken place also in the Hindu funeral rites in Indonesia. Like their Indian counterparts, the Indonesian Hindus cremate their dead, but according to a ritual quite different from the one followed in India. The body is carried to the place of the cremation in a high tower made of bamboo and adorned with strips of coloured paper. The funeral procession makes many zigzag movements, and turns round and round in circles every now and then, to confuse the spirit of the dead person if it ever wants to return to its earthly dwelling, and to direct it straight to the next world! On reaching the place of

cremation, the body is placed in a kind of a container made in the shape of various animals. For the Brahmin the container is made in the shape of a cow, for the Kshatrya it is in the form of a lion, for the Vaishyas it is in the form of some of the mythological figures, while for the Shudras the preferred figure is that of the fish.⁴⁷

Thailand

The Salesians took charge of the mission of Rajaburi in 1927. And from that year on wards, there are regular notices on Thailand and its people in GM. The articles evidence the attention of the editors on projecting the special features of the country like its natural beauty, its temples, the white elephant, its festivities etc. In keeping with its missionary nature GM makes sufficient mention of the history of the Catholic missions in the country.⁴⁸ Little space is dedicated to tell the story of the salesian missions in the region.⁴⁹

The natural charm of Thailand

According to a report of Cesare Castellino in April 1942, before June 1939 Thailand was commonly known by the name of "Siam" – a name given to the region by the Burmese, signifying "the land of the brown people". For Castellino, Thailand "is the classical East with all its splendour and all its charm."⁵⁰ Another report in February 1952 states:

⁴⁷ Cfr. *Cerimonie Funebri*, in GM 34 (1956) 11, 20-21.

⁴⁸ Certain write ups like CASTELLINO C., *Thailandia*, in GM 20 (1942) 4, 36-38; *Roma-Bangkok*, in GM 26 (1948) 4, 5; *Il Paese dell'Elefante Bianco*, in GM 31 (1953) 4, 2-3, dedicate short paragraphs to the history of the Catholic missions in Thailand. These merely make mention of the most important stages of the progress of the work. A more comprehensive picture of the history of the missions in the country is given in the following narrations: *Le Missioni Cattoliche nel Siam*, in GM 29 (1951) 2, 8-9; *Il Cattolicesimo nel Siam*, in GM 37 (1959) 7, 10.

⁴⁹ There seems to be absolutely little about the beginnings of the salesian mission in Thailand. An article in July 1941 mentions that the prefecture apostolic of Rajaburi, entrusted to the Salesians, is raised to the status of a Vicariate Apostolic with Gaetano Pasotti SDB as the Vicar Apostolic. Cfr. *Fausto Avvenimento*, in GM 19 (1941) 7, 106. And in April 1942 GM publishes a report of Cesare Castellino, missionary in Thailand, where the author makes a general presentation of the country and its people. In this report some space is dedicated to tell about the beginnings of the Salesian mission in the region. Cfr. CASTELLINO C., *Thailandia*, 36-38.

⁵⁰ CASTELLINO C., *Thailandia*, 36.

The natural beauty of Thailand is insuperable. [...] The aerial vision of Siam presents a vast extension of green with silver ribbons here and there, and a few scattered dark spots. The sum total of colours is truly breath taking.⁵¹

For its exuberant nature, gifted with such great variety, Carlo Caretto, the brother of Pietro Caretto who was a salesian missionary in the country, wrote in April 1953, "Siam is a charming country, one of the most beautiful of the whole of the East."⁵²

A report in February 1952 presents Thailand as a true tropical garden with all kinds of tropical fruits. And because of the many rivers and streams that criss-cross the country, fish is found in abundance in the region. Yet another peculiarity of the country is that it has just three main seasons. The dry and hot season lasts from March to May, the rainy season from June to October and winter from November to February.⁵³

The various ethnic groups of Thailand

In September 1931 GM publishes quite a lengthy article of Giuseppe Pinaffo, illustrated with adequate photographs, about the various ethnic groups who live in Thailand. Pinaffo notes that according to the anthropologists, there are more than 30 ethnic groups in Thailand. However, he speaks only about the main groups. According to the missionary, the Semangs were the original inhabitants of the whole of Indo-China in times past. They are found in the Pattani and Nakhon Sritamarat mountains of Siam. This group is found also in the Philippines, in the Andaman Islands and in the Malaysian peninsula. Originally they lived a nomadic life in the forest, but later on they got accustomed to a more settled type of life. Normally they are short of stature. They are dressed very rustically. They do not undertake systematic cultivation, instead live on the fruits in the forest. Their weapons are bow and arrow and spear made of bamboo.

The Malaysians who belong to the group of Austro-Asians are found mainly in the southern part of Thailand. They are all Muslims

⁵¹ *Il Muang Thai*, in GM 29 (1951) 2, 4.

⁵² CARRETTO C., *Viaggio nel Siam*, in GM 31 (1953) 4, 10.

⁵³ Cfr. *Il Muang Thai*, 4-5.

and are deeply attached to Mohamed. The women here, do not cover their faces. This group is mainly engaged in the cultivation of rice and are good fishermen.

The Sakais who belong to the Mon or Peguano-Kmen group live in the south of Thailand. They are accustomed to tattooing and painting themselves. They know a little of agriculture; cultivate rice, tapioca, and tobacco. Their weapons are the bow and the arrow. The Kamuks belongs to the same ethnic group, and live in the region of Luang-Probang. Groups of Cambodians, who came down from the North, Yunnan, in their movement towards Cambodia, have established communities also in Thailand. The monument to their sojourn through Siam is the famous ruins of Angkor.

The Annamite Christians who escaped from Vietnam during the period of persecution, form yet another major ethnic group in Thailand. They belong to the bigger Mon-Khmer family. They are famous in Thailand for the artistic mats that they make.

The Thais, from whom has descended the major part of the population of Thailand also belong to the great Mongolian, Mon-Khmer family. Probably their original habitation was the South West region of China – Yunnan, from where they were driven southwards. The Thai ethnic group is found also in Tonkino, in the Island of Hainanu and even in Assam. The Cantonese also probably belonged to this group of people.

Another separate ethnic group is the one of the Laozians. Except for the fact that they are ethnically different, there is nothing much that differentiates them from the Thai people, as they have adopted the customs and beliefs of the Thais. Thailand also has other ethnic groups like the Sam-Sams, the Carians and the Chinese.⁵⁴

The general Thai character

In his evidently very enthusiastic report on Thailand, Cesare Castellino, giving a general description of the Thais, says:

The Thais belong to the Mongolian race: of medium stature, they have broad shoulders, well developed chest, well

⁵⁴ Cfr. PINAFFO G., *Etnografia Siamese*, in GM 9 (1931) 9, 172-175.

proportioned body, short neck, broad forehead, black eyes, nose some what flat, hair black, smooth and short. They do not have beards.

By character they are happy, gentle, at times timid, very grateful to those who do good to them. They have a natural inclination to music also due to their own language which is all based on tones and the length of the syllables. [...] Thailand is the land of generosity, of feasts, of smiles and of eternal poetry.⁵⁵

The report of February 1951 adds to these above mentioned characteristics that of their love for sport. Among the traditional sports are boxing, the falcon fight (between male and female falcon), etc. This narration also states that the art of dancing is well developed among the Thais, so too theatre. They have a classical drama all their own that combines dialogue, song and dance.⁵⁶

The white elephants of Thailand

M. Alessi in an article in February 1941 writes that Thailand is one of the countries with a great elephant population. But the curious factor is that, Thailand is called the land of the white elephant; not merely because of the presence of a species more white in colour, but because of the special cult and the royal honour that is paid to it. Alessi notes that the Thais believe that the spirit of the great Buddha resides in the white elephant. As a result, a section of the royal palace is reserved to it with guards, servants, and pages at its service!⁵⁷

Thailand – a land of pagodas

A little column in the February 1951 issue of GM is dedicated to the Pagodas of Thailand, but it carries interesting information.

⁵⁵ CASTELLINO C., *Thailandia*, 36.

⁵⁶ Cfr. *Il Muang Thai*, 4-5.

⁵⁷ Cfr. ALESSI M., *Nel Paese degli Elefanti*, in GM 19 (1941) 2, 24-25. Cesare Castellino, speaking of a new white elephant that has been found in the Siamese forest, speaks of the veneration that is paid to this special animal. According to him, it is the Buddhist belief that every great Buddhist, during the process of the reincarnations, will pass necessarily through some white animals. And the greatest of these white animals is the white elephant. So it is the common belief that the white elephant is animated by some great hero destined to become a Buddha one day. Cfr. CASTELLINO C., *Un Nuovo Elefante Bianco*, in GM 25 (1947) 1, 13.

It says, "Siam is the land of pagodas. These are of all times and all styles!"⁵⁸ And unlike Japanese Shintoist temples, the report continues, these of Thailand have enormous statues of Buddha in them, are well decorated, and contain pictures and other statues.

According to another small report of April 1953, something that impresses a visitor of Thailand first is the great number of pagodas found in the country. The article states, "Thailand is known as the land of the white elephant, the land of pagodas and of the yellow gown."⁵⁹ The report continues that there are about 18,000 temples in the whole country, and as for the number of monks, one out of every 70 inhabitants is a monk! The great number of pagodas is also due to the fact that in the earlier times these pagodas served as school, hospital, centre for recreation, sports, and other cultural activities.⁶⁰

The Thai calculation of the year

According to Mario Ruzzeddu, salesian missionary in Thailand, the Siamese follow the Chinese and the Japanese mode of calculating the years, in circles of 12 years. Each year is called after an animal like rat, ox, tiger, leopard, dragon, serpent, horse, ram, monkey, cock, dog and pig. The traditional Siamese calendar follows the Buddhist era.⁶¹

⁵⁸ *Pagode e Santuari*, in GM 29 (1951) 2, 6.

⁵⁹ *Pagode e Toga Gialla*, in GM 31 (1953) 4, 13.

⁶⁰ The great number of monks can be understood in the light of a write up in July 1959 where the author, in the context of exposing the situation of the Church in Thailand, speaks also about the over all religious context of the country. He states that, according to the tradition of the land, every boy is obliged to pass a part of his life, before marriage, as a bonze. The period can be as short as 15 days, or as long as 3 months. Cfr. *La Situazione della Chiesa in Thailandia*, in GM 37 (1959) 7, 5-6.

⁶¹ Cfr. RUZZEDDU M., *La Festa del Re*, in GM 8 (1930) 3, 63-64. In a later report in April 1955 it is noted that there are four different systems of calculating the years in use in Thailand depending on the different eras. The Christian era is followed by the Government and by all who have commerce with the outside world. The Buddhist era is the one in common use, and initiates from the death of Buddha in 543 BC. The Ratanakosin era starts from the foundation of Bangkok in 1768 AD. It is just a national memory. And the civil era called also Chulasakarat has its origin in one of the ancient kings and starts in the year 638 AD. This too is not in common use. Cfr. *Curiosità siamesi*, in GM 33 (1955) 4, 14-15.

The Thai New Year's Day celebration

The one great Siamese national festival is the new year's day celebration, locally called Songkran. GM publishes a some what detailed account of Cesare Castellino of this particular feast with photos of the various phases of the celebration. Castellino says that the Thai New Year's Day falls on the first day of the fifth lunar month of the year. The festivities last for three days.

On the last day of the year, every Thai family cleans the house, throws out all things broken and out of use. Preserving such things would bring ill fortune to the family in the coming year! In the morning of the New Year's day, the people visit the various monasteries bringing gifts to the monks. And on that day there is the purification of the Buddha and of the abbot of the monastery, which consists simply in pouring lustral water over them. Then the young people pay their homage to the old, pouring perfumed water on their hands and making some presents. An interesting feature of the feast is the procession of the young people carrying little cages with birds inside, or vases containing little fish. The birds are set free in the forest and the fish in the river. According to the Buddhist belief, these birds and fish are re-incarnations of some persons, and it is a meritorious action to give them back their liberty! A characteristic feature of the New Year's celebration is pouring water on each other, as a sign of good wishes!⁶²

The Thai marriage rite

An article in April 1953, with adequate photos of the various stages of the ceremony, describe the Thai marriage customs. The report says that the Thais have a very simple marriage ceremony. The day propitious for the marriage is fixed by the monks after due divinations. The wedding ceremony takes place in the house of the parents of the girl. Usually a group of 5 to 10 Buddhist monks are invited to recite the prayers and perform the rites. When every thing is ready, the bride and the bridegroom are seated on two cushions at the centre of the main hall in the house. A person

⁶² Cfr. CASTELLINO C., *Songkran, la Festa dell'Anno Nuovo in Thailandia*, in GM 42 (1964) 5, 37-40.

of importance, from among the guests, places a crown of flowers on the head of the couple, and bind together the right hands of the boy and girl with a simple white cord blessed by the monks. After this, the invited guests in turn approach the new couple and pour water on their joined hands, wishing them prosperity and joy. When every one has personally greeted the new couple, the bride and the bridegroom distribute rice to the monks. The newly wedded are then garlanded and this gives initiation to the festive meal for all the invited.⁶³

Vietnam

The first articles that appear in GM on this area, do not speak of Vietnam as such but of Indo-China. Vietnam comes to be named as such only after the World War II. While focus of the articles after the World War II on Vietnam is on reporting the condition of the Church under the communist regime, the articles prior to this period describe more the culture, the beliefs and traditions of the people of the region. However, there is not much write up about the region before the World War II. There is quite a bit of information about the beginnings of the Church in the region, especially in the period after the War.⁶⁴

Vietnam and its people

Through various articles entitled "Attraverso l'Impero d'Annam" GM presents in 1929, the report of G. Casetta on the

⁶³ Cfr. *Matrimonio Buddista*, in GM 31 (1953) 4, 12-13.

⁶⁴ Through various articles, GM presents the story of the evangelisation of Vietnam, starting from the early efforts towards the end of the 16th and beginning of the 17th century. It highlights the advantages that the missionaries harvested from the French colonisation of the region. It speaks of the effects of the Japanese occupation of the region during the period of the World War II. It takes up the history of the nationalist movement in Vietnam which finally culminated in the region's division and independence. CFR. CASSETTA G., *Attraverso l'Impero d'Annam*, in GM 7 (1929) 1, 3-4; *La Chiesa nel Vietnam*, in GM 26 (1948) 6, 2; *Vietnam*, in GM 26 (1948) 6, 8-9; *Il Viet-Minh*, in GM 26 (1948) 6, 11; *La Cristianità nel Vietnam*, in GM 32 (1954) 9, 2-5; *La Fuga Verso il Sud*, in GM 33 (1955) 6, 18-20; FERRARI L., *Vietnam Zona Esplosiva*, in GM 34 (1956) 2, 16-19; *La Chiesa nel Vietnam*, in GM 41 (1963) 3, 4-8; *Intenzione Missionaria di Febbraio*, in GM 45 (1967) 2, 3-4.

people of the ancient kingdom of Annam. The article speaks of the people of the region, their superstitions, their religious beliefs, their traditions, and of the story of the missions in this region. Casetta describes these people in the following way:

The Annamite people are hard working, sober, patient, attached to their village and respectful. [...] They are of short stature, have lean hands with long fingers, flat nose, small almond shaped eyes.⁶⁵

Their chief occupation is the cultivation of rice which is their staple food. Their common drink is tea.

Vietnamese superstitions

What impressed the missionary seems to have been their greatly superstitious nature. Casetta reports that the Annamites believe that certain snakes carry in their mouth certain amulet, the size of a small coin, and give it to whom they want, rendering the receiver invulnerable. The comet is considered as something that brings war. They think that the eclipses are due to some dragon trying to swallow up the moon or the sun, and do everything possible by way of making noise to chase the dragon away. The strongest of all animals for the Annamites is the dragon. It lives in the underground. In digging the foundation for the house, or in the various mines, every effort is made not to hurt the dragon that lies below. They have a reverential fear for the tiger.⁶⁶

The religious beliefs and practices of the Vietnamese

It is again G. Casetta, in one of the sections of his long article, who speaks about the ancient beliefs of the Annamites. The author reports that the religion of this people consists in the worship of the spirits and in the cult of the ancestors. The protecting spirits of the empire are the spirits of some great personages, nominated by the emperor himself. The Mandarin has similar right of choosing the protecting spirit for the region over which he has jurisdiction.

⁶⁵ CASETTA G., *Attraverso l'Impero d'Annam*, 3.'

⁶⁶ Cfr. CASETTA G., *Attraverso l'Impero d'Annam*, 3-4.

The Vietnamese hierarchy of gods

According to Casetta, the Annamites acknowledge a hierarchy among the spirits. The supreme spirit is *Thuong De*. Among the rest, the greatest spirit concerned with the living is *Ngoc Hoang* who is a kind of creator of the world. The spirit who concerns himself with the dead is *Minh Vuong*. He has the charge of the under world. The heavens are divided into three regions with three custodians: *Thang Long* (white Dragon), *Cu Dien* (rose sparrow) and *Bach Ho* (the white wolf). Besides these divine spirits, there is quite a host of others, who together form the council of the gods.

The one class of these spirits who enter more into the daily life of the Annamite is that of the *Ong Wao*, the spirits of the family hearth. The three stones of the family hearth are dedicated to this spirit. Offering to these spirits are always accompanied by alcoholic drinks, which after the religious function is drunk by the members of the family. If the grace required for from one spirit is not granted, the spirit can even be divested of divinity and their statues thrown into the river!

Ancestor worship among the Vietnamese

The second part of the Annamite religion, according to Casetta, refers to the cult of the ancestors. The Annamites believe that every person has three souls: the spiritual, the sensitive and the material. The spiritual soul resides in the brain, and at death, if the person is worthy, passes to the status of the spirits. The sensitive resides in the stomach, and at death goes to the tomb. If the person is not given a worthy burial, this soul wanders about searching for a place of rest. The material soul abides in the lower part of the stomach and after death goes to hell. If the burial is not worthy, this soul escapes and goes back to trouble the living. So the cult of the dead is the veneration of the ancestor who after his death has joined the circle of the divine spirits. In every house there is an altar to the ancestors. These people too have one day of the year dedicated to the dead ancestors - 15th day of the 7th month. According to the local belief, on this day the dead return to their original earthly homes. And so the family celebrates the return of their ancestors to their homes.

A religion without priests

The Annamites, according to Casetta, do not have a special class of priests and religious ministers. The supreme priest for the whole kingdom is the emperor himself. The mandarins are the priests for the regions entrusted to them. In the family it is the first born son who conducts the religious functions. The bonzes are not considered priests, they do not have any religious authority, and in Vietnam they are comparatively few in number.⁶⁷

The Vietnamese ceremony of naming a child

The one important religious ceremony in the life of every person in the region, of which Casetta makes mention in April 1928, is that of imposing a name on the child. It has elements of the superstitious, the curious and of the comical. It is performed when the child is just about a month old. The divinity that presides over this ceremony is the goddess *Bà Mau*. The ritual requires that the parents of the child burn 15 blouses, 15 pants and 15 caps in honour of this goddess. To trick the aged goddess who is believed to have poor eyesight, the ceremony is always conducted towards nightfall. And what actually is burnt, is the necessary number of blouses, pants and caps, but made of paper! And after this sacrifice, the name is imposed on the child. A boy receives three names: one that corresponds to the family name, the second that expresses the wishes of the parents for the child like the name of some kings, or a warrior or some artists, and third, the real name by which the child will be called. At times the child is given the name cat, cow, buffalo, etc with the belief that hearing these names the evil spirits will be duped and not come to torment the child.⁶⁸

Korea

The salesians entered Korea only in 1955. Although most of the articles on Korea appear after this date, the story of the beginning of the Church in Korea, for its uniqueness, and for the waves of persecution, appeared on the pages of GM from 1931

⁶⁷ Cfr. CASETTA G., *Attraverso l'Impero d'Annam*, in GM 7 (1929) 3, 46-47.

⁶⁸ Cfr. CASETTA , *Come gli Annamiti Impongono il Nome ai Bambini*, in GM 6 (1928) 4, 72-73.

onwards.⁶⁹ The presentation of Korea is along the same lines as that of Japan: admiration for its natural beauty, praise for its people and their inborn qualities of head and heart, and a general appreciation of its culture.

Korea: A general description of the land and the people

In April 1956 GM presents a general description of Korea: the land and its people. It notes that the Koreans call their country "the dew of the morning", while the Chinese call it "Kaosi" which means elegant, or "Tsaosmian" meaning serene. It has a physical feature similar to that of Italy.

This initial report says that ancient Korean legend proposes that these people descended from a sacred cow! An aristocratic legend, proposes that the Koreans descended instead from the sun! The ethnologists say that the Koreans are a mixture of Japanese, Manchurian and Chinese. Describing the general characteristics of the people, the report states,

In general the Korean is of a robust type, of medium stature, of a heavy build. The womenfolk bear a more delicate character, with delicate facial features, slightly bright eyes, rounded forehead, and thick hair. They are intelligent, hospitable, honest and benevolent. They are expansive to relations and friends, but reserved to the strangers.⁷⁰

⁶⁹ The mode of entry of Christianity in Korea is unique in the sense that it was not introduced into the country by some foreign missionaries. Some Korean wise lay men were the first evangelisers of their own people towards the end of the 18th century. For quite a few decades the Christian community remained, and continued its growth without priests. Even the first missionaries could not enter the country openly. Only in 1890 could foreign missionaries really establish themselves openly in Korea. Cfr. *Il Centenario della Chiesa in Corea*, in GM 9 (1931) 10, 181-182; *Corea*, in GM 28 (1950) 10, 8-9; SPIES R., *Una Storia Gloriosa*, in GM 37 (1959) 4, 18-20; *Il Regno Romito*, in GM 39 (1961) 10, 26-29. Something of the kind happened also in regard to the starting of the Salesian work in the country. Much before the arrival of the Salesians, Don Bosco had found a place in Korea. A chronicle of May 1939 notes that a parish Church was dedicated to the Saint in a little village called Eitòho, and youth associations were functioning in this parish inspired by the spirit of Don Bosco. Cfr. *Cronaca Missionaria*, in GM 16 (1939) 5, ii.

⁷⁰ *La Corea*, in GM 34 (1956) 4, 18.

The same report says that the ancient religion of the Koreans seems to have been the worship of various elements of nature like plants, water, stones and fire, which they believed were inhabited by some spirits. However, when the salesian missionaries reached the country, its official religion was Buddhism.⁷¹

Early impressions of the missionaries of the Korean people

In April 1959 GM reports the impressions of Rinaldo Facchinelli one of the first salesian missionaries to arrive from Japan to Korea. Coming from the land of the cherry in blossom, the missionary seems to have been slightly deluded. He writes,

While Japan, a land of much rain yet sufficiently hot, appeared to be a well cultivated garden, Korea gives the impression of a semi-wild desert: bare mountains of rose clay, the plains of large forested grasslands, rivers without embankments, small and difficult mountain paths, little groups of huts made of mud and covered with thatch.⁷²

It was the great poverty and misery of the Koreans that immediately impressed the first salesian missionaries. Facchinelli continues,

As one gets out of the airport, one is struck by the extreme incredible poverty of the land. [...] And even in the great city of Seoul, crowds of boys, ragged, miserable, famished, with pitiful eyes who stretch out their hands to the foreigners. [...] Then there are those wounded in war, and lepers! Yes, also lepers, horribly deformed, were wandering about in the streets and alleys of the capital.

But in spite of all this poverty and misery, the missionary immediately discovered the natural goodness of the people. He wrote,

⁷¹ This is confirmed by another report in April 1959 seemingly coming from the editors of GM. It says that the Koreans are very superstitious. They believe that the atmosphere is full of good and evil spirits. And these spirits live in the trees, rocks, rivers, mountains etc. This explains why they worship these inanimate things. Cfr. *Paese del Calmo Mattino*, in GM 37 (1959) 4, 16.

⁷² FACCHINELLI R., *Dal Giappone alla Corea*, in GM 37 (1959) 4, 4.

[...] In spite of it all, the Koreans have a noble and generous heart, habituated to renunciation and sacrifice. In opposition to the Japanese, the Korean is above all humble, simple and naturally religious.

A write up, apparently from the editors, in October 1961 gives more details about the Koreans and their customs and beliefs. It says that the Korean houses are constructed with mud walls and thatched roof. They are usually elevated about half a metre above the ground. The rich have their houses of wood, or of bricks with tile roofing. The traditional ancient houses did not have any windows in it, and there was always just one single entrance. Like in many eastern countries, no one enters the house with foot-wears on!

General characteristics of the Koreans

The same report speaking of the people as such, says that the Koreans are a Mongolian race. It is their simplicity of heart and affability of manners that endears them to the missionaries. They are also intelligent and capable of sacrificing work. They are a people who love cleanliness. The one season of great joy for them is when the work in the paddy field is over and they give themselves to dancing and merry making.⁷³

One of the last reports about Korea in GM, that of April 1966, presents the Korean people as great lovers of music and of dance. Even at home the children learn to sing and to dance. In the school, every class has music lessons. All their meetings are characterised by their traditional songs. Traditional Korean music is slow and simple. However, with the opening to the west, traditional Korean music is slowly being replaced by the western.⁷⁴

Korea – the paradise of the missionaries

But the one characteristic of the Korean people that truly impressed the Salesian missionaries, and that which GM kept repeating in a number of articles is the eagerness of these people for the Catholic faith. Facchinelli wrote in his first report,

⁷³ Cfr. *Paese del Chiaro Mattino*, in GM 39 (1961) 10, 19-23.

⁷⁴ Cfr. *La Corea Canta*, in GM 44 (1966) 4, 8-11.

Now the Koreans as if in a mass movement are assaulting the Catholic missions asking to be instructed and to receive baptism. [...] The mission center is overflowing with souls in search of the light!⁷⁵

And speaking of the fervent faith of those already baptised the same missionary wrote. "It is an impressionable scene of every day life here: churches packed to capacity, also for the Mass of week days." Speaking of the numbers of baptisms that the missionary administers, Facchinelli wrote in the same report,

While in Japan we were emotionally moved when on some feast days we could baptize three or four catechumens, in Korea instead there are hundreds and hundreds of them every time. [...] While in Japan there is an average of 17 baptism a year per priest, in Korea it is about 230 baptism per missionary!

In the same issue of GM, yet another Salesian missionary in Japan, Raimondo Spies testifies to the mass movement of the people to the Catholic faith.⁷⁶

The same impression is given by what is said in the write up on Korea in October 1961. The compiler of the article states that the Catholic faith has been diffused among the Koreans during the past 10 years in a surprising way. And the numerical growth has been accompanied by the growth in true fervour.⁷⁷

An article of Archimede Martelli, missionary in Korea, in July 1962 is precisely entitled, "Korea: the paradise of the missionaries". Besides describing the general good nature of the Koreans, and the great movement among all sections of the people towards the Catholic faith, Martelli notes the flowering of religious and priestly vocations. Concluding the report, the missionary writes:

In this climate, there are many who desire to follow the path of priesthood. Habituated to sacrifice and fervent as they are, they find nothing better than to dedicate their life to the good

⁷⁵ FACCHINELLI R., *Dal Giappone alla Corea*, in GM 37 (1959) 4, 7-8.

⁷⁶ Cfr. SPIES R., *Nuovi Tentativi e Sangue*, in GM 37 (1959) 4, 21.

⁷⁷ Cfr. *Paese del Chiaro Mattino*, 23.

of others, for the establishment of the Kingdom of Christ among their own country men. Vocations abound among those who finish their graduation. There are those who study in the universities too who choose this particular way. At times even those who return from their military service, which here in Korea last for three years, opt for the priesthood!⁷⁸

Funeral rites – cult of the dead among the Koreans

The Koreans like their neighbours, the Chinese and the Japanese have great veneration for their dead. It is common belief that the prosperity and happiness of the family depend on this cult for the dead. Though GM mentions this aspect of the Korean culture,⁷⁹ it does not give the details of the expression of this cult. Instead it dedicates some space to the funeral rites of the Koreans.

GM mentions the funeral rites of the Koreans for the first time in the general article about Korea in April 1956. The author reports that when a family member is seriously sick, he is transferred from his usual bed-room, to another room in the house, to trick the evil spirit that afflicts him. But if the sick person gives no hope of recovery, the whole family gathers around him waiting for the last moment.

According to the same article, soon after death, the corpse is covered with a sheet of cloth, and the family observes a time of sacred silence after which they burst into expressions of sorrow and grief. On the third day, the relations or sons, after a ritual bath of purification, place the body with the mattress, in a coffin of fir wood or pine wood, trees that symbolise eternal life. At the bottom of the coffin they spread a layer of wheat flour about 3 centimetres thick. On top of the body they spread a covering on which are written the necrological data of the dead person. A few dresses used by the dead when alive, are placed in the coffin. On the fourth day, the relations return to their daily work, but the head of the ceremony, places near the coffin all the objects used by the

⁷⁸ MARTELLI A., *Corea: Paradiso dei Missionari*, in GM 40 (1962) 7, 32.

⁷⁹ Cfr. *La Corea*, 19; *Paese del Chiaro Mattino*, 22-23.

dead person, also drinks and fruits. For an ordinary person, the burial takes place on the fifth day.

It is common practice that the bonzes are cremated. The ashes of saintly bonzes are preserved in urns and kept in the temples, while the ashes of the ordinary bonzes are mixed with the food that is given to the birds.⁸⁰

The narration of Edoardo McNeil, missionary in Korea, in February 1962 highlights the festive dimension of the funeral in Korea. According to the author, the Koreans consider death as a true passage to life, and so do not manifest so much sorrow in the face of it. The term used to indicate death is "*tora kasyotta*" which means "turn back" to the life from which one has come. That sense of hope is so profound that the funeral procession itself takes on a very festive mood. McNeil reports that the first time that he saw a funeral procession, he even mistook it for a wedding march! It is accompanied by singing and music. At the centre of the procession is the catafalque decorated richly, carried by 8 persons. When they reach the cemetery, the body is taken down and placed in the tomb and covered with sand. Those who accompanied the body, pay their last respects by a deep bow. And everything comes to a conclusion with a banquet at the site of the grave itself! The cemeteries are always outside the village, at a reasonable distance.⁸¹

Conclusion

All along the life of GM the editors seemed to have kept the one focus of the review constantly in mind: create interest in the missions. The reports of the Far East countries served precisely this one purpose. And in some way the vast variety of this region in all spheres of life contributed in a major way to this goal. One would think that the reports of GM created in the readers a great admiration for this region and its people, and at the same time the longing to bring these ancient people to faith in Christ.

⁸⁰ Cfr. *La Corea*, 19.

⁸¹ Cfr. McNEIL E., *Funerale in Corea*, in GM 40 (1962) 2, 38-41.

In all these countries the Church had to undergo some persecution of some type or other. And GM was not afraid to present this reality to mere school going boys and girls. The missionary presented by GM in these regions is not merely a dogooder who is the hero of the indigenous people. He is fired by his faith, and has to be ready to sacrifice everything, even his life when his apostolate demands that. This presentation certainly would have warded off the faint-hearted. But it presented a reality that was challenging and therefore truly great.

Today anthropological studies of various ethnic groups serve to supply information on the life styles of these peoples. In this respect GM was a mine of information about the peoples of the East. Coming again from persons who lived and mingled with the people, they always contained much element of truth. This rich information opened up the young boys and girls of Italy to a world so different from their own. It did serve as a cultural bridge.

CHAPTER 17

THE AFRICAN MISSIONS

Africa, the black continent, with its teeming millions became the object of great interest of the Church early in the period of the 19th century missionary expansion. The huge stretch of the Sahara desert had prevented all descent of the missionaries from the North. It was only when the sea routes were discovered that the rest of the continent opened up to “discovery” and to evangelization.

The Salesians started their African missions with their apostolate at Elisabethville in Belgian Congo in 1910.¹ Though much of the reports in GM are about this particular mission, there is evidently a tendency to speak of the “African mission” and of the “African people”. Especially when it comes to speaking about the beliefs, culture and nature of the people, one notices write-ups on the Congolese people in particular, and on the African people in general. While the majority of the information about Congo in particular comes directly from the missionaries working in the region, the general information about Africa comes from the editorial board. As the presentation of Africa and its people, though from a secondary

¹ In 1923 GM presented an over all picture of the salesian mission in Congo. But then on, there are just scattered reports about the various activities of the missionaries. Obviously the missions in the East occupied much more of the attention of the editors of the periodical. What the reports put in relief is the salesian apostolate in favour of the indigenous people of the region. Though the Salesian mission in Congo started with a formal school in favour of the children of the European immigrants, its development was in favour of the black population. Cfr. GARNERI D., *La Missione del Katanga*, in GM 1 (1923) 11, 164-166. The initial report was further enriched with notices on developments of the mission in the course of time. Cfr. *Missione Salesiane nel Cuore dell’Africa*, in GM 12 (1944) 10, 104; *I Salesiani nel Cuore dell’Africa*, in GM 33 (1955) 2, 12-13.

font, served to create a general picture of the region in the minds of the readers of the periodical, the first part of this section will examine the elements of this over-all presentation.

The general image of Africa and its people projected by GM

GM makes little mention of the story of Christianity in North Africa. What GM means by the African missions is the Christian penetration of the regions south of the great Sahara desert that is called "black Africa". In fact Zucchetti speaking of the African missions writes in 1951: "The entrance of Christianity into black Africa has been reserved to our times."² Therefore when GM uses "Africa" what is generally meant is the region south of the Sahara, and its people are the diverse original black inhabitants of this zone. GM gives quite a bit of information about the efforts made to evangelise this region. However, all these write ups appear only in the period after the World War II. These reports are always combined especially with the general presentation of the salesian missions south of Sahara.³

Primitive style of life of the Africans

The earliest report of the interior regions of Africa tend to present the primitiveness of the way of living of the people, their apparently savage ways, to highlight the urgency of missionary work in those regions. Thus in May 1924 GM reports that the French government has absolutely forbidden cannibalism in its

² ZUCCHETTI D., *Cristianesimo in Africa*, in GM 29 (1951) 1, 10. (8-10). GM does not totally ignore the early history. In fact the same article deals mainly with the early history of the Church in the continent. However, in the over all picture, very little attention is paid to it. The whole region had become Muslim, and offered little scope for direct evangelisation. Cfr. ZUCCHETTI D., *Le Missioni in Africa*, in GM 32 (1954) 2, 2-5; *La Chiesa in Africa*, in GM 35 (1957) 10, 4.

³ For notices about the initiation of the Christian missions south of Sahara cfr. *Il Congo Belga*, in GM 30 (1952) 11, 7; ZUCCHETTI D., *La Storia del Congo*, in GM 35 (1957) 4, 4-5; *La Chiesa in Africa*, in GM 35 (1957) 10, 4; *La Via Crucis del Missionario in Africa*, in GM 35 (1957) 10, 9. Notices about the beginnings of the missions in other countries have not been grouped together here as they will be referred to when dealing with the individual countries.

colonies in Africa, obviously alluding to its existence. The editor mentions that the savage practice simply seems to have arisen out of a need for food in the interior forest regions. But at times also religious ceremonies were connected with human sacrifice. Among certain tribes this practice seems to have persisted for a long time.⁴

General characteristics of the African people

Only after World War II does GM present notices on the general character of the African people. Already in May 1944, GM speaks of the sensitiveness of the Black people to love and affection. A missionary writes,

The Negroes are very sensitive to the way in which they are treated. They feel degraded by the hard and authoritarian ways of the protestant ministers and government functionaries. These do not treat them well, and take care not to enter the hotels frequented by the black people. Seeing that we, instead, treat them well, enter their little huts and take care of them, they take a liking for us and do all that we ask them to do.⁵

They are basically a simple people. And the only path to their heart is that of the missionary: mixing with them, treating them as equals.

It appears that one of the great difficulties that the missionaries met with in their apostolate with the people of Africa was the easy going nature of the people. They have a natural dislike for work, and do the work that is just necessary to obtain the food needed for the day. It is instinct that rules much of their action. There is little tendency to hard work or to sacrifice. The only reason for them to live, is to satisfy their natural instincts. They do not arrive at anything but the material and the pleasurable. But all these do not mean that they are totally incapable of any effort, of any sacrifice. In activities that please them, like hunting, fishing and dancing, they do spend a lot of time and energy. Their easy going nature makes them live one day at a time with little thought for tomorrow! Their love for

⁴ Cfr. *L'Antropofagia nel Centro dell'Africa*, in GM 2 (1924) 5, 75.

⁵ Bozzi E., *La Pace nel Pensiero di Un Negro*, in GM 22 (1944) 5, 47.

individual freedom, and dislike for anything that seems to curtail this unlimited freedom is yet another aspect of their character. This love for freedom makes them also incapable of being constant and persevering at any work. Since even reflection is something that demands effort, they prefer just to remain in their incredulity, and this certainly makes the work of the missionary more difficult and less productive.

The missionaries do not attribute malice to the easy going spirit of the black people. They understand it as part of their character that is very childlike. And this childlike nature is manifested also in their inborn love for pictures, for the colourful, for theatre! They hardly get tired of ceremonies, even when they are long. They can pass hours on end in singing and listening to stories. They easily tend to accept the truth without discussion. They are very sensitive to the way that they are treated. Where they meet with love, they respond with love. And a great saving feature in their character is their sense of bounty and brotherhood, and their capacity to share, even in spite of their great poverty. Their great attachment to their mothers could in some way be seen as yet another dimension of their simple childlike nature.⁶

The lethargic nature of the people takes nothing away from the fact that Africa is the second largest missionary field, the first being Asia. While the Muslim population of North Africa resists all missionary work, and is in turn a threat to all efforts at Christianisation, the Black population of interior Africa, is mostly animist and open to evangelisation. Africa is a continent of great hopes for the Church.⁷

Following the indications of *Fidei Donum* of Pius XII, GM makes a strong appeal in favour of Africa in 1957. The editors present the continent in turmoil, a people who aspire to a civilised life. Various countries tend to throw off whatever smacks of the era of colonisation. There is a legitimate struggle for independence

⁶ Cfr. ZUCCHETTI D., *Questi Sono i Negri*, in GM 29 (1951) 1, 4-6.

⁷ Cfr. *Africa Nera*, in GM 33 (1955) 10, 4-5.

all over. The dangers of communism, Islam and Protestantism threaten the continent.⁸

The common picturing of the African people in their poverty and misery, could easily give the young an impression that this poverty was caused by the continent's lack of natural resources. To ward off such misconception GM notes that the poverty of the people is not due to the lack of natural resource. Africa is a continent that has been endowed with immense natural resources, and especially rich in mineral resources, but with a population that is extremely poor. In spite of the fact that 98% of the diamonds, 55% of the gold, 22 % of the copper and 60% of the palm oil of the world comes from this continent, the indigenous people of the continent live in abject poverty. Therefore the solution to Africa's poverty lies some where else.⁹

Africa – a land of superstitions

One of the first general presentations of Africa carries the heading "In the land of superstitions". Deep rooted ignorance and lack of education of the people make them subject to all types of superstitions. There is a general belief that the whole universe is full of evil spirits whose main concern is to torment poor humanity. The Africans, according to GM, easily tend to attribute the evil they suffer to the evil intention of some one else. In the absence of other means of verifying the innocence of the accused, they have recourse to superstitious methods. So, if one is accused of having poisoned the food of some one else, he is forced to eat the whole supply of food kept in the house of the accuser. And in all disputes, the last word belongs to the sorcerer, whom they believe with so much ease.¹⁰

Obstacles to the evangelisation of Africa

One of the great difficulties that the missionaries met in the evangelisation of Africa, was the family structure in the primitive societies. Polygamy was a common practice among most African

⁸ Cfr. *L'Africa Chiamata*, in GM 35 (1957) 10, 3.

⁹ Cfr. *L'Africa*, in GM 37 (1959) 3, 5.

¹⁰ Cfr. *Nel Paese della Superstizione*, in GM 4 (1926) 9, 173-174.

people. The richer a man was, the more wives he could maintain. In fact what was required from a boy to obtain a girl in marriage was the payment of a required amount of money and cattle to the father of the girl. Therefore, the number of wives that a person had also pointed to his financial and social status! Because of the payments involved, the parents finally chose the husbands for their daughters, without even consulting them. And again since it was always a question of money, the husbands had the right to dismiss their wives even for very flimsy reasons.

This over emphasis on the financial aspect had its repercussions on other aspects of family living. As deformed children would be just a burden on the family, it was common custom to get rid of them soon after birth. Since twins were considered to bring ill fortune, they too were put to death at birth, with little qualms of conscience.¹¹

Music and dance in the African culture

In the context of requesting financial assistance for procuring musical instruments for the seminary at Kafubu, Gerardo Van Asperdt speaks of the great love that the black people have for music and for dance. When they are still little children, they participate in dance while being carried by their mothers! The rhythm of the drum enters into them from early infancy! Dancing and singing are the great pastimes of the black people. Certainly in their own ambience, music and dance run the risk of being instruments of evil. But that danger only evidences the greater need to educate especially the young to use it as a means for a greater good.¹²

The African mission of Congo

GM speaks of the general characteristics of the Congolese people, some aspects of their primitive beliefs and culture in the context of presenting the missionary apostolate among them. These

¹¹ Cfr. *La Famiglia in Africa*, in GM 38 (1960) 3, 3; *Me Li Hai Salvati Tu*, in GM 38 (1960) 3, 9-11.

¹² Cfr. VAN ASPERDT G., *Musica per il Congo*, in GM 40 (1962) 5, 42-45.

reports come from missionaries working in the region. However they are very scanty.

The primitive nature of the Congolese society

A letter of an FMA in 1930 December, speak of the difficulty of the climate of the place, and the destruction brought about by white ants. In the rainy season, two unwelcome guests are the mosquitoes and the snakes. This letter also speaks of the addiction of the Congolese to tobacco and to alcoholic drinks. But even in this they are social minded. The pipe is passed from one person to another. And drinking is a social act. Life is absolutely primitive. Their fickle nature requires much follow up and encouragement from the part of the missionaries. But the vast majority take to the faith with much enthusiasm.¹³

One of the first reports in GM about the customs of the Congolese people picture them as a very primitive group. "In general, the blacks are very poor and their life is very primitive and frugal." so writes Maria Teresa Papa, the provincial Superior of the FMAs in Belgium. Their huts, the furnishings of these huts, and the utensils they use speak of their primitive type of life. Even for their food they depend largely on the products of the forest. And one of their favourite dishes is the locust.

Like everything else, the way of dressing of these people is very simple. The men are scantily dressed, while the women wear a type of a gown that covers them from head to foot. They love to tattoo their faces and wear necklaces. The women folk even wear a nose ring. And all have a passion for wearing shoes.

Even the organisation of the family reflects their primitive nature. The father exercises authority over the sons, while the mother, over the daughters. The boys are practically left to fend for themselves once they reach the age of 12 or 13; the girls are given a better deal. Both the sons and the daughters nourish a great love for the mother. Strangely, the father never takes his meals

¹³ Cfr. *Vita di Missione*, in GM 8 (1930) 12, 256-258.

in his own house, but he is served in another house, used in common by the fathers of the families. Generally only the mother and the little children eat in their own families. Even the grown up children eat some where else.

Their primitiveness makes them wonder at the various instruments used by the missionaries. Even a thing like a doll becomes a thing of great attraction to them. The missionary is taken aback by their casual and apparently ungrateful attitude in front of the good done to them.¹⁴

In this primitive society, a personage greatly feared and who wields great authority over the simple people and with whom the missionary is in constant conflict, is the notorious sorcerer. When some parents decide to do away with some child, it is the sorcerer who takes it to the forest and leaves it there as prey to the wild beasts. Even though they may appear to be happy with the gifts that the missionaries offer, their conversion is obviously difficult.¹⁵

In 1947 an FMA, missionary in Congo, writes about the various aspects of the mission. The stress is again on the primitiveness of life of the black people. The region is undeveloped, with no roads and highways. The people live in small villages. Their huts are normally circular in shape with a diameter of about three or four metres. The thatched roofing almost touches the ground rendering the interior very dark. There is practically nothing inside the house by way of furnishing. The chief concern of the people is to get the food for the day.

GM's description of the character of the Congolese

Describing the character of the black children the same FMA writes: "In general these black children are docile, good, affectionate; they sing with particular sweetness the sacred hymns, are intelligent and learn their catechism quickly. [...] They are a happy and smart group. But they have a fickle character."¹⁶

¹⁴ Cfr. PAPA M.T., *Usi e Costumi dei Neri*, in GM 13 (1935) 10, 188-189.

¹⁵ Cfr. *Kaposa*, in GM 16 (1938) 4, 55.

¹⁶ *I Miei Congolesi*, in GM 24 (1946) 6, 67.

In a report of an FMA about the customs of the Congolese people in January 1951, the sister notes that while the children have a great love for their mothers, it is Congolese custom to turn one's back on the mother in law, and not to look her in the face. This letter too speaks of the apparent ungrateful nature of the people. The FMA writes, "Poor Congolese, they do not know how to distinguish between the right of giving and that of receiving; and so as not to be taken for a ride, they think it better to hold on always to their right of receiving!"¹⁷

One of the difficulties enumerated by the missionaries, for which the Congolese people are slow to accept the faith, even if they have a great desire to, is their apparent aversion for commandments and rules, and their fear for the "always". It is something that makes them retrace their steps. They like the free life, where their choice is not bound to any thing. And this ambience of individual freedom characterises even their family life. After a certain age the parents do not exercise any coercive authority over the children.

Because of their hard, primitive life, where the primary concern is to procure daily food, they do not have much inclination to aesthetics and even to natural beauty. They are a pragmatic people. But, in spite of their primitiveness, they demonstrate a heart that is sensitive and in their simplicity they live their faith with conviction in their day to day life.¹⁸

The superstitious nature of the Congolese

In 1955 February GM publishes quite a long article about the superstitions of the Congolese people written by an FMA. The sister introduces the article in this way, "The life of the black people turns around a texture of superstitions of all types."¹⁹ According to this report, some of their superstitions are harmless while others are harmful. Thus the belief that if a child is born

¹⁷ *Usanze Congolesi*, in GM 29 (1951) 1, 7.

¹⁸ Cfr. *Note di Vita Congolese*, in GM 30 (1952) 11, 10-11.

¹⁹ *Dal Congo Belga - Superstizioni Africane*, in GM 33 (1955) 2, 14.

already with some small teeth, it brings misfortune to the whole village, is the cause of death of hundreds of innocent children. Similarly they believe that if at the time of the sprouting of the teeth, the first ones to sprout are the top molars, the child needs to be killed as it brings misfortune to the village. In their primitive and superstitious nature, death is almost always considered as something caused by some enemy. They believe in the power of spells and magic. But because of it, often innocent people are made to suffer. A motive of fear for the Congolese is the world of evil spirits who inflict various types of misfortunes on them. One way of placating these evil spirits is constructing some little huts and in them make some offering of flour of manioc and some coins. These superstitions are so ingrained in the life of the people that the missionary has an arduous task trying to divest them of it all.

The various ethnic groups of Congo

Only as late as 1957 does GM offer some precise information about the various ethnic groups that inhabit Congo. Besides a good portion of European population, there are three distinct indigenous groups: the Bantus, the pigmies and the Sudanese. The Bantus are the more numerous group and are found every where except in the north-east which is practically entirely occupied by the Sudanese. The Pigmies instead live in small groups in the interior forested regions.²⁰

GM presents a write up about the Pigmies in October 1957. It describes the race in these terms, "They are marked by distinct ethnic characteristics and particularly by their shortness of stature, by their dark coloured skin, their hairy body and their monstrous appearance."²¹ Describing their religious beliefs, the same article reports that the pigmies of Congo call the supreme being "*Mungu*". To *Mungu* belongs everything, he sees everything and hears everything. Sacrifices are offered to him. Returning from hunting, they throw in the forest a part of the heart of the prey for *Mungu*.

²⁰ Cfr. *Congo Belga*, in GM 35 (1957) 4, 3.

²¹ *I Pigmei*, in GM 35 (1957) 10, 14.

So too the first fruits are burnt in the fire for *Mungu*. These Pigmies have an idea of a life after death. They believe that the good go to live with God and the evil are thrown into the fire under the ground. The sense of right and wrong seems to be very high among them. They attribute great efficacy to amulets, magic etc. Unlike the rest of the population, they have no fear for the dead.

Ethiopia

The Salesians started their presence in Ethiopia only in 1976. Articles on the country begin to appear in GM from 1935. In fact the majority of the write ups appear within 1935 and 1936. And after 1936 GM remains almost silent about the region till after the World War II. This early and frequent appearance of notices about Ethiopia apparently is motivated by the Italian colonisation of the country, and some kind of an imposition from the then Italian government to glorify the "Italian empire". GM does not enter into any political discussion of the situation, instead concentrates on the history of the Church in the region,²² on certain aspects of the lives of the people, and some of their practices. As noted earlier it even offers a mini Ethiopian-Italian dictionary!

The Ethiopians and their customs

Obviously the article "Usances and Customs of the Ethiopians" of September 1936 is written to highlight the

²² GM traces the history of the Church in Ethiopia, right from its first contact with the faith through the two slaves Frumentius and Edesius, the establishment of a vibrant community, its decisive break from the Church of Rome, the various missionary efforts during the various centuries, and to the actual situation of the Catholic missions in the country. Cfr. *Storia dell'Abissinia*, in GM 13 (1935) 11, 217; 13 (1935) 12, 235; *Il Cristianesimo in Abissinia*, in GM 14 (1936) 1, 16; Di SAN GRADO A., *Un Abissino alla Gloria degli Altari*, in GM 14 (1936) 2, 24-25; *Le Attuali Missioni Cattoliche in Abissinia*, in GM 14 (1936) 3, 38. In the period after the World War II, when GM tends to present various aspects of single missionary regions together in single issue, there is a comprehensive summary of the history of the Church in Ethiopia in September 1956. Cfr. *Il Cristianesimo in Etiopia*, in GM 32 (1956) 9, 6-7; The story is taken up again in January 1967, but with a projection of the actual difficulties that missionary activity encounters in modern Ethiopia both in the social and religious fields. Cfr. PERINETTI F., *La Terra del Negus*, in GM 45 (1967) 1, 9-11.

advantages that the Italian occupation has brought to the Ethiopians, and to put in contrast the primitive ways existent prior to it.

Prior to the Italian occupation, there was little care for the children. Once they were capable of walking about, they were left on their own. Education was limited to very few, and was imparted by some Coptic priest, and all that he taught was to read some religious books and some sacred hymns. This primitiveness marked their family life and their social set up as well. Each village had a council of the fathers of the families, headed by a sort of village head man. Everything was decided by this body. And every one blindly obeyed the decisions made by these elders.

Their food was very simple, the preferred dish being uncooked food. Both men and women dressed very simple. Their occupation was the rearing of cattle and agriculture, but using methods very primitive, and producing just what was necessary to maintain the family. The merchants among them exploited the ignorant villagers. In conclusion the article states: "In general, the Ethiopians were averse to all that which could elevate them. Always diffident by nature, they attached themselves to nothing, not even to their own mother land."²³

Funeral Rites of the Ethiopians

In continuation with the notices about the customs and practices of the people of Ethiopia, GM in November 1936 published an article on the funeral rites of the Abissinians. Among them, when the dying person was really on the verge of breathing his last, the relations came out of the house with loud shouts, and the village joined in this shouting and lamenting. In a short time people gathered before the house of the dead person lamenting and crying. The women folk slowly started a slow dance, singing the praises of the dead person. In the mean time messengers were sent out to the relations near and far to bring the sad news. The dead body was covered and tightly tied in the sheet and placed on the bed on which the person

²³ *Usi e Costumi Etiopici*, in GM 14 (1936) 9, 142-144.

died. The Coptic priests arrived to recite psalms and other prayers. After that, four persons carried the body on the bed on which the body was kept to the church and then to the cemetery. The people followed in procession. When they reached the church, the bed was lowered and the men formed a circle around it. The women in the mean time started a kind of dance again outside the church. After the prayers in the church, the body was carried to the cemetery which was always near the church. Cries, lamentations and dancing became all the more when the body was lowered into the grave. The family kept a mourning period of 15 days when they did not even wash themselves or change their clothes. In this time the fellow-villagers visited the family and brought what it needed by way of food etc. On the first anniversary, they celebrated the rites in the church in the morning, and later in the day, offered a solemn meal to all the relations and friends, thus closing the period of mourning.²⁴

Some aspects of the Ethiopian character

In February 1937 GM published again another article on the customs of the Ethiopians, taking much of the matter from an article published in «Vie d'Italia» of July 1936. This publication notes that the Ethiopian is by instinct a warrior and a hunter. The virtue most admired in any person, especially in a man, is that of courage. For them it is a question of great honour to kill one's enemy in battle or to kill a lion. They marry at an early age. The women do not work in the fields because of the superstition that such a thing would render the land sterile.

In the family, there is great love for children and respect for the aged. They have a great sense of hospitality. Their sense of compassion induces them to assist the sick, to help the poor and the disabled. They are noted for the great veneration they have for the dead.²⁵

²⁴ Cfr. *Curiosi Riti Funebri tra i Selvaggi*, in GM 14 (1936) 11, 174-175.

²⁵ Cfr. *Usi e Costumi Vigenti nell'Impero Italiano*, in GM 15 (1937) 2, 22-23.

Rwanda

Although the Salesians arrived in Rwanda only in 1953, articles on the country started appearing from 1949 onwards. There is very little mention about how the Salesian work started in this country. In February 1954 GM publishes the photo of Fr. Frans Lehaen SDB with the king of Rwanda, Carlo Rudahigwa, and notes that after much insistence on the part of the king, the Salesians have opened a technical school at Kabgayi, the capital of Rwanda. In May 1961, among other notices about the country, GM notes that the Salesians have two institutions in Rwanda: the professional school at Kigali and a seminary at Rwesero.²⁶

Considering the fact that the Salesian presence was started in Rwanda only in 1953, one would say that GM dedicated sufficient space to information about the country and its people. True to its missionary nature, much of the information is related to the Church, its initiation and its present status.²⁷

Rwanda – a vast oasis in the African desert

In July 1949 GM publishes a comprehensive report on Rwanda, written by Frans Lehaen, the Provincial Superior of Belgium. The article is written from Elisabethville in May 1949. Lehaen gives a good description of Rwanda, its land, its people, the Church in this country and the missionary prospects in the region. The author takes pains to picture the natural setting of the country, bordered in the north by a series of volcanoes, some of them active, in the east by the river Kagera, in the south by the

²⁶ Cfr. *A Kabgayi*, in GM 32 (1954) 2, 9; *Chiesa – Ruanda*, in GM 39 (1961) 6, 29.

²⁷ In its narration of the history of the Church in Rwanda, GM highlights the role of king Mutara III Rubahigwa in the spread of the faith in this country. His father had opposed the spread of the faith. But Mutara, as a young man, was in contact with the missionaries and was a catechumen in secret. For notices about the initiation of the Church in Rwanda and for its present status cfr. LEHAEN F., *Nel Paese dei Giganti*, in GM 27 (1949) 7, 8-9,11; *Ruanda: Paese dei Giganti*, in GM 30 (1952) 11, 12-13; *Chiesa – Ruanda*, 27-29.

river Akanyuru which separates it from Burundi and in the west by the lake Kivu. It is a land that does not have winter. It is an area with an average altitude of 500 – 3000 metres above sea level. There is an almost invariable temperature of about 18°, and the plants are ever green. There are four seasons, based on the intensity of the rainfall: the short period of dry weather in the full month of January, the great season of heavy rains from February to June, the long season of dry weather from the end of June to the end of September, and the short rainy season from October to January. In earlier times Rwanda was a forested region, ideal habitat for various types of wild animals. The national park of Kagera with its rich collection of wild animals, is world famous. Agriculture and pasturing of cattle are the chief occupations of the people.²⁸

Rwandan population and its occupation

This nation is relatively more populated than the others in Africa. There are three groups of indigenous people: Batwa, Bahutu and Batutsi. The Batwas belong to the family of the pigmies. They were the first occupants of the region. They are 1.42 metres to 1.47 metres tall. They are by nature people of the forest, nomads, who live on hunting and fishing. The Bahutu form 80% of the population. They are similar to the black population of Congo. They are mainly farmers. They are a peace-loving people. The Batutsi are true giants, the average height being 1.79 metres! Their chief occupation is pasturing of cattle. They constitute the aristocracy and nobility of Rwanda.²⁹

Deep-rooted division in the Rwandan society

The notices found in GM in May 1961 add little details to the general picture presented by Lehaen. These reports highlight the social upheaval that was menacing the Rwandan society during the period. The Batwas were despised by the other two groups even from the earliest times. The Bahutus who formed the majority of the population, did not have much political power. The Batutsis

²⁸ Cfr. LEHAEN F., *Nel Paese dei Giganti*, 8-9, 11.

²⁹ Cfr. LEHAEN F., *Nel Paese dei Giganti*, 8-9, 11.

who had so far dominated the other two groups in a feudal way, were being driven out from various regions. The problem that confronted the Church was precisely this social upheaval.³⁰

Madagascar

Salesian presence in Madagascar started only in 1981. Yet reports about beautiful island, its history and its people occupied much space in the 1959 issues of GM. Obviously all the information comes from the editorial board. Some of the reports are shown as written by Zucchetti, while others are of anonymous authorship. The emphasis is on the history of the missions in the island country.³¹

Madagascar – the rose island

From the scattered reports, coming from the editorial board of GM, one could form the following general picture of Madagascar and its people.

It is called the “rose island” because of the great presence of the element of stone in its soil. It has a hot and rainy climate, ideal for the cultivation of rice. The chief occupations of the people are cattle rearing and agriculture. Methods of cultivation used are very primitive. The language is Malagasy, a mixture of Asiatic, African and Oceanic languages.

The Madagascans and their general character

The population of Madagascar is divided into various tribal groups: Hova or Merina, Betsileo, Betsimisaraka, Tanala, Sakalava,

³⁰ Cfr. *Terra – Ruanda*, in GM 39 (1961) 6, 20; *Popolo – Ruanda*, in GM 39 (1961) 6, 22-26; *Chiesa – Ruanda*, 27-29.

³¹ GM gives a brief sketch of the history of Madagascar from its discovery by the Portuguese Diego Diaz in 1500 up to its becoming a republic in 1958. The evangelising work of the missionaries was established on a permanent basis only from the year 1861, although there were efforts at christianising the island by earlier groups of missionaries. However, these earlier groups left the island after some period, apparently due to the lack of progress in the work. Cfr. *Madagascar*, in GM 33 (1955) 10, 6-7; ZUCCHETTI D., *Storia Malgascia*, in GM 37 (1959) 11, 8-11; *Le Missioni nel Madagascar*, in GM 37 (1959) 11, 16.

Tsimihety, Antaisaka, Antandroy, Bara etc. The Hova is intelligent, enterprising, but an introvert. The other tribals are expansive, simple, happy, always ready to enter into friendship with the foreigners, and great lovers of music and dance.

The Madagascans, on the whole, are primitive but not savage; they have great respect for the aged and great love for children: Their characteristic feature seems to be their love for a peaceful life!

Religious beliefs and practices of the Madagascans

The pagan Madagascans are animists, with a great cult for the ancestors. They have some vague ideas of a creator god. They have a host of other gods who according to local belief, live in the forests and in the rivers. Their religion has neither temples nor priests. The king, the heads of the tribes, and the fathers of the families are the intermediaries between the numerous gods and the people. Marriage is left to the free choice of the partners. All the tribal groups bury the dead, except for the Baras who expose the dead body till it rots away. The Merinas and the Sihanakas bury the dead near to their homes or along the road as they have no fear for the dead. All the other groups bury them away in forest.

The Madagascans do not have sir-names. The Christians have usually two names: one that they receive at Baptism, usually the name of some saint, and the other which they call the Madagascan name. These latter names have always some meaning.³²

Conclusion

It is in coming in contact with a people that one really comes to know them. Therefore, the personal experiences of the missionaries have great value. Barring certain undue generalizations the reports of GM speak much about customs and more about

³² Cfr. *Madagascar*, 6-7; ZUCCHETTI D., *L'Isola Rossa*, in GM 37 (1959) 11, 4-7; ZUCCHETTI D., *Storia Malgascia*, 8-11; *Il Riso*, in GM 37 (1959) 11, 20; *I Nomi Malgasci*, in GM 37 (1959) 11, 22.

certain values of the people that the missionaries met. They speak well of the intuition of the missionaries into the nature of the people. The missionaries were sensitive to what they found good and bad in the people they served.

In evaluating the various reports, it is easy to lose sight of the purpose of the periodical: to create enthusiasm for the missions, to sow the seeds of missionary vocation and to sustain them, to create a missionary culture in the various institutions for the young. The temptation is to judge these reports with the present measures. This would certainly be anachronistic! The reports had a purpose, and if they served that purpose in that fixed period of time they served their purpose. There is a constant development of perspectives on different peoples and their cultures. While respecting the progressive changes, the past needs to be valued in its own context.

Compassion is the one characteristic of a missionary. One cannot deny that this characteristic marks everything that is found in GM. One cannot deny occasional "lord it over" mentality. But that is rare! And even in those rare cases, it is a general tone of compassion for the suffering people that marks the reports of GM. The evil practices are not the creations of the present generations. They are often the sufferers! They are in some way condemned to perpetuate a social system which they themselves in some way know are destructive. And therefore, they need the help of people from outside their cultures to enlighten them and to walk with them in the process of liberation: people capable of understanding and suffering with them.

CONCLUSION

Mission is a matter of faith. When the Vatican Council II proclaimed that the Church was missionary by its very nature (cfr. AG 2), it was pointing to this basic constituent of Christian faith. After their personal experience of the Risen Lord, the two disciples of Emmaus had to rush back to Jerusalem to announce the glad tidings to the others. At the filling with the Holy Spirit, the apostles just could not but proclaim the Good News. It is a matter of an inner necessity. "Necessity is laid on me" (1Cor 11:16).

Today there is so much debate still on "why the missions?" So much is offered by way of an answer to a surely vital question like this, some times convincing, at other times not so convincing. The answer that GM gave for a span of over 45 years is "Mission is fundamentally a matter of faith". And it understood faith simply as a passion for Jesus and His mission! It was not merely enlisting oneself in one group or other, and much less the fulfilment of a set of rules which seemed to be better than others. It was a question of entering into a deep relationship with Jesus and consequently making one's own the concerns of this Master, the way that the apostles did it, the way that St. Paul and thousands of valiant missionaries did it after him.

The missionary then is basically a Christian who has in some way tasted the core of what it means to be a believer, has found joy in it, and loves that reality with passion. The missionary does not ask "why the missions?" instead, driven by that inner necessity, the question that he constantly confronts and lives is "how the mission?" He has already found the answers to the "why" in that inner motivating dynamism of his faith, and all his concern now becomes the "how".

The image of the missionary projected by the pages of GM is that of a person deeply and passionately in love with Jesus and

of one who is deeply moved by the value of the saving death of Jesus on the Cross. As projected by GM there is no denying the truth that Jesus is the primary motivation of all and of everything that the missionary lives. In front of a personal and profound appropriation of the Cross and Resurrection of Jesus the honest believer cannot but be a missionary. In that case the believer begins to be a missionary, not when he leaves his homeland and sets out to a distant land, but at the moment of an inner awareness of what it means to be a follower of Jesus.

The question that the missionary confronts is not "will a person be saved or not without believing in Christ?" The answer to this question cannot be considered as the pivotal point of missionary activity. It has to be admitted that for the period in which GM was published the official teaching of the Church on this issue augmented missionary enthusiasm in some way. But as presented by GM this was just not the primary motive. Moreover, if others are lost or not, why should one be so bothered as to sacrifice everything precious in the world and go to distant lands ready even to give one's life just to preach salvation? The colonizers had much to gain: the wealth of the new found regions. But the missionary, what did he really have to gain? Nothing! If so, the answer to the question regarding the inner motivation of the missionary, as wonderfully presented by GM lies in that primary passion for Jesus Christ, and depending on this, the secondary passion for salvation of souls.

The *Da mihi animas* of Don Bosco too cannot be interpreted and properly understood just by starting from a mere exegesis of the words. One would have to start an understanding of the phrase beginning from a delving into the motives for such a passion for souls. Otherwise Don Bosco too would be none other than a greedy colonizer, now greedy for souls, who knows for what purpose! Don Bosco and so too the Salesian missionary, and for that matter any missionary, has found the source of that passion for souls in the passion of the Son of Man.

The second love of the missionary is an all embracing love for mankind. The source of it is again Christ himself and the

missionary's passion for Christ. It is a love that seeks to become like the Master in his relationship with humankind. Materially speaking, he gains nothing from his dedication to the people of the missions. These people are not his people, who speak his language, have his mode of thinking and acting. Often there is little that is attractive about these people! Often enough what the people of the missions have to offer to the missionary is their poverty, their misery, their ignorance, their superstitions and their backwardness. Yet, the missionary simply loves these people with a love that is "pastoral": the love of the good Shepherd who lives for the sheep, and gives his life for his sheep! He makes the land of his mission his second fatherland, its people his people, their customs and traditions his own. Often, paradoxically, it is he the non-local who loves the indigenous people even more than their own family members, and who sacrifices everything for their welfare. It is the good of the people entrusted to him that he seeks in everything and above everything. The risks he accepts, the dangers he faces, the sacrifices he makes are all aimed at one goal: the all round welfare of the people he serves. A person without such "pastoral charity" in his heart should not launch out into the missions. And if for some reason he does launch out, he is destined to failure, he will bring immense harm on the people, and he will be the cause of failure of the mission! Mission is not a place of escape from personal and particularly relational problems. Mission needs men who are already tried and have passed the test, and like Don Bosco are capable of loving with a true pastoral heart. A person incapable of loving will never make a missionary!

The missionary's love for humankind is not just the philanthropic love of a "do-gooder". It is "pastoral charity" drawn by the heart of Christ. He is not in the mission field just to do some good, merely for the purpose of educating the young, not even only for the sake of liberating and developing society. He is involved in all these activities. In fact pastoral charity finds expression precisely in all these activities. However, just involvement in these activities does not make of a person a "missionary". It is more a question of a vision, a mentality, a

motivation and a definite direction that belongs intrinsically to the very physique of the missionary. Missionary action motivated simply by the desire to do some good could be compared to the burning of a huge heap of straw! It is all over within a few minutes, and then it dies off leaving just a handful of ashes.

In the Salesian missionary vision, the missionary is one who is deeply marked by a profound love for the Church. He receives the missionary mandate from the Church, he is a man of the Church in all he does. He certainly not only desires but also works to bring all into the Church. He is not apologetic when it comes to calling people to acceptance of discipleship in the Catholic Church. He knows he is there for that, and rejoices when he can bring even a single person to the Church. He values the Church not merely in its hierarchical structure, but more as a community founded and desired by Christ, a community that has found life in the saving passion, death and resurrection of Jesus, and exists now to live and extend this same divine reality to all humankind: a true sacrament of salvation to the world (cfr. LG 1). Everything that is related to the Church forms holy ground for the Salesian missionary. He truly lives the passion of Don Bosco for the Church. This does not make him belligerent. However, he does not compromise when it comes to matters which he believes and knows for certain are founded solidly on divine revelation and the magisterial teaching of the Church. He is capable of seeing good in all religions, but he surely longs to realize the prayer of the divine Master, "that they may all be one" (Jn 17:21).

In the Salesian vision, the missionary is a passionate person. He is passionate in his acceptance of the call, passionate in his leaving everything behind to heed the demands of this call, and passionate too in his dedication to all that he deems as part of his saving activity. Most of the young people leaving the shores of Europe for distant mission lands like South America, the Far East and for Africa, knew that they were leaving whatever they could call their own, and that too once and for all! Little did they hope to see again their homelands, their parents, their near and dear ones. That was the radicality of that passion! Liberated from all

other human bonds, they in the missions bound themselves for ever to their country of adoption, and to the people they came to serve. And what dedication? One can only look in admiration at the true missionary spirit found in the great pioneers whom the Congregation has given to the Church and to the world! They displayed a Bosconian passion in their commitment to their mission!

In "mission" the Salesian congregation found a reality that helped the beneficiaries in the distant lands, and along with them benefited also the sent and the sender. Besides the incalculable spiritual good brought about by the missionaries, they were real civilizers of the nations: they established schools, colleges, technical schools; built hospitals and made medical facilities available to the poorest of the poor; built houses, furthered the cause of development in all fields in these distant lands and laid the foundations for growth and progress in different sectors of life. The missionaries of all times and all climes were true servants of humankind.

Mission also helped the missionary. The hard realities of the life of the missionary formed the heroes in the vast majority of them. True, some succumbed and left. But this group formed a most negligible minority. On the contrary, the true missionary made use of these realities to bring out what was best in him, and in the process of it truly got to the highest rings in the ladder of holiness. In a "normal" Christian community, one passes for good and satisfactory just being mediocre and fulfilling the rules which often demand just the minimum! Ease and comfort envelope the life of any one in these "comfortable" communities. Not so the life in the missions. The very demands of the day to day life of the missionary require a high level of Christian discipleship. When one is set ablaze with the zeal for the "salvation of souls" there is little space for ease and comfort. The call of the mission is basically addressed to the more generous souls, and essentially requires greater sense of dedication, and the generous souls are those who find in the missions a true path to that radical following of Christ which marks the saints. The life of the missionary, lived out

enthusiastically and with commitment, is certainly a way of living life in its fullness! And that is sanctity!

Missions benefits the sender too. Here, the sender is not just an indifferent agency that simply fulfills the obligation of sending out new personnel into the missions. The sender is an essential part of the missions, and has the missions very much at heart. In the case of the present study, the sender is the Salesian Congregation. And the missions helped in a great way this young congregation, particularly through the missionary animation of the young of its various institutions. It enthused these youngsters, and they in some way flocked in great numbers to join the ranks of the frontier missionaries. Evidently the missionary fervour of the years between 1920 and 1960 contributed greatly to the prodigious growth of the Congregation. The Congregation experienced growth both at home in the European countries, and in the mission lands. It was not a mere swelling up of numbers! Reading the scanty reports available in the pages of GM about the life and spirit of the various institutions, one would get an impression that the new comers into the Congregation during this period came with a spirit marked with great generosity, heroism, and added not merely to the numerical growth of the Congregation, but also to its growth in holiness of life.

The methodology of missionary animation of GM had little of the spectacular or of the extraordinary in it. In fact, one outstanding characteristic of the review seems to have been its simplicity. Simple narrations of life situations of the missionaries and of the missions, ardent appeals of the pioneers for helpers to join their ranks, facts and stories of missionary heroism, examples of groups of youngsters who did something for the missions, indications of what each one could do even in their own situations in favour of the missions etc: these filled the pages of GM. And certainly the tie up with the association of young missionaries! This simple methodology produced magnificent fruits. Sooner than later, the various salesian institutions were in a holy competition with each other: who will have the most number of associates, the greatest number of subscriptions for the review, who will be able

to send the largest contributions to the center for the support of the missions and the missionary aspirantates, who will be able to send the biggest group of youngsters to the houses of formation of future missionaries? And the result of it all on these very institutions: a new type of youth spirituality, vibrant with missionary enthusiasm! GM became a methodology for creating good spirit in these various institutions, and as noted above a greatly efficacious methodology for the promotion and nurturing of vocations to the priesthood and to religious life.

Even in the initial stages of the periodical, there was a certain fear on the part of some that the naked projection of the actual difficulties of the mission territories would serve as a wet blanket on the enthusiasm of many young people to opt for the missions. But, the actual reaction of the young to these and other projections of the missionary reality was quite contrary to the fears of these sceptics. The young daringly opted purposefully for these hardships, and even in their own situations formed themselves to meet the future with a manly spirit. Even stories of martyrs in the mission field did not dampen their spirits, instead aroused in the young the great eagerness to join their ranks, probably to be martyred along with them!

Not all are heroes, neither are all cowards! Heroism and cowardice, courage and fear, daring and withdrawal form part of every human person. It is simply a question of which aspect is nurtured, and by what means. GM chose to nurture heroism, courage and daring, and consequently it reaped a wonderful harvest.

In an era of colonisation, political, economical and cultural, this periodical of missionary animation chose a different direction: to be a cultural bridge, linking the readers with the peoples of the different corners of the world. And the link was not through fanning the flames of ambition to conquer, but through nourishing what was truly human in every one: understanding, compassion and sympathy. True, the language of GM was the language of its day. Terms like "savage", "uncivilized", "barbarian" etc. have been used by the editors to characterize the indigenous people of missions.

If one were to stop merely at the words, these could be occasions of hurt. If, instead, one goes beyond the words to understand the reason for use of such apparently disparaging terminology, it will not be hard to find a sympathetic understanding of the indigenous people. In defence of the periodical, it should be noted that terms like "savage", "barbarian" are used particularly in reporting about societies that in some way sanction practices that even today would be considered not worthy of human beings like the killing of innocent children, head hunting, caste system, sorcery etc. Even when GM reports these evils, it is not primarily with the motive of showing up one's superiority of culture, instead, it is to highlight to the young readers the urgency of the situation in the missions, to arouse their generosity and call them to some action to root out these practices. GM well knows that such practices do degrade a whole society. But it is also aware that the same practices are not endorsed by the vast majority of the population; often these are the forceful imposition of a powerful minority, at other times these simply form part of the package of an unquestioned heritage, blindly continued, often again to the advantage of some section in society. The majority often forms the part of the silent sufferer! And therefore, the attitude of GM, and so of the missionary, to the people at large is certainly one of sympathy. The missionary feels the need to do something, and that too in a hurry, to liberate the people from age old slavery to inhuman practices.

Appreciable indeed is the wide collection of cultural practices of different ethnic groups of the indigenous people of the missions found in the pages of GM. Going beyond the periodical, this element points to a quality of the missionary: appreciation for the cultural diversity so characteristic of mission lands. From the pages of GM it has to be strongly affirmed that Christianization has never been presented as a process of Europeanization or Westernisation of peoples: a type of cultural colonization. GM was born in the period after the publication of the great missionary encyclical *Maximum Illud* of Benedict XV where the missionary was strongly urged to refrain from any activity that would smack of colonization. Besides, the Holy Father in the said encyclical had called for an

appreciation of the local cultures, and for action in favour of maintaining all that was genuinely human in these cultures. Therefore, the missionary is one who appreciates the local culture and makes it more and more his own following the incarnational methodology of the Divine Master. Justly does the periodical put up the examples of missionaries who contributed significantly even in the cultural field. Truly, the missionary is one who leaves one fatherland and its mores and modes of living and finds in the mission another fatherland, and accepts and appropriates its mores and modes of life.

Some in the missions today seem to be asking “what is particularly Salesian about the Salesian missions? Aren’t the Salesians doing the same things as the other missionaries do? Aren’t they living the same reality as the others do? What element puts a Salesian mission apart from a non-Salesian one?” Framing the question positively, one would ask “What characteristics should mark a Salesian mission?” Although the Salesian, like the other missionaries, is engaged in the one mission of the Church, he exhibits a method, an approach that could properly be called Salesian. Every congregation and missionary institute brings to the missions their own charism and spirituality. If not, they forfeit the right to be in the missions. Engagement in a common enterprise does not mean the levelling down of all differences in charism and methodology. Through its various reports GM proves that the salesian missionary does not ever loose the predilection for youth, and that too the poor and the abandoned, that is characteristic of the salesian charism. It is through the youth that he approaches the adults. Wherever they went, the salesians established oratories, schools, hostels, technical schools. But more than the institutions, it was a style of activity oriented towards the young that characterised the salesians. The success of the salesian missionaries depended precisely on their salesian methodology. Their missions grew, they were entrusted with one region after another, they enjoyed the favour of the ecclesiastical authorities because of that aspect that was particularly salesian in their work of evangelisation. They took Don Bosco and his system to the four corners of the

world. With the Valdocan Oratory firmly rooted in their hearts, they established Don Bosco houses wherever they went.

The projection of a particular image of the mission and of the missionary in what it proposed as a process of missionary formation of the young, would bring to light the relevance of this image itself. From the many reports in the periodical itself, GM within a short period, became the missionary review of all the students of the salesian institutions. Its reports fascinated its young readers. It really sold the idea of the missions and of the missionary to young in a way to make of them missionaries of the missionaries. In its own time, this image of the missions and the missionary formed the nucleus of a formative process. In many cases this process culminated in a personal appropriation of that image as one's life dream, and in a dedication of oneself to the salvation of souls in distant lands. From the various reports found in GM itself, and from the occasional assertions of the Major Superiors of the Congregation, one easily deduces that it was the idea of the missions that attracted and motivated many youngsters in their choice of the salesian life. It would not be true to ascribe only to GM and the missionary association the prodigious growth of the Congregation. There were very other factors that played their due role. But, certainly, the image of the missions and of the missionary projected by this simple periodical fascinated many young people and played its role in the choices they made. In its own time, it was relevant!

One would think that it was the projection of the image of the missions and of the missionary in folkloristic and easy to read style that contributed to the great success of GM. The projection of the image of the missionary as a real hero who did great things for a people so much in need, obviously appealed to the young readers. GM's missionary was a true hero, but whose heroism consisted in spending one's life in service of saving the ignorant, the poor and the abandoned. GM presented to the young a combination of great heroism with great human and spiritual strength.

No one is born just to live for oneself. The orientation to the other is written into the structure of the human person. It is only in relationships that the person realizes oneself. More challenging these relationships, greater the realization that can be achieved! Mission is a spirituality not only oriented to mission lands. It is a spirituality that can be lived meaningfully any where and any time, and that can be a very efficacious means of personal growth for the young. The story of GM is the story of a youth missionary spirituality. In an era when the tendency is to lock oneself up in the narrow confines of interests centered most often on the self, the challenge of the vast unconfined mission lands could supply a more meaningful alternative to live life with greater meaning and greater satisfaction.

APPENDIX 1

TRANSCRIPT OF THE LETTER OF PROVISORY COMMITTEE OF GIOVENTÙ MISSIONARIA TO PAUL ALBERA

Torino, 16 Luglio 1921

Rev.mo Sig. D. ALBERA,

L'eco del suo caldo appello sulle Vocazioni Salesiane è giunto anche a noi del Primo Oratorio Festivo di D. Bosco e ci ha invogliati, spronati a rispondere noi pure, nel miglior modo possibile, ai suoi santi desideri e voleri, e gareggiare noi pure, coi suoi figli Salesiani, nella santa impresa di promuovere e coltivare le Vocazione Salesiane e specialmente le Missionarie.

E perché la nostra umile cooperazione sia quanto più possibile larga e duratura ed efficace abbiamo creduto bene di costituirci in Associazione Missionaria permanente affine di promuovere e aiutare le Vocazione Missionarie.

A tale effetto ci siamo costituiti in Comitato provvisorio, con l'adesione entusiastica di un forte gruppo di giovani dell'Oratorio, e redatto un schema di Statuto che ci permettiamo di sottoporre alla sua autorevolissima approvazione.

Noi osiamo sperare dalla sua bontà non solo l'approvazione, ma altresì la sua paterna benedizione ed il suo benevolo appoggio.

Con questa speranza siamo lieti di professarci

Obbl.mi in C.J.

IL COMITATO PROVISSORIO

Sd. Gaspare Balma, Luigi Pisani, Pietro Pivano.

GIOVENTÙ MISSIONARIA PER LE VOCAZIONI MISSIONARIE

Costituzione. – Mossi dal pietoso lamento del Divin Redentore: La messe è certo molta ma gli operai sono pochi, e dall'accurato appello del suo Vicario Benedetto XV nella sua lettera apostolica sulle missioni, nonché dalle paterne insistenti esortazioni e preghiere di Don Bosco e dei suoi Successori e dei missionari in genere, gi Allievi ed Ex-Allievi del I° Oratorio Festivo di Don Bosco hanno costituito l'Associazione "Gioventù Missionaria".

Scopo. – Lo Scopo è di promuovere le vocazioni missionarie, di aiutare a formarle e a sostenerle nell'apostolato.

Soci. – Tutta la gioventù dell'uno e dell'altro sesso degli Oratori, dei Circoli, delle Unioni, dei Collegi, delle Scuole ecc. può appartenere alla Associazione. Può appartenere altresì ogni altra persona a cui sta a cuore la gloria di Dio e la salvezza delle anime. – I soci si dividono in attivi, propagandisti e benemeriti. Attivi sono quelli che corrispondono regolarmente al programma. Propagandisti – collettori sono quelli che si fanno apostoli dell'Opera, si incaricano di raccogliere le offerte; da essi principalmente dipende il felice successo e lo sviluppo dell'Associazione. Benemeriti sono quelli che appoggiano particolarmente l'Opera e vi concorrono con generose offerte.

Mezzi. – I° Preghiera, conforme all'insegnamento di Gesù che disse: Pregate il Padrone della messe che mandi operai a lavorare nella sua vigna. I soci quindi mettono l'intenzione che le loro preghiere quotidiane siano anche indirizzate per le vocazioni missionarie. Inoltre offrono a tale scopo Messe, Comunioni, Rosari ecc.; 2° Propaganda, col diffondere l'Opera, col fare conoscere la sublimità, la necessita delle Vocazioni Missionarie, col promuovere, coltivare, indirizzare ad Istituti Missionari quei giovani che aspirano a sì nobile e santo ideale; 3° Offerte, per cui i soci si impegnano di versare almeno due soldi al mese o più secondo il loro zelo e la loro possibilità. Chi non può versare nemmeno i due soldi vi supplisca con più abbondanti preghiere.

Vantaggi. – 1° Quello eccelso di cooperare con Gesù Cristo alla salvezza delle anime; 2° Quello di partecipare alle preghiere che gli Aspiranti Missionari fanno ogni giorno per i loro benefattori; 3° Quello di partecipare a tutte le opere di zelo che vanno compiendo i Missionari.

Funzionamento. — “Gioventù Missionaria” sceglie a suo Patrono Maria Ausiliatrice, a suo modello Domenico Savio, a Superiore il Rettor Maggiore dei Salesiani. È diretta ed amministrata da un Presidente, da un Segretario, da un Cassiere, assistiti da un Assistente Ecclesiastico, nominati tutti dal Superiore. Al Superiore saranno raccomandate in modo particolare le Vocazioni Missionarie, al cui mantenimento saranno devoluti interamente i proventi dell’Opera.

Organo e mezzi di propaganda. Organo è il Bollettino Salesiano. Mezzi di propaganda sono i foglietti “Gioventù Missionaria” che vengono spediti ai propagandisti e a chiunque altri ne faccia richiesta. L’Associazione fa inoltre molto assegnamento sulla propaganda dei soci e sulla cooperazione attivi degli Allievi ed Ex-Allievi Salesiani, delle Allieve ed Ex-Allieve delle Figlie di Maria Ausiliatrice, dei Cooperatori e delle Cooperatrici Salesiane e di ogni altra persona a cui sta a cuore la propagazione della fede e della civiltà.

Per informazioni rivolgersi a “Gioventù Missionaria”– Via Cottolengo 32, Torino

Comitato provvisorio

Pivano Pietro: Presidente
Pisani Luigi: Cassiere
Balma Gaspare: Segretario

APPENDIX 2

TRANSCRIPT OF THE REPLY OF PAUL ALBERA TO THE LETTER OF THE PROVISORY COMMITTEE

Ai Carissimi

PIVANO PIETRO, PISANI LUIGI, BALMA GASPARE,
costituenti

Il Comitato Provvisorio dell'Associazione "Gioventù
Missionaria" per le Vocazioni, nel I° Oratorio festivo
Del Venerabile Don Bosco.

Con grande gioia dell'animo mio ho letto la vostra bella lettera del 16 corrente, e presa visione dello schema di Statuto dell'Associazione "Gioventù Missionaria" per le vocazioni, la quale voi avete in animo di far sorgere tra i vostri compagni del I° festivo di Don Bosco, e di propagare in tutta quanta la gioventù cattolica.

Tra le cose che potevate ideare per fare del bene, questa di cooperare efficacemente a formare dei buoni Missionari è certo una delle più sante e necessarie, stando a quello che pensava San Vincenzo de'Paoli, il quale lasciò scritto "Pensiamo pure fin che vorremo, ma troveremo di non poter contribuire a cosa più grande che a formare un buon prete." E il nostro Ven. Padre Don Bosco, facendo suo questo pensiero, si diede a promuovere e coltivare le vocazioni con tale zelo, da meritarsi di venire chiamato Apostolo delle vocazioni sacerdotali-religiose.

È quindi cosa convenientissima che il primo Oratorio festivo da Lui fondato, dal quale Egli trasse eccellenti vocazioni, si faccia in certo modo continuatore dell'Apostolate paterno in modo più regolare ed efficace mediante l'Associazione testè costituita, che io perciò benedico di tutto cuore, augurando a me ed a voi che i

suoi aderenti divengano così numerosi da poter mettere insieme ogni anno la somma necessaria per far studiare non uno solo ma parecchi giovani che si sentano chiamati a farsi missionari. Ogni legione di mille soci, i quali si obbligassero di mettere in serbo a tal fine almeno una lira all'anno per ciascuno, potrebbe far studiare un futuro missionario. Ora io ho fiducia che, lanciata quest'ottima iniziativa, si farà di tutto per tradurla in atto con tenace e perseverante lavoro, e si riuscirà, coll'aiuto del Signore, a raccogliere migliaia di soci, sia tra gli allievi ed ex-allievi del Oratorio e i loro parenti, si negli altri oratorii festivi maschili e femminili, dove potrebbero costituirsi sezioni apposite.

Ma questo scopo di raccogliere i mezzi per far studiare i futuri Missionari non è, se ben vaggio, che uno scopo secondario della "Gioventù Missionaria" mentre il principale sarebbe quello di suscitare e coltivare in gran numero le vocazioni stesse tra i giovani degli Oratorii festivi, sia col mezzo potente della preghiera, sia con apposite conferenze, sia ancora procurando di risvegliare l'aspirazione all'apostolato in quei giovani in cui uno studi amoroso e costante faccia riconoscere le doti a ciò necessarie. Proposito questo ancor più eccellente e meritorio.

All'opera dunque! La nostra benignissima Ausiliatrice coll'angelico Servo di Dio, Domenico Savio, vi ottengano dal Signore la forza e gli aiuti necessari per l'attuazione del vostro magnifico disegno, e in particolare i lumi per ben redigere lo Statuto e il Regolamento definitivo dell'Associazione, poiché da ciò dipende in sommo grado il successo dell'impresa. Io pregherò con fervore a tal fine; e certo Don Bosco non mancherà di appoggiare le mie povere preghiere col suo valido patrocinio.

Salutandovi intanto di cuore insieme con tutti i vostri cari, mi confermo coi migliori augurii

Vostro aff.mo nel Signore

APPENDIX 3

TRANSCRIPT OF PRO MEMORIA SU GIOVENTÙ MISSIONARIA E SUL PERIODICO MISSIONARIO SALESIANO OF SAMUELE VOSTI

Mi permette di sottoporre alla considerazione dei Superiori del Capitolo quanto segue:

1° GIOVENTÙ MISSIONARIA.

Quanto prima si dovrebbero ristampare i foglietti "Gioventù Missionaria". Occorrerebbe quindi sapere se e quali modificazioni si desiderano introdotte nello Statuto-Programma.

È noto che "Gioventù Missionaria" è sorta per suscitare e maturare Vocazioni Missionarie; per aiutare a formarle a sostenerle con preghiere e offerte.

È noto parimenti come quest'opera abbia suscitato e attirato molte simpatie, specialmente tra i giovani e chierici e anche tra il popolo. Il Sig. D. Albera stesso e lo stesso S. Padre la benedissero e commendarono ampiamente. "Il S. Padre", scriveva il Cardinal Segretario di Stato, "non può non augurare il più fiorente sviluppo ad una istituzione così bella e così conforme all'insegnamento evangelico. E di tutto cuore imparte la Benedizione Apostolica ai promotori e a scritti a 'Gioventù Missionaria' invocando ad essa le grazie più elette..."

È vero che vi fu anche qualche voce isolata che la disse inutile, un bis in idem della S. Infanzia e della Propagazione della Fede.

Se fosse stata inutile o fosse stata un bis in idem della S. Infanzia non avrebbe certo ottenuto lo commendatizie così lusinghiere dal Sig. D. Albera e dal S. Padre stesso.

Dal resto basta esaminare lo scopo della Santa Infanzia e della Propagazione della Fede per convincersene del contrario. Lo scopo della S. Infanzia è essenzialmente per raccogliere offerte pei bambini cinesi; quello della Propagazione della fede è di raccogliere danaro per sussidiare le Missioni Cattoliche. Giov. Miss. Invece è per suscitare e maturare Vocazioni Missionarie.

2° PERIODICO MISSIONARIO

Ora da molti si prega per un organo di propaganda e per il resoconto dell'opera, un periodichino, mensile o quindicinale. Ma perché il periodico corrisponda anche ad un altro bisogno molto sentito, dovrebbe essere un periodico che narrasse gli episodi più interessanti e significativi delle Missioni nostre e anche altrui.

Con questo mezzo, col propagandare cioè le nostre Missioni, certo noi potremmo fare un grande bene tra la gioventù. Potremmo suscitare un grande movimento missionario; suscitare vocazioni, simpatie, entusiasmo per le nostre Missioni.

Gli altri Ordini e Congregazioni che hanno Missioni hanno quasi tutti il loro periodico per la gioventù. Lo hanno quei di Milano, di Parma, i Gesuiti, i Francescani, i Domenicani, ecc.. noi in questo siamo rimasti indietro. Col solo Bollettino Salesiano non si può soddisfare. Così molti dei nostri giovani sono costretti a prendere gli abbonamenti al periodico missionario di altri Istituti non Salesiani. In certi nostri Collegi hanno 20, 30, 50 abbonamenti di Italia Missionari o di altri periodici consimili.

Tutti questi sarebbero abbonati nostri, cui se ne aggiungerebbero molti altri. A questi si potrebbero accoppiare i 10,000 abbonati al Per la Gioventù che in tal caso soprattutto potrebbe cessare senz'altro le sue pubblicazioni.

Mi permetto di fare ancora presente ai Superiori che qualora ritenessero che anche noi potessimo gareggiare cogli altri Istituti per far conoscere e valorizzare sempre più le nostre Missioni e suscitare per esse simpatie e vocazioni mediante un periodichino missionario vi sarebbero già parecchi confratelli che accetterebbero volentieri il desiderato incarico della redazione. Ad esempio D.

Garneri lo redigerebbe molto volentieri. D.Spriano, D. Marescalchi, parecchi Missionari e chierici vi collaborerebbero molto volentieri

Il periodico dovrebbe essere di formato comodo, ad esempio, come "Rivista dei Giovani" o come il "Per la Gioventù"; avere 16 pagine mensili, più la copertina per annunci, ecc..

Per le speze si potrebbero mettere abbonamenti come per il "Per la Gioventù". Si potrebbe anche aprire una sottoscrizione permanente per il Periodico e per le Missioni.

Torino, 14 Dicembre, 1922.

Sd. Don Vosti.

APPENDIX 4

TRANSCRIPT OF THE PROJECT OF GM “IL NOSTRO PROGRAMMA”¹

Don Bosco saluterà certamente col suo benevolo sorriso paterno il nascere di questa nostra rivista – Gioventù Missionaria – e benedirà dal cielo a tutti quelli che collaboreranno a questa opera buona.

Egli infatti non solo si adoperava con ogni santa industria perché i giovani potessero trascorrere le ore di ricreazione nella sana e vivace letizia del giuoco; ma voleva che anche durante le ore dello studio, nei momenti liberi dalle cure della scuola, potessero gustare lo svago e il conforto delle amene letture.

Per questo sacrificando le ore del riposo, oltre ai libri che dovevano essere nutrimento di sapere e di divozione, componeva anche quelli che li avrebbero ricreati col vario racconto di fatti edificanti, di casi curiosi e di amene avventure. Addestrava intanto a quest'arte quelli tra i suoi figli che mostravano migliori disposizione e così, dietro al suo esempio, si svolgeva quella serie di pubblicazioni che si poteva dire la letteratura dei collegi salesiani ed erano pascolo desiderato e gradito della bramosa curiosità dei giovani alunni.

Così nacquero le Vite di *Domenico Savio*, *Magone Michele* e *Francesco Besucco*, così la *Casa della fortuna* e *l'Orfanello delle Alpi*, così la *Storia d'Italia* e le *Vite dei primi Papi*, così i volumi delle *Letture Cattoliche* e così tutti gli altri che furono letti con tanto gusto e tanto bene operarono, e si mantengono sempre vivi ed attraenti per la semplicità e l'affetto che spirano da ogni pagina e per la edificazione che se ne ricava.

¹ FASCIE B., *Il Nostro Programma*, in GM 1 (1923) 1, 1-2.

Benedirà dunque certamente a questa pubblicazione periodica che vuol'illustrare ai giovani l'opera delle Missioni che da lui iniziata e caldeggiata mise radice accanto alle altre che già fiorivano e con esse crebbe come pianta maestosa distendendo i suoi rami su tutta la faccia della terra. Che messe copiosa di fatti e notizie, di cose nuove e interessanti, di avventure edificanti e generose, di aneddoti commoventi ed ameni, di costumi nuovi e bizzarri, di atti umili ed eroici, di opere ferventi di fede, di carità e di apostolato.

Né meno contenti ne devono essere i giovani lettori. Essi nelle loro letture vanno a caccia di tutto ciò che può stuzzicare la loro curiosità; e, pur di soddisfare quello loro bramosia, divorano volumi di avventure fantastiche che molte volte non hanno nulla a che fare né colla realtà e nemmeno colla verosomiglianza, e finiscono per trovarsi, dopo la lettura, stanchi e storditi, colla mente eccitata, popolata di strani fantasmi, lontani e diversi da tutto ciò che li circonda e li tocca, e invece di appagamento e soddisfazione provano una sete sempre crescente, che pare malattia, di nuove letture dello stesso genere che li ecciteranno sempre più senza riposarsi mai.

Quanto non dovranno dunque trovarsi contenti e soddisfatti nel vedersi davanti a novità vive e vere, nell'apprendere notizie e cognizioni inaspettate ed interessanti, nel conoscere costumi curiosi di popoli reali e viventi, nell'assistere al drammatico svolgimento di avventure forti e generose, nel partecipare con santa invidia alle eroiche e sante imprese dei missionari.

E tutto questo non in mondo vano e fantastico, ma sulla faccia di questa terra, patria del genere umano, nei suoi mari sterminati, nei suoi laghi nei suoi fiumi, nei monti, nelle valli, nelle città, nelle campagne popolate dalla bella e sempre nuova famiglia di erbe, piante ed animali che vegetano e vivono di una vita piena e reale dalla quale la commozione e gli ammaestramenti nascono da sé ad appagamento della fantasia, a soddisfazione della mente a conforto del cuore, ad educazione della volontà.

E non questo solo. Da una tale lettura nascerà dentro dell'animo un forte allettamento e uno sprone vigoroso a bene

operare, e un'affettuosa emulazione li spingerà ad associarsi col desiderio e coll'opera all'apostolato dei missionari così pieno di attrattive. Donde il desiderio e, direi, il bisogno di far vivere in mezzo a loro questo mondo missionario così corrispondente alle aspirazioni generose e ai movimenti espansivi del loro cuore. E vorranno prima di tutto parlarne tra di loro e le loro conversazioni coi compagni acquisteranno un tono nuovo e naturale di spontanea edificazione, improntato ad una vivacità soda e composta, fervida ed educata che diffonderà intorno come un'aureola di santa letizia. E dopo questo la tendenza ad unirsi in associazioni per cooperare colla parola, colla preghiera, colle loro piccole industrie, collo scrivere, colle elemosine all'opera e all'apostolato missionario, godendo della soddisfazione santa ed operosa di sentirsi parte attiva di un'opera così grandiosa di carità.

Ed educandosi a questa scuola di apostolato nuove iniziative si apriranno facilmente al loro semplice intuito illuminato e accalorato dalle grazie di Dio. Vedranno che una larga opera missionaria si può svolgere anche senza uscire dalla propria famiglia, e dal proprio paese, col buon esempio, colla parola, colla buona condotta tra i loro compagni freddi, poco educati al sentimento religioso od anche sviati, come Don Bosco fanciullo faceva tra i fanciulli della sua borgata. E avranno il conforto di vedere sbocciare intorno a sé, coltivata dalle loro giovani anime, una ricca e varia fioritura di bene, irrorata e fecondata dalle benedizioni celesti. Saranno così essi le giovani scolte di questo esercito della carità che si avvanza per diffondere il Regno di Dio e la sua pace su tutta la faccia della terra.

A questo mira con umile coraggio – Gioventù Missionaria – e per questo rivolge il suo fiducioso appello al cuore generoso di tutti i giovani.

D. B. Fascie.

APPENDIX 5

LIST OF SOME OF THE MISSIONARY PERIODICALS IN CIRCULATION IN ITALY DURING THE LIFE SPAN OF GM ACCORDING TO THEIR YEAR OF INITIATION

- 1822 - «Annales de l'Association de la Propaganda de la Foi» was published from Lyons and from Paris.
- 1831 - «Annali delle Francescane Missionarie di Maria» was published from Rome. In 1961 the title was changed to «Rose Serafiche», and in 1973 the title was further changed to «Le Missioni Francescane».
- 1853 - «Annali dell'Opera della Santa Infanzia» was the official review of the Pontifical Society of Holy Infancy. In 1924 the title was simplified to «Santa Infanzia».
- 1870 - «Annali Francescani» was a missionary periodical published from Lombardi. In 1965 the title was changed to «Cammino Scintilla».
- 1872 - «Le Missioni Cattoliche» was started as a weekly illustrated missionary periodical by the PIME fathers. It continued under the same title till 1969, when it was changed to «Mondo e Missione».
- 1881 - «Il Missionario» was a missionary bulletin published by the Salvatorians from Rome, mainly for the co-operators of the Society.
- 1883 - «La Nigrizia» was an illustrated review published by the Figli del Sacro Cuore, from Verona. Its objective was to make propaganda mainly for the African missions.
- 1893 - «Annali della Congregazione della Missione» was published from Firenze. In 1951 the title was changed to «Annali della Missione».

- 1895 - «Eco dell’Africa» was the illustrated periodical of the African missions of Sodalizio di San Pietro Claver, published from Rome.
- 1897 - «Il Missionario Cattolico» was the bulletin of the Pontifical Seminary of Saints Peter and Paul, Rome.
- 1899 - «Bollettino Francese» was the missionary bulletin of the Franciscans, published from Turin.
- 1899 - «La Consolata» was the missionary bulletin of the Missionaries of La Consolata, published from Turin. In 1929 the title was changed to «Missioni della Consolata».
- 1902 - «Carmelo e le sue Missioni all’estero» was the missionary periodical of the Order of Carmelites Discalced, published from Rome.
- 1902 - «Fanciullo Negro» was started by the Sodalizio di S. Pietro Claver, precisely for the young. It was published from Rome. In 1957 it was named «Gioventù Africana».
- 1903 - «Fede e civiltà» was the illustrated review of the Institute of St. Francis Xavier of Parma for Foreign Missions. It was published from Parma. In the period between 1927 and 1947 the title was changed to «Missioni Illustrate».
- 1903 - «Missione di Mangalore» seems to have been the first missionary periodical of the Jesuits, published from Venezia. From 1915 onwards, it was published with the new title of «Le Missioni della Compagnia di Gesù», and 1970 the title was further changed to «Popoli e Missioni della Compagnia di Gesù».
- 1914 - «Siglo de las Misiones» was published by the Jesuits from Bilbao, Burgos. This too was to cater to the missionary interests of the young. In 1967 the periodical appeared under the title of «Misiones». In 1976 the latter was united to «Pueblos del Tercer Mundo».
- 1914 - «Propaganda Missionaria», was a publication of the PIME from Milan and from Rome. From 1959 onwards it appeared with the title of «Missionari del PIME».

- 1917 - «*Bollettino dell'Unione Missionaria del Clero*» was the official organ of the Unione Missionaria del Clero, published originally from Milan. It was more scientific in nature and meant to serve the clergy. From 1919 to 1922 the title was changed to «*Rivista di Studi Missionari*». Again from 1923 to 1938 it appeared with a new title: «*Rivista dell'Unione Missionaria del Clero*». In the period between 1939 and 1949 the periodical was known under the title of «*Rivista dell'Unione Missionaria*», and in the period between 1950 and 1968 it was renamed «*Clero e Missioni*». From 1969 onwards the review has been published under the name of «*Mondo e Missione*».
- 1919 - «*Italia Missionaria*» was the official organ of the Institute of Foreign missions of Milan.
- 1919 - «*Per il bene*» was the bulletin of the Stigmatists, published from Rome. Besides reporting about their missions, it spoke of their works in general. In 1934 it took on a more missionary character and was renamed «*Il Missionario*».
- 1920 - «*Bollettino della Congregazione della S. Croce e Passione di N.S.G.C*» was the bulletin of the Passionists, published from Rome.
- 1920 - «*Missioni Francescane*» was the periodical of the OFM, published from Venezia.
- 1921 - «*Bollettino di S. Domenico*» served as the missionary bulletin of the Dominicans and was published from Bologna.
- 1921 - «*Eco dei Barnabiti*» was a bulletin of the apostolic life of the Barnabites, published from Rome.
- 1921 - «*Svegliarino Missionario*», published from Brescia, was the missionary periodical of the Combonian Missionaries. In 1933 the title was changed to «*Le missioni dei Comboni*».
- 1921 - «*Voce di Maria*» was an illustrated review of the Oblates of Mary Immaculate, published from Naples. In 1955 it was renamed «*Fino al Popolo*», and from 1959 it was known under the title of «*Missioni OMI*».

- 1921 - «Voci d'oltre Mare» was the missionary periodical of the Institute of Foreign Missions of Parma, published from Parma.
- 1922 - «Azione Missionaria» was a missionary bulletin of the Diocese of Vicenza, to serve as an organ of propaganda for the missions of the diocese.
- 1922 - «Missioni dei Padri Bianchi in Africa», published from Aosta, was the missionary review of the White Fathers. In 1946 the title was changed simply to only «Africa».
- 1922 - «Regina degli Apostoli» was the missionary bulletin of the Pallotine Missionaries, published from Rome.
- 1923 - «Bollettino ufficiale dell'Azione Cattolica Italiana», published from Rome, was the official organ of information and animation of the Catholic Action.
- 1923 - «Le Missioni Francescane dei Frati Minori» was yet another missionary periodical of the OFM, published from Rome.
- 1923 - «Missioni estere Vincenziane» was published from Turin, by the Vincentians to make propaganda for their missions. From 1968 onwards the review was known as «Missione Vincenziana».
- 1924 - «Campana Missionaria» was the missionary periodical of the diocese of Aversa.
- 1924 - «Lacrime e Sorrisi di Bimbi» published from Rovereto was the missionary review of Rovereto.
- 1924 - «Le Missioni della Madonna dei Servi di Maria», official organ of missionary propaganda of the Servants of Mary, was published from Vicenza.
- 1924 - «Santa Infanzia», published from Rome, was the organ of the General Council of Holy Infancy for the whole of Italy. In 1936 the title was changed to «Crociata Missionaria».
- 1926 - «Squilla Missionaria» was the illustrated periodical of the Franciscan Missionary Union of the province of Venice, published by the OFM of Vicenza.
- 1927 - «Crociata Missionaria Francescana» was published by the Franciscans from Rome.

- 1927 - «Echi delle Missioni» was an illustrated missionary review for boys, published from Rome.
- 1927 - «Gentes» was the official organ of the Lega Missionaria Studenti started by the Jesuits, published from Rome. In 1933 the title was changed to «Lega Missionaria Studenti», and in 1947 it was renamed «Gentes L.M.S.».
- 1927 - «Il Piccolo Missionario» was the illustrated monthly for the young, published from Verona. It centred more on the African Missions.
- 1927 - «Voci della Nigrizia» was the missionary bulletin of the Institute of African Missions, Forli.
- 1928 - «Missioni dei Servi di Maria» was published from Rome by the Servants of Mary.
- 1928 - «Missioni Domenicane», published by the Dominicans from Firenze.
- 1929 - «Il Pensiero Missionario» was another missionary periodical of the Missionary Union of the Clergy in Italy, published from Rome. It started as a trimonthly.
- 1930 - «Crociata Missionaria» was the common periodical of the Pontifical Missionary societies, published from Rome. In 1976 the title was changed «Popoli e Missioni».
- 1932 - «La Voce del Nilo» was another of the OFM missionary periodical published by the Franciscan Missions of Northern Egypt.
- 1932 - «Missionarie Francescane d'Egitto» was published from Rome, as the voice of the Franciscan missionaries of the whole of Egypt.
- 1933 - «Fanciulla Missionaria» was a simple supplement to «Vita Canossiana», the official bulletin of the Canossians.
- 1933 - «Il Missionario Franciscano» was the monthly illustrated review of the Friars Minor Conventuals, published from Assisi.
- 1934 - «Notizie della Missione di Pengpu» was the voice of the Jesuit missions of Pengpu in China.

- 1939 - «Bollettino dell'istituto Missioni Consolata» was published from Torino as another bulletin of the Missions of the Missionaries of La Consolata.
- 1942 - «Bollettino di didattica missionaria» was published from Parma by the Institute of the Foreign Missions of Parma.
- 1946 - «Missioni Camilliane» was the review published from Milan by the Camilians, dedicated to the ministry among the sick in the pagan lands. In 1963 the title was changed to «Amare».
- 1953 - «Missionarie di Maria» was a monthly periodical of the Missionarie Saveriane, published from Parma.

APPENDIX 6

TRANSCRIPT OF THE CLOSING EDITORIAL OF GIUSEPPE BASSI

COMMIATO

Cari lettori,

ho il doloroso incarico di annunciarvi che con questo numero la nostra rivista «Gioventù Missionaria» chiude i battenti. Il 1968 non la vedrà più uscire.

Molti di voi, già a conoscenza della cosa, ci hanno scritto per esprimerci il loro rammarico e la loro protesta, con parole spesso commoventi. Prendiamo atto di questi gesti di solidarietà che sollevano un po' la nostra pena. Ma le ragioni che hanno indotto i nostri Superiori a prendere questa decisione sono di forza maggiore.

Termina così il dialogo che la nostra rivista teneva con i suoi giovani lettori da ben 45 anni, durante i quali essa è stata il punto d'incontro tra molti illustri missionari e molti giovani generosi, suscitatrice di entusiasmi, di fattiva cooperazione e di numerose vocazioni missionarie.

Non terminerà però il vostro affetto per le missioni, che troverà sicuramente altri modi per alimentarsi.

No, la vera Gioventù Missionaria non muore, perché più vivo di prima sarà il vostro interessamento, la vostra azione, la vostra preghiera per le missioni.

Avanti, Gioventù Missionaria, nel più sacro tra i doveri del cristiano, quello di spandere il Regno di Dio tra gli uomini che popolano la terra! E la vostra testimonianza viva sarà ancor più efficace di quanto non lo fossero questi pochi fogli di carta.

A.R.T.!

IL DIRETTORE

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Missionary work is often evaluated only in terms of its external achievements. Little effort is made to get to know the inner motivations of the great heroes and heroines. Basing himself on the writings found in *Giovenù Missionaria* Roy Anthony Parackal has made a very valuable contribution to missionary spirituality by bringing out the dynamic inner motivations of the pioneering missionaries of a great missionary era. Revisiting the motivations of our forefathers will certainly kindle the same passion in us too.

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