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**MISSION AS REGENERATION
Missionary Heritages of the Plan for the Regeneration
of Africa**

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EPIGRAPH

“Experience thus clearly shows that the system followed until now, while most useful for the conversion of unbelievers in other parts of the world, is no less than plainly inadvisable for the Regeneration of the African interior. This is because, in the first place, European missionaries are not able to live in the torrid heat of those regions and thus do not succeed in establishing and giving continuity to the Faith there and, in the second place, because Africans educated in Europe, for the reasons set out above, become unsuitable for the exercise of the apostolic ministry in their own countries.”

St. Daniel Comboni

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May God bless you all!

STUDENT DECLARATION

I, the undersigned, declare that this Thesis is my original work achieved through my personal reading, scientific research method and critical reflection. It is submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for a masters' degree in theology. It has never been submitted to any other college or university for academic credit. All sources have been cited in full and acknowledged.

Signed: _____

Name of Student: _____

Date: _____

This Long Essay has been submitted for examination with my approval as the College Supervisor.

Signed: _____

Name of Supervisor: _____

Date: _____

ABBREVIATIONS

AG	<i>Ad Gentes</i>
CCC	Catechism of the Catholic Church
CCL	Code of Canon Law
CMS	Church Missionary Society
EA	<i>Ecclesia in Africa</i>
EN	<i>Evangelii Nuntiandi</i>
Eph	Ephesians
GS	<i>Gaudium et Spes</i>
Jn	John
LCM	Lay Comboni Missionaries
LG	<i>Lumen Gentium</i>
Lk	Luke
Mccj	<i>Missionarii Comboniani Cordis Jesu</i>
Mk	Mark
MR	<i>Mutuae Relationis</i>
Mt	Matthew
NM	New Millennium
Ps	Psalms
RL	Comboni Rule of Life
RM	<i>Redemptoris Missio</i>
Rv	Revelation

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GENERAL INTRODUCTION

0.1. Background of the Study

On the 18 of September, 2014 the entire Comboni family celebrated with joy one hundred and fifty years anniversary since the first draft of the summary of the new Plan of the society of the sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary for the conversion of Nigrizia, which was proposed to the Holy Congregation of *Propaganda Fide* by Father Daniel Comboni of the Mazza Institute. This Plan marked a turning point in Comboni's missionary life, specifically in central African mission. This first edition of the draft was followed by others in different languages: French, German and Italian. These other editions got updated depending on the changing situations or the suggestions received from those who read the first edition. The fourth edition, which is the main topic of this paper, for example has a different title: *Plan for the Regeneration of Africa*. The event of the Plan rather than the Plan itself certainly represents a very important moment in the maturing of the missionary charism of Saint Daniel Comboni. After one hundred and fifty years, the question is, what are the missionary heritages the Church in general and the Comboni missionaries in particular can draw from the Plan? What can the missionary Church learn from Comboni's methodology? Is the Plan still relevant in the modern Church?

The Plan of the Regeneration of Africa has a lot to teach the Church today as far as mission is concerned. Professor Fulvio De Giorgi who is in charge of

Comboni archives pointed out that the Plan of Comboni should be read in terms of *discontinuity as growth*, Actuality and prophecy, unity, utility and simplicity. That is why it should be noted that the Plan is not a document of the past rather it should entirely be seen as an actual and prophetic guideline for the mission, but only if it is successfully contextualized. It is also necessary to understand the historical context which stimulated the inspiration of the Plan. In this case the main reference is on the eighteenth and nineteenth century's missionary activities. In particular such an understanding is the very tool that will help the present Church to contextualize the Plan and consequently see its genuineness and applicability.

The period since 1700 has been tumultuous in the history of mission. The eighteenth, nineteenth and twentieth centuries coincided with the scientific and technological revolutions. This revolution gave rise to industrialization, urbanization and Western expansion around the world. In principle it was in this context that the modern mission movement was conducted. A close analysis of the evolution of missionary activities can clearly demonstrate the fact that the Trinity is the centre and protagonist of any missionary activity. In order to undertake this great Plan, God uses people as collaborators. These people have contributed as much as they could to further the Good News to the furthest ends of the world. History has clearly indicated that both men and women have tried their best to carry out the mandate of Jesus Christ: "Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit" (Mt. 28:19). This research aims at understanding Comboni's specific contribution at in his time and to draw from his contribution the heritages for today's mission. In fact, Comboni illustrated his contribution by writing the Plan for the Regeneration of Africa. This very Plan is the main topic of this thesis.

0.2. Objectives and Basic Assumptions of the Study

Any up-to-date reflection on the Plan of Comboni that is not simply historical but something that is spiritual, pastoral and missionary, must start with contextualization, without adopting a level of interpretation that is direct and unmediated, as if it were a modern text¹. When reading the Plan today, it is important to note that the language is that of a century and a half ago, and that there are expressions which may no longer make sense today. Like anybody else, Daniel Comboni was conditioned by historical circumstances in which he lived². Nevertheless the underlying vision was truly prophetic and its actuality remains. His prophetic insights belong more to the future than to the past and are certainly able to illumine the present today. In this standpoint this paper will point out three major heritages drawn from the prophetic vision of Daniel Comboni. These three heritages: mission promotion, collaboration and the role of the laity have been presented in the context of the Plan as well as in the context of today's ecclesiology

0.3. Significance of the Study

This study is mainly based on the analysis of Comboni's writings especially in what concerns the fourth edition of the Plan for the Regeneration of Africa. This will also be evaluated from the viewpoint of the papal documents and Church teachings, the works of outstanding theologians who have marked the history of the Christian doctrine (Protestants and Catholics alike). It has to be clarified in advance

¹ Familia Comboniani, January 2014.

² *Save Africa with Africa*, 7.

that this essay does not reflect by itself the fruits of an empirical research work among the people. It is essentially a missionary reading of Comboni's.

My wish is that this work may not just be read by people but it may also provoke readers to engage in an active mission animation and promotion, a factor that will, in itself, foster team work and collaboration. Once such attitude is achieved the Lay missionary vocation will be promoted to a substantially good level. These should be the main heritages drawn from the prophetic vision of the Plan.

0.4. The Scope of the Study

The study focuses on mission as Regeneration. The purpose of mission is, as Comboni himself says: "the Regeneration of Africa". Mission should not be confined or limited only to evangelizing people only and overlooking their social situation. Mission as Regeneration is that mission that is also founded on mutual trust in people. It is the mission that makes common cause with people while evangelizing as a community and promoting collaboration.

The term Regeneration has been used in the sense of giving back what was lost. In this context of the fourth edition of Comboni's Plan this concept is linked with the situation of Africa in the 18th and 19th centuries. Regeneration should not be understood in a spiritual sense only. This is a holistic event which implies not only Faith in Christ, but also the liberation from social evils such as slavery, hunger, disease and social marginalization.

0.5. Work Division

This study is divided into four chapters. The first chapter presents the historical background of the mission in Central Africa. The emphasis is on the

methodological challenges of the first missionaries encountered in Central Africa. The second chapter deals with methodological shifts in the early 19th century's missionary activity and elaborates on the first challenges encountered by the missionaries. The whole chapter presents the manner in which the missionaries reacted to the methodological challenges highlighted in the first chapter. The third chapter situates the Plan of the Regeneration of Africa as one among many other contributions of the 19th century missionary reflection. The fourth chapter analyses the Plan in relationship to today's missiology and ecclesiology. The chapter points out three outcomes of the Plan such as mission promotion, collaboration and formation of local leaders.

Chapter I

Brief Historical Overview of the Central African Mission: Origin and Challenges

Introduction

The understanding of the word mission has always caused disagreement for those who have thought of conceiving a particular definition that would sound quite universal and fitting in all spheres. Karl Mueller rightly pointed out that: « Words do not have fixed precise meanings valid for all times. For this reason it would perhaps make greater sense if, as the first step, this paper dealt with the development and change of the concept of mission. It is not the word that counts but the meaning behind it ».³ Until the sixteenth century the term mission was used exclusively with reference to the doctrine of the Trinity that is the sending of the Son by the Father and the sending of the Holy Spirit by the Father and the Son⁴. The Church Fathers spoke of mission in terms of the divine mission⁵. When both Popes Paul VI and John

³ K. MUELLER, *Mission Theology*, 30.

⁴ D. BOSCH, *Transforming Mission*, 1.

⁵ St Irenaeus (130-200 AD) speaks of the mission of the Word. He says that the mission of the Spirit is manifested in a special way in the Baptism of Jesus and at Pentecost. Tertullian (160-220 AD): There is no distinction between the mission of the Word incarnate and the mission of the Father. Origen (185-254 AD) says that the eternal procession of the Word and the Holy Spirit is the foundation of their divine mission. The Father and the Son send the Holy Spirit which proceeds from the Father, through the Son. St Augustin of Hippo (354-430 AD). Speaks of the Trinitarian level of Mission. Moreover, he speaks of the visible mission of the invisible Holy Spirit, during Jesus' Baptism and at Pentecost. St Thomas Aquinas speaks of the Divine Mission, as the sending of the Son by the Father and of the sending of the Holy Spirit by the Son. St Bonaventure uses the term « mission » referring himself to the Pope in so far as he is the authority constituted send.

Paul II wrote *Evangelii Nuntiandi* and *Redemptoris Missio* respectively, they wanted somehow to clarify what mission and the missionary activity of the Church mean. That is probably why it remains quite important to clarify, from a historical perspective, what we mean by Central African missionary movement in the 19th century. As a matter of fact therefore this chapter will give priority to a wide analysis of the origin of central African mission and will at the same time outline some challenges that were encountered by missionaries. In addition to this, the chapter will look into some of the contributions that these missionaries of the 19th century made in their various attempts to further the original Christological missionary mandate.

1.0 African Contact with the Gospel

The work of communicating the Gospel has undergone three phases on the African continent. The first phase can be clearly seen in the first fifteen centuries and this phase was mostly preoccupied with Northern Africa, that is, the modern countries of Tunisia, Algeria and Morocco, Egypt, Nubia and Ethiopia. Unfortunately the seed of the Gospel planted in the North was eventually wiped out by the Muslim invasion in the seventh century. Nonetheless, unlike this first phase which almost proved unsuccessful, the second phase led by the Portuguese managed to implant the Church in a few areas along the coast of Africa. It has often been observed that this phase won quite a good number of African believers. “However this Faith did not take firm roots in the African cultural context but instead remained marginal to mainstream African cultural”⁶. The third phase started in the nineteenth

⁶ P. MWANIA, “*Communication of the Gospel in the African Cultural Context*”, 100.

century and was basically characterized by an extraordinary passion and love for mission. In principle, this paper will base most of its research on this third phase of evangelization.

1.1. The Missionary Movement in General: Decline and Revival

The existence of mission in the Church has always helped the same Church to go beyond the frontiers of the accomplished in order to face the one of novelty, “of the unheard-of, of the risky, as long as Christ is preached”.⁷ In the centuries that made up the Middle Ages until the seventeenth century, the Church made itself a sentinel on the fronts of humanity in order to indicate to the rest of humanity the light of Christ and in him “Stability, Peace, Justice and freedom”.⁸ This activity was fundamental in the Church’s mission and identity through the mission accomplished by many agents of evangelization. Under this topic the aim is, among other things, to present the revival of the mission in the 19th century. The revival is the main topic to be overviewed here at hand; this can be understood only in the light of the decline of missions before the 19th century. With this basis therefore an attempt is made to present, first, the decline of mission in order to shed light in the revival movement that actually gave rise to the birth of Central Africa mission.

⁷ B. GUISEPPE, *Missiology*, 25.

⁸ B. GUISEPPE, *Missiology*, 25.

1.2.0. Decline of Mission in the 18th Century⁹

It is historically established that by the end of the eighteenth and the beginning of the nineteenth centuries several disasters struck the missions and caused a sudden decline in missionary activities. In this web of confusion and disasters everything seemed not only like a sinking ship but all missionary efforts came almost to a sudden unexpected halt. Like any other failure the decline of mission in the 18th century had its causes and justification. These causes may be of great values if an attempt is made to appreciate the revival movement's roots in the Catholic missiology. There are many causes that are attributed to the decline of mission in the 18th century. In this paper a few have been selected. In essence they are the four reasons that explain the actual decline of missionary activities in the 18th century. In the first place there was the suppression of the congregation of the Jesuits in 1773. This was immediately followed by great persecution of missionaries in the so called "land of mission". The third can be termed as the European religious crisis that caused a serious fall in the number of vocations and the impact of French revolution in the mission.

1.2.1. The Suppression of Jesuits

As already outlined above, among the major causes of the slow-down in the process of evangelization was the suppression of the Society of Jesus. This move was "prepared on the one hand by the Enlightenment"¹⁰ ideas of the *philosophes*,

⁹ With the diminishing of Portuguese as a world power and the resurgence of Islam in the early 18th century came the decline of Catholic missionary work. Ironically, these events led to liberation of the missionary enterprise from Royal Patronage. The first burst of renewed interest in the evangelization of Africa came from European-based Protestant missionary societies as early as 1792, notably the Baptist missionary Society (BMS), the interdenominational London Missionary Society (LMS), and the evangelical Anglicans of the Church Missionary Society (CMS).

¹⁰ F. PIERLLI, ed., *Gateway to the Heart of Africa*, 32.

and on the other by the political influence of Jansenists and Gallicans. In fact in 1759 the almighty Pombal¹¹ expelled the Jesuits from Portugal. This was the signal for all the Catholic absolutist monarchs who immediately followed suit. But they were not yet satisfied with this. It is observed that they mounted pressure upon Pope Clement XIV to such an extent that he suppressed the society throughout the Church in 1773. This blow deprived the Church of three thousands of its most experienced and respected missionaries. Other orders and societies tried to fill the gap left by the Jesuits, but unfortunately they had a very small number of missionaries at their disposal. The expulsion of Jesuits¹² from French, Portuguese, and Spanish territories was a great lose and setback as far as mission is concerned.

1.2.2. Persecution

Moreover, priests and religious were persecuted, Church property confiscated, the Popes exiled from Rome, and the Congregation of the Propaganda Fide made ineffective. The early missionary societies in France were dissolved and were unable to send missionaries to foreign nations. There were no recruitments. The old missionaries died and could not be replaced by younger ones. The negative factors that marked the missionary decline of the 18th century can be summed up as follows: the cruel nature of the English and Dutch imperialists towards the missionaries, Catholic presence and action in their colonial territory¹³.

¹¹ Pombal was the powerful anticlerical minister in Portugal, who suppressed the company of Jesus. He died in 1782. Cf. J.BAUR, *2000 Years of Christianity in Africa*, 65.

¹² This was particularly serious since the Jesuits were the missionary task force in the Catholic Church.

¹³ F. PIERLLI, ed., *Gateway to the Heart of Africa*, 32.

1.2.3. European Religious Crisis

The European religious crisis caused a major fall in the number of vocations. This is to be seen as one of the major causes of the decline of missionary activity. In addition, “the Enlightenment mentality, which entered into the Church circles under the title of modernity, caused deplorable confusion.”¹⁴

1.2.4. The Impact of French Revolution

The impact of the French revolution is equally considered a major cause in the decline of the missionary activities of the Church. In fact French revolution itself completely paralyzed the missionary movement by stifling the inflow of new vocations, since all youngsters were enrolled in the army of Napoleon. This was not enough as Napoleon went ahead in suppressing “the missionary power house, Congregation for the Evangelization of People on the 15 of March 1798”.¹⁵

1.3. The Revival of Missionary Activity in the Nineteenth Century

Jean Comboy believes that “even if it is necessary to distinguish different stages in history of evangelization in the first three quarters of the nineteenth century, there is a certain unity.”¹⁶ This unity is possible only if we understand that “within the Church of Europe particularly in France, the idea of mission became an essential element of Christian existence, both in people’s minds and in the many institutions which developed in the service of missions”.¹⁷ It is highly important to note that the missionary movement of the 19th century was born through various circumstances and encounters of people. The four causes of decline of mission,

¹⁴ F. PIERLI, ed., *Gateway to the Heart of Africa*, 32.

¹⁵ F. PIERLI, ed., *Gateway to the Heart of Africa*, 32.

¹⁶ J. COMBY, *How to Understand the History of Christian Mission*, 115.

¹⁷ J. COMBY, *How to Understand the History of Christian Mission*, 115.

which have been highlighted above among many others, were both political and religious. In this section the main focus is on the reaction to the decline of missionary activity.

Revival movement has historical background. On one hand we have the influence of the Society of Jesus, and of the various spiritualities clearly opposing Jansenism. And on the other hand the mystery of the incarnation, and the urgency of its actualization in all cultures and ethnic groups. This second component was stressed particularly by the spirituality of De Berul, De sales and the Sulpicians¹⁸. Moreover Warneck sees the third possibility of this renewal in the ideas brought by the humanistic movement proclaiming human rights for all people.

1.4.0. Warneck's Interpretation of the Missionary Renewal Movement of the 19th Century

Warneck¹⁹ agrees with the historical roots of the revival missionary movement. That is why after a long study, he found another way of advancing the explanation of the missionary renewal movement. He attributed the missionary reawakening to the ideas brought about by the humanistic movement which was proclaiming human rights for all people. The slogan of human rights was concretized by the campaign against slavery. This began in England around the middle of the 18th century among Anglicans and several philanthropic movements. According to Francesco Pierli “this fight also stimulated the re-launching of a strong missionary activity with social overtones.”²⁰ Pierli rightly sees its concrete consequences in anti- slavery movement led by Livingstone, Stanley, Libermann

¹⁸ F. PIERLI, ed., *Gateway to the Heart of Africa*, 32.

¹⁹ Gustav Warneck 1834-1919 is the founder of the German Missions-Zeitschrift in 1874. Warneck does theology of mission constantly referring himself to the Bible and this being combined and almost proved with experiential data and history.

²⁰ F. PIERLI, ed., *Gateway to the Heart of Africa*, 33.

and his Holy Ghost Missionaries, the association “Pro Nigris” of Cologne (Germany) Comboni, Lavigeries and other missionaries. It is time to question if this initiative was exclusively religious.

1.4.1. Renewal of the Missionary Spirit among the Laity

The first signs of renewal and a deepening of the missionary scope are found among the laity²¹. In 1802 F.R. Chateaubriand, who had fled to England in the initial stage of the Revolution, published *The Genius of Christianity*²². Part IV, Book 4 of this work was completely dedicated to the missions in the distant lands²³. Its influence was tremendous. The missionary was depicted as a romantic figure, an adventurer for the Faith²⁴. Even till Vatican II it still had influenced the way the ideal of missionary work was seen and spoken of. Moreover Chateaubriand was drawing on missionary literature for his work, especially the *Edifying and Curious Letters*²⁵. In general people started again to take an interest in the reports on mission.

Interest and participation of the laity in missions were still to a greater extent stimulated by the foundation of the Associations to support the missionary activities. The most important of these was the *Association of the Propagation of the Faith* which was established by Pauline Jaricot²⁶ in Lyons in 1822²⁷. It supported the missions with prayer and money²⁸. The money was collected by organizing small groups of people who donated a coin a week²⁹. The Association spread rapidly

²¹ J. COMBY, *How to Understand the History of Christian Mission*, 117.

²² F. PIERLI, ed., *Gateway to the Heart of Africa*, 33.

²³ B. SUNDKLER- C. STEED, *A History of the Church in Africa*, 100.

²⁴ B. SUNDKLER- C. STEED, *A History of the Church in Africa*, 101.

²⁵ J. COMBY, *How to Understand the History of Christian Mission*, 116.

²⁶ Pauline-Marie Jaricot (1799-1869)

²⁷ B. SUNDKLER- C. STEED, *A History of the Church in Africa*, 101.

²⁸ J. BAUR, *2000 Years of Christianity in Africa*, 106.

²⁹ J. COMBY, *How to Understand the History of Christian Mission*, 116.

through Europe and America, by the popularity of its missionary magazine, the *Annals of the Association of the Propagation of the Faith*³⁰. It provided vital support for the missions at a time when the royal subsidies and feudal revenues were something of the past³¹. Thus the Association of the Propagation of Faith and the *Annals* contributed a great deal in the bringing forth of a missionary awareness among the Catholic faithful. Many missionaries traced their vocation to the *Annals*.

1.4.2. Kairos for Central African Mission

The renewal of mission can be seen from the African perspective as as a *Kairos*, the time of grace. For with the missionary renewal came the idea and eagerness of knowing and evangelizing Africa³² was born. What follows now is a brief overview of the origin of this mission. In any case who were the pioneers of this great enterprise so delicate and dangerous at that time? These are some of the questions that are to be addressed in this discourse. What follows thus is somehow an attempt to respond to these very questions by searching for answers.

1.5. Central African Mission: Origin and Challenges

The reference to Central Africa in this chapter follows the division of Africa by Baur³³. In fact, at the beginning of our modern epoch the continent was seen as “North and South Africa, connected by a costal line, and between them the unknown

³⁰ The aim of the Society for the Propagation of faith is to promote world-wide interest in evangelization in all sections of the “People of God”, namely families, Christian communities, parishes schools, movements, associations, so that each diocese may become aware, at all levels, of the universal vocation. It aims at developing the missionary consciousness and promoting aid between churches and exchanging spiritual values, material resources and missionary personnel. The obligation of spreading the faith is imposed on each baptized. This can be done in two ways by prayer and by contributing money to the Society of the Propagation of faith.

³¹ J. BAUR, *2000 Years of Christianity in Africa*, 172.

³² From now on when we mention Africa, we mean Central Africa mission and Evangelization.

³³ We will use the division of Africa as it is in the book of J. BAUR, *2000 Years of Christianity in Africa*.

interior, usually called Central Africa”³⁴. The so called Central Africa was geographically divided by the legendary mountain range, called the Mountains of the Moon. This was supposed to cross the continent from the source of the Nile in the East to Sierra Leone in the West. Therefore, in the North the region between the Sahara and the mountain of the moon is called Central Africa³⁵. Likewise in the South the region between the mountain of the moon and Limpopo-Kalahari was as well called Central Africa³⁶. This region was inhospitable and unknown by the explorers.

1.6. From an Unknown Mission Territory to Central Africa Mission

“No other continent has kept its mysteries hidden for as many centuries as Africa has. And no other river has so gripped the attention of the world as has the Nile.”³⁷ These two affirmations seem to portray the secular interest of Africa which should be considered when we want to grasp the motivation of missionary activity in Central Africa. That is why it seems crucial in this paper to have in mind these details in order to apprehend the contact of Central Africa with Europe. It is equally important to note that in the secular world one motivation can be underlined. It is clear that the contact between Europe and Africa was initially fuelled by the idea of exploration of Africa. For them what was important was the discovery of the source of the Nile and the great Lake Victoria.

If this is the situation, then some remarks have to be considered. First of all, we have to know that “towards the mid of the nineteenth century Europe awoke to a

³⁴ J. BAUR, *2000 Years of Christianity in Africa*, 104.

³⁵ The two regions were called central Africa. However, the difference was that the Northern region was called central Africa of the earlier explorers and Missionaries whereas the Southern region the central Africa of Livingstone and the missionaries in his footsteps.

³⁶ J. BAUR, *2000 Years of Christianity in Africa*, 104.

³⁷ A. GILLI, *Daniel Comboni*, 5.

new interest in the African continent. Initially there was a scientific interest alongside with the geographical explorations.”³⁸ Secondly missionary activity in Africa in general and Central Africa in particular was the work of both Protestants and Catholics. It is possible to affirm that there is a clear difference between the humanitarian philanthropy of the Enlightenment of the 18th and 19th centuries and missionary activity. The third remark is about the Church missionary activity organization. In fact, in the fifteenth century the patronage of mission was given to the kingdoms³⁹ of Spain and Portugal.⁴⁰ This was known as *padroado* patronage in Portuguese⁴¹. This meant that “the king was entrusted with the foundation and endowment of the Episcopal see, chaplaincies and convents”⁴². This element also had some influences on missionary activities in Central Africa. As time went by, the power of the two kingdoms withered away. As John Baur rightly pointed it out “their decline was a major reason for the decline of the Catholic mission”⁴³ as well as the new way of doing mission based on the contribution of the whole Church. It is good to note that a clear distinction between missionary activity on one hand and trade and politics on the other hand did not appear in the Padroado System. It put the missionaries literally to a *no servico de Deus e do rei* (i.e in the service of God and King), continually confusing the interest of God with those of their king. Scandalously, they believed that *reino* (i.e the kingdom) of Portugal was the reign of God itself. Thanks to God that Propaganda Fide made a great change as far as

³⁸ L. COCCHI, *Daniel Comboni Builder of Civilization*, 25.

³⁹ The Spanish *patronato* was established with the Bull of 1508 and the Portuguese *Padroado* with the Bull of 1514. With these two papal bulls, the pope granted to Spain and Portugal the right to organize the missionary activity in these territories. They were the chiefs of the new conquered churches. The rulers of the two countries had dominion over their colonies, not only politically, but also ecclesiastically. This right to have colonies carried with it the duty to Christianize the colonized.

⁴⁰ J. BAUR, *2000 Years of Christianity in Africa*, 48.

⁴¹ A. HASTINGS, *A World History of Christianity*, 204.

⁴² J. BAUR, *2000 Years of Christianity in Africa*, 48.

⁴³ J. BAUR, *2000 Years of Christianity in Africa*, 106.

mission was concerned. It deems essential to mention its creation as a step forward to the missionary activity of the Church.

1.7. Creation of *Propaganda Fide*

At the beginning of the age of European explorations the spreading of the Faith was entrusted to the Kings of Portugal and Spain⁴⁴. However, in the course of later centuries their power withered off and as a consequence the missions declined. After the French Revolution and the Napoleonic Empire it was clear to everyone that the role of royal patronage in evangelization had been finished.

The decline of patronage was seen as negative as far as mission is concerned. However, it had a positive impact because it liberated the mission work from royal patronage to “the responsibility of the whole Church”⁴⁵. Therefore, the vacuum left by the decline of the patronage⁴⁶, was taken over by a missionary activities of the Christian world. This missionary activity was supported by the faithful, directed by the Pope, and carried out by missionaries’ societies old and new.⁴⁷ The direction of the missions from then on was led by the Popes who worked through the Congregation of the Propaganda Fide. This means the Roman Catholic Church took into its hands the guidance of missionary activity⁴⁸. The creation on January 6, 1622 of the Congregation for the Propagation of Faith by Pope Gregory XV was a great step forward to the Church’s mission⁴⁹. The congregation took in to consideration the task of coordinating the missionary activities of the Church, and to assist the Pope in the governance of missions. The congregation came up with two aims: To

⁴⁴ A. HASTINGS, *A World History of Christianity*, 204.

⁴⁵ J. BAUR, *2000 Years of Christianity in Africa*, 106.

⁴⁶ J. BAUR, *2000 Years of Christianity in Africa*, 106.

⁴⁷ Cf. J. BAUR, *2000 Years of Christianity in Africa*, 106.

⁴⁸ J. BAUR, *2000 Years of Christianity in Africa*, 48.

⁴⁹ A. HASTINGS, *A World History of Christianity*, 204.

promote the union of Christians and to spread the Faith among the pagans. Alongside this the task is to look at some significant Popes who courageously contributed to the nineteenth century missionaries activities.

1.8.0. The Popes and the Missions

This topic on the Popes and mission aims at reflecting on some prominent Popes of the nineteenth century and their contribution to the missionary activities. The reorganization of the Propaganda Fide in 1817⁵⁰ was a great step ahead for missionary activities in the Church. Yet, it was only in 1826 that Cardinal Maur Capellari was appointed Prefect of the Propaganda Fide and Rome began to play a crucial role not only in the shaping of the missionary policy but also in the restructuring of the mission territories. Let us look at the contributions of each of them.

1.8.1. Pope Gregory XVI (1831-1846)

The former Prefect of the Propaganda Fide Maur Capellari became in 1831 Pope under the name Gregory XVI and reigned until 1846. Gregory XVI brought out the evil of the slave trade to the attention of the Catholic world. Although the campaign against the slave trade had made great strides in England, in the Catholic countries of Europe it was not yet the real issue⁵¹. Gregory changed this attitude by issuing in 1839 the apostolic brief *In Supremo Apostolatus*⁵². In this document, he declared that the Pope had condemned the slave trade and slavery, and forbade “all, ecclesiastical or Lay, to dare to support this trade in Negroes under any pretext, or to

⁵⁰ A. HASTINGS, *A World History of Christianity*, 204.

⁵¹ Cf. J. BAUR, *2000 Years of Christianity in Africa*, 109.

⁵² Is an Apostolic Letter condemning the slave trade, written by Pope Gregory XVI and read during the 4th Provincial Council of Baltimore, December 3, 1839.

preach or teach in public or in private anything contrary to our apostolic briefs.”⁵³

The emancipation of the slaves became for many missionary congregations their priority when they started evangelizing in Africa⁵⁴.

Gregory XVI issued the first missionary encyclical *Probe Nostis* August 15, 1840⁵⁵. In this document the Pope rejoiced for the successful advances made in the propagation of Faith in many parts of the world. The Pope postulated that confidence was needed because God does not abandon His Church; he stressed the impact of new institutions, of sisters and laypersons in the ecclesial reality with their charisms. The Pope expressed his appreciation for the society for the propagation of Faith that had been founded in 1822 in Lyon, France.

The pontificate of Gregory was characterized by *Neminem profecto* which can be considered as an important document as far as the mission is concerned. In 1845 the Propaganda Fide issued the instruction *Neminem profecto*, which outlined the missionary policy of Gregory XVI. It is an extremely important text taking in consideration the time when it was published and the recommendations it made. It stated that mission territories had to be transformed in normal dioceses as soon as possible. The indigenous clergy had to be trained and for that purpose seminaries had to be founded. Native priests, it was stated, should be treated equally. Missionaries were asked to kindly abstain from politics. Indigenous cultures, customs and arts had to be respected and integrated in the Christian message. Finally, it also advocated for the holding of synods.

⁵³ Encyclicals on line: <http://www.papalencyclicals.net/Greg16/g16sup.htm>.

⁵⁴ Mother Javouhey, Libermann, Cardinal Lavigerie and Comboni can be mentioned as pioneers.

⁵⁵ Vito Del Prete, *Paul VI and the Mission*, in *Omnis Terra*, No447, June 2014.

The last contribution of Gregory XVI is that during his pontificate he created more than seventy new missionary ecclesiastical circumscriptions. He introduced into these territories the system of *jus commissionis* a system in which a specific missionary territory to be evangelized would always be entrusted to a particular missionary society. This system was to remain in force until Vatican II.

1.8.2. Pope Pius IX (1846-1878)

During the pontificate of Pius IX the outstanding and competent Cardinal Barnabo was Prefect of the *Propaganda Fide* for twenty years (1854-1874). The missions got a tremendous boost when Pius IX in 1862 canonized 23 Japanese martyrs of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries and beatified 205 others five years later. Pius IX convoked Vatican I (1869-1870). For the first time in Church history the missions were represented at a general council by missionary bishops, and the vicars apostolic, who were almost all Europeans.

1.8.3. Pope Leo XIII (1878-1903)

The successor of Pope Pius IX, Leo XIII was also very missionary minded. At the beginning of his pontificate he issued the mission encyclical *Sancta Dei Civitas* (1880) in which he outlined and stressed the duty of all the faithful to have the missions very close to their heart. Leo chose capable and qualified men to lead the Propaganda Fide: Cardinal Simeoni (1878-1892) and then Cardinal Leochowski (1892-1902). The instruction *Neminem profecto* of 1845 guided them in their missionary policy. The training of indigenous clergy and the creation of new churches with dioceses and bishops was of greatest importance. We have to mention here that the outdated privileges of states with regard to missions had to be

abolished. Propaganda Fide instructed prefects and vicars apostolic to send in their quinquennial reports without delay which had to follow the outlines of a questionnaire of 1877.

During the pontificate of Leo XIII the Berlin Conference (1884-1885) was held, while colonial imperialism was rising in Europe. The conference led to the scramble for Africa. In less than two decades Africa was divided into various zones of influence by the European powers. This created a situation in which missionary activities and politics became strange bedfellows. European colonial expansion was considered providential for the proclamation of the Gospel and the promotion of civilisation⁵⁶. “Leo XIII was also of this mindset. For him there was a close association between colonization, civilisation and mission, while the Church was seen as the source of true civilisation”⁵⁷.

Leo was very much interested in the anti-slavery movement which was promoted by the great missionary figures of the nineteenth century: Mother Javouhey, Libermann, Comboni and Lavigerie. In 1888 Leo sent an encyclical *In plurimis* concerning this issue to the Brazilian bishops. In the same year he wrote a letter to Cardinal Lavigerie asking him to stir up world opinion on African slavery. Lavigerie started a resounding campaign throughout Europe. In 1890 anti-slavery Congress of the European powers was held in Brussels. It put forward recommendations geared towards the abolition of slavery which, by coincidence, were to a great extent in conformity with the suggestions Lavigerie had made⁵⁸.

⁵⁶ Cf. J. BAUR, *2000 Years of Christianity in Africa*, 109.

⁵⁷ A. DE JONG, *Class Notes 2A* 2013.

⁵⁸ A. DE JONG, *Class Notes2 A* 2013.

1.9.0. Central African Mission

Historically speaking, it has so far been observed that the previous attempts of the Central Africa mission were not successful. Besides the moving appeal resulting from the fact that so many Africans were enslaved there was no adequate response to that appeal. Only in the 1840s, this appeal was finally taken into consideration. Canon Annetto Casolani of Malta conceived the “*courageous Plan of going straight on into the heart of Africa and of starting a mission beyond the Sahara.*”⁵⁹ He understood Central Africa as “the region between Lake Chad and the countries of Guinea Coast, between the desert of the Sahara and the Mountains of the Moon”⁶⁰. The idea of starting a mission in Central Africa came out after gathering information from the many traders and explorers who used Malta as a transit port.

1.9.1. *Propaganda Fide*’s Green light

Thus, in 1844, he proposed to the *Propaganda Fide* in Rome a concrete Plan for a central African mission. The Plan received a positive answer from Propaganda. However, they found it difficult to find men to accompany Casolani. Providentially, the polish rector of the Propaganda College, Maximilian Ryllo SJ., and two students Ignatius Knobler and Angelo Vinco accepted to go with Annetto. So in 1846 the Vicariate apostolic of Central Africa was erected and Casolani was ordained as acting bishop.

The surest and easiest way to penetrate the region was to pass from Tripoli via Ghadames. Nevertheless, they chose to use the Road cutting across the Sahara.

⁵⁹ J. BAUR, *2000 Years of Christianity in Africa*, 171.

⁶⁰ J. BAUR, *2000 Years of Christianity in Africa*, 171.

The Nile route was particularly chosen because Ryllo had interest in fact of Egypt being a missionary to Syria.⁶¹ This trajectory took longer and embarrassed the Cardinals of the *Propaganda*. For the simple reason that prior to their expedition, the Cardinals publicized the Plan of Casolani and received offers of support from the geographical society in Paris, London and Vienna⁶².

1.9.2. Misunderstanding

Knowing that ten days had already passed yet Annetto was still in Malta, Propaganda reproached him for his incomprehensible delay. As a result he offered his resignation as the leader of the mission. Then *Propaganda Fide* appointed in his place Fr. Maximillian Ryllo, who was given another Jesuit as his assistant. Bishop Casolani joined the group as a common missionary. The expedition then moved from Malta and by mid-June 1847 they reached Alexandria. After five months of adventurous and dangerous happenings, sailing on perilous boats up the Nile and crossing the Bayuda desert on camel back, on 11th February 1848, the first missionary expedition reached Khartoum⁶³.

1.9.3. The First Missionary Work in the Vicariate of Central Africa

Maximillian Ryllo started a seminary with some redeemed slave boys. He succeeded in making friendly contacts with the local people. He explored the region of Bari on the Equator. Unfortunately, he died only after four months. On his death bed, he entrusted his power as pro-vicar to the young Knoblecher. And bishop Casolani who was already sick returned to Europe with two seminarians who

⁶¹ J. BAUR, *2000 Years of Christianity in Africa*, 172.

⁶² J. BAUR, *2000 Years of Christianity in Africa*, 172.

⁶³ L. COCCHI, *Daniel Comboni Builder of Civilization*, 27.

accompanied him⁶⁴. The task was not easy for the new pro- vicar Knoblecher. He faced financial crisis. Thus he went back to his country Austria for help. In Vienna, he met with unexpected success. The emperor offered him his *personal financial and diplomatic assistance*. As a result a wave of enthusiasm swept over Austria for this central African mission. Priests and laymen presented themselves as missionaries. An organization, then founded *the association of our Lady* which would later guarantee continuous financial and moral support⁶⁵.

1.10.0 Evaluation of African Mission

Throughout the above analysis, the attempt has so far been to evaluate the genesis of the central African mission by surveying the significant steps. In what follows here focus now shifts into a broader context of the whole of Africa. In any case the same evaluation has shown that more is still to be done as far as methodology is concerned. Up to now there is much to admire and praise, we distribute it equally “between heroic missionaries and faithful African”⁶⁶.

According to John Baur, in reviewing the whole missionary enterprise spread over more than three centuries, the historian is disappointed with its eventual outcome. The many failures are obvious and their causes must be investigated⁶⁷. Indeed, we hold the opinion that this evaluation is of great value because it prepares the second topic in this research, that is, on the great figures of central African evangelization. These missionaries tried to find a way of responding genuinely to the limits of mission in the past two centuries.

⁶⁴ J. BAUR, *2000 Years of Christianity in Africa*, 172.

⁶⁵ J. BAUR, *2000 Years of Christianity in Africa*, 172.

⁶⁶ J. BAUR, *2000 Years of Christianity in Africa*, 92.

⁶⁷ J. BAUR, *2000 Years of Christianity in Africa*, 92.

For Baur “the main natural causes of the lack of success and the impermanence of the mission were the hardship of navigation and climate which decimated and weakened the missionary personnel within a few years.”⁶⁸ He supports his argument by giving the example of Capuchins’ mission in Kongo and Angola between 1672-1700. In fact, out of 91 missionaries, six perished on the journey, 49 died in the country and 36 returned home after exhausting work. This made many people to give up any attempt of commitment to evangelization of Africa. Moreover there are other reasons for the failure of the first attempt of communication of the Gospel in Africa. The task here is now to point out methodological approach as being among the cause of unsuccessful mission in the period 1500 early 1800.

The same approach is shared by Jean Comby. In fact, Jean Comby points out the causes and lessons of the failures in terms of methodology. For him the failure was caused by “lack of continuity in the apostolate, mediocre clergy, ignorance of the language, baptism without catechesis, the thoughtless destruction of paganism.”⁶⁹

1.10.1 Methodological Challenges

The entire Western missionary movement of the past three centuries emerged from the ground of the Enlightenment. The great missionaries brought the Gospel to other cultures as they understood it; for this we owe them respect and gratitude. Moreover, missionaries are sons and daughters of their time and cultures. If we wish to make a critique as far as methodology is concerned we should be aware of the danger of anachronism. In any case that is not what is intended in this paper because

⁶⁸ J. BAUR, *2000 Years of Christianity in Africa* , 92.

⁶⁹ J. COMBY, *How to Understand the History of Christian Mission*, 73.

the principle aim is to arrive at the methodological challenges of the missions from 1500-1800 and the reaction of the later generation of missionaries from 1831 onward. Such a focus is based on missiology which developed and systematized much later. That is why we are fully aware of the danger of anachronism in the subsequent result. However, it is also to be pointed out the three methodological challenges: assimilation, soul-saving and individualistic approach.

1.10.2. Assimilation

Assimilation was one ideological basis of French colonial policy in the 19th and 20th centuries. In contrast with British imperial policy, the French taught their subjects that, by adopting French language and culture, they could eventually become French. Missionaries adopted such approach to communicate the Gospel in Africa. Mwanja has found a name to describe such missionary approach: he calls it “mere transplantation”⁷⁰ of the Western Church into Africa. In this regard Africa only receives a Faith vested in a European culture dress and language that neither correspond to the African reality nor meet their needs because it is simply foreign to them.

1.10.3. Soul-Saving

Soul-saving approach means the over emphasis on the salvation of souls by undermining other aspects of evangelization such as building of the church. This can be explained by the separation between Church building and salvation. In reality, these two elements should go together, unfortunately in the epoch of 1500-1800 the two were separated. The missionaries emphasized baptism as the way to salvation by

⁷⁰ P. MWANJA, “Communication of the Gospel in the African Cultural context”, 100.

leaving out the building of the Church. The basic missionary aim was to save souls for heaven. Yet it could have been necessary to enlighten the people on the inefficiency of having recourse to magic and to counteract such practices with medical care in one hand, and an intelligible and adapted liturgy with a deep sacramental life on the other hand. Catholic missionaries were still captive to the concept of “soul-saving” and not the building of the local churches. While the Protestant already believed that “African should not be converted by Africans” Catholic missionaries still treated Africans as ‘children’.

1.10.4. Individualistic Approach

The last shortcoming is the logical consequences of the second methodological approach. The great emphasis led to baptism, especially infant baptism reveals and proves the understanding of salvation as an individual affair. The consequence of such method was the incompatibility with the local traditions which emphasized the communal concept of salvation as Baur rightly pointed it out: “The African religious rites were denounced as superstitious, and their function of bringing forth and protecting the life and the whole order of the community remained hidden from the missionaries”.⁷¹

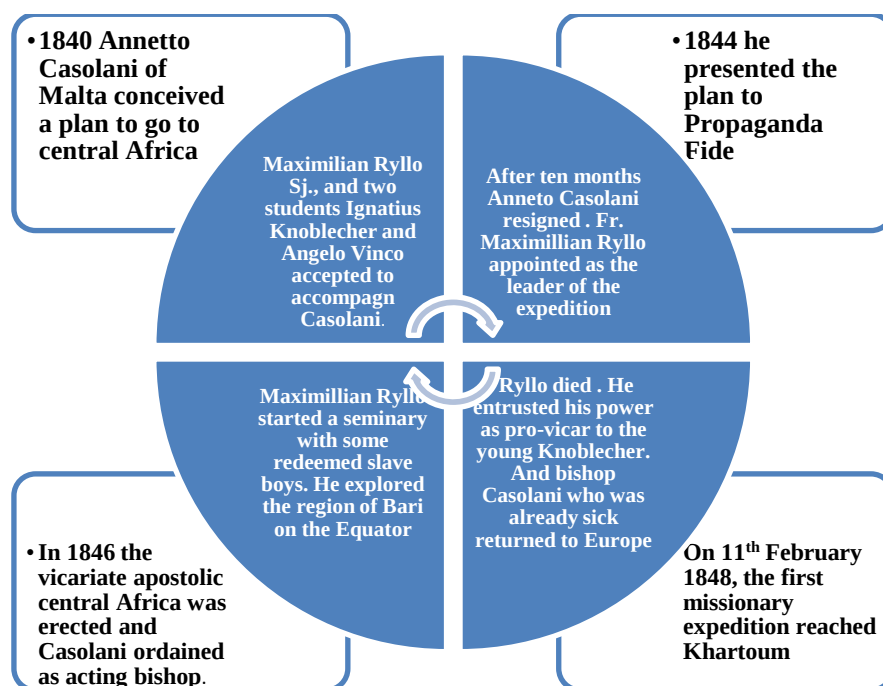
Conclusion

The first topic developed in this chapter can be summarized in two words the “origin and challenges” of the missionary activities in the “unknown territory” as it used to be called. The aim of this study was to fix the readers on what took place in the beginning of evangelization in Central Africa. Although the topic focuses mainly

⁷¹J. BAUR, *2000 Years of Christianity in Africa*, 94.

on the mission in Central Africa, we cannot separate ourselves from the entire continent, for that reason, it deems important to include a survey of evangelization in the whole continent, hence, the mention of three phases of the Gospel in the African continent. The decline of missionary movement due to some reasons mentioned is seen as the new beginning of missionary activity which involved the whole Church. This end is called a Kairos of a new beginning. This is evident in the way the Popes took seriously the dimension of mission as a Church affair, not a matter of Portugal and Spain only. The revival spirit among the laity was a great contribution of the 19th century period that saw the end of patronage way of doing mission. This will be the main articulation of the second chapter of this research.

Keys Events in the Origin of Central Africa Mission



Chapter II

Methodological Shift in the Early XIX Century

Introduction

History can help one to know the past in order to be in a position of judging the present and also to prepare for the future. Such an understanding of history contributed in shaping the *new generation*⁷² of missionaries in bettering their commitment in Africa. The 19th century was the time of expanding the missionary activities overseas. On the Protestant side, Missionary Societies were formed and were sending missionaries. On the Catholic side this was the time of many new missionary congregations⁷³. The great variety of missionary societies accounts for a certain diversity of evangelizing approaches⁷⁴. In contrast to earlier centuries, mentioned in chapter one, the new generation of missionaries was unanimous in the goals of the mission and the fight against slavery. First, they believed that mission activity is both the building up of the Church and saving souls as well. This is the opposing approach to the saving souls only promoted by previous missionaries. They also put as second goal the communal salvation “the aim was to Christianize

⁷² By new generation of missionaries, the implication is the missionaries of the early 19th century onward.

⁷³ Spiritans, Comboni Missionaries, Missionaries of Africa, Society of the African Mission...

⁷⁴ The Protestants used the method of offering the Bible translated in local languages. Catholics tried rather to impress the population by the solemnity of worship. Cf. J. COMBY, *How to Understand the History of Christian Mission*, 123.

society at large.”⁷⁵ This was in contrast to the individualistic approach that has been mentioned at the end of chapter one. And lastly, the third goal was the formation of indigenous Catholics. This approach is a significant contribution and distinctive mark of the new generation of missionaries who will take seriously the indigenous people. In this study, attention is going to be given to the presentation of the new methodology that was adopted by these missionaries and how they responded to their common enemy namely slavery. The purpose of such a presentation is to grasp how these missionaries concretized the three goals of the mission in their method of evangelizing. Thus, the first topic will briefly shed light on the new methodology, after which there will be a comprehension of mission and slavery. There will eventually be a presentation of some remarkable figures of the 19th century missionaries in Central Africa.

2.0. New Methodology

“Preoccupations and methods in part depended on the original background of the missionaries.”⁷⁶ If this statement proves to be true, then there must be the use of historical methods in order that there may be a substantial awareness of what had been the development of the mission up to the present time. According to Wilbert Shenk, 19th century deserves to be called “*The great century*”. Why should we dare to say so if in terms of numbers the 19th century is not better than the previous centuries? For him, the 19th century is great because of “the formative impact the movement had on the Christian world”⁷⁷. As far as the mission is concerned “nineteenth century remains crucial because of the way it shaped the twentieth.”⁷⁸

⁷⁵ J. BAUR, *2000 Years of Christianity in Africa*, 108.

⁷⁶ J. COMBY, *How to Understand the History of Christian Mission*, 122.

⁷⁷ W. SHENK, *Changing Frontiers of Mission*, 142.

⁷⁸ W. SHENK, *Changing Frontiers of Mission*, 142.

Therefore, the “mission leaders in the nineteenth century saw themselves as pioneers in missionary principles and action”⁷⁹. The sheer scale of the missionary movement in the 19th century finds no precedent in history. The vision that stimulated mission supporters to action was firmly grounded in the Old Testament prayer “that thy way be known upon earth, thy saving power among the nations”⁸⁰. (Ps. 67:2.) What is important to note here is that those who took part in mission activity underwent profound change in their self-understanding as well as in their sense of responsibility for the world beyond their own national boundaries. In this topic, we really target to clarify the whole swing of methodology that characterized the mission in the 19th century. This new methodology has its root in the limits of previous approaches of mission made by the missionaries in the early centuries⁸¹. This swing of methodology can be seen in three interconnected stages: the incorporation of Africans in the evangelization of Africa, the formation of the local clergy and more positive approach towards African cultures.

2.1. Africa Must be Converted by Africans

The first step of the new methodology consists of the general conviction shared by missionaries in the 19th century. In fact, both Protestants and Catholics missionaries were convinced that “Africa must be converted by Africans”⁸². This is a long journey of Faith and maturity in the understanding of the role of local people in the evangelization. In his book *Foreign Missions*, Anderson treated what he labeled “Principles and Methods of Modern Missions” in which he summarized the main features of Paul’s missionary approach. He came to the conclusion that can be

⁷⁹ W. SHENK, *Changing Frontiers of Mission*, 145.

⁸⁰ W. SHENK, *Changing Frontiers of Mission*, 144.

⁸¹ 1500-1800.

⁸² J. BAUR, *2000 Years of Christianity in Africa*, 108.

called a discovery of recent date. This discovery was that “an indigenous Church must be led by an indigenous pastor”⁸³. If we have to consider the time of its genesis, the cultural prejudices and discrimination of that period we may come to appreciate how prophetic this conviction was. Moreover, the failures of many past attempts caused by the climate and lack of adaptation of missionaries from Europe fuelled and matured consideration of indigenous people.

2.2. Training of Local People

The missionaries came to realize that the dream of “Africa must be converted by Africans” can be possible only if they are well trained. That is why both Protestants and Catholic missionaries agreed on the necessity of training African coworkers, starting with catechists, proceeding to the ordained ministry and aiming at self-responsible churches. Consequently, in 1840 Francis Libermann proclaimed as a goal for the Holy Ghost fathers the training of an African clergy. He placed priestly training as a priority in the missionary agenda.⁸⁴ The idea of changing the game was not exclusively a Catholic enterprise. Protestants as well made an emphasis on native clergy. Thus, in the 1850s CMS⁸⁵ secretary Henry Venn developed for the Anglican missions the policy of preparing “self-supporting, self-governing and self-extending churches”⁸⁶ under a native ministry and an indigenous episcopate. This theory came to be known as “Triple autonomy” method of evangelization. The method consists of the process of promoting the local people to be and feel as part of the Church. It includes the financial, administrative and missionary autonomy.

⁸³ W. SHENK, *Changing Frontiers of Mission*, 145.

⁸⁴ W. SHENK, *Changing Frontiers of Mission*, 145.

⁸⁵ Church missionary society

⁸⁶ W. SHENK, *Changing Frontiers of Mission*, 145.

2.3. More Positive Approach to African Cultures

After recognizing the role of the Africans in the conversion of Africa, the missionaries felt the need for the appropriate training of the Africans. Lastly, they handled the issue of African cultures by taking into consideration the cultures of those new evangelizers. It can thus be asserted that the conception of mission in the 19th century had a more positive approach to African cultures as compared to the former centuries. Both Protestant and Catholic Europeans belonged to a civilisation of the written word. They had a fascination with schools, a privileged means of coming to Faith and Civilisation⁸⁷. Thus, many missionaries started learning African languages. Many also studied tribal customs and history of African cultures. Therefore, “many missionaries became ethnologists and made a collection of oral history which is still valuable today.”⁸⁸ Falk sees it as a step forward to the acceptance of Christianity being indigenous. He is convinced that “for many tribes the printing of the Bible in their language was synonymous with Christianity having become indigenous”⁸⁹. We are fully aware of the imperfection of this approach which can be compared to inculturation today. This was not perfect and we don’t expect it to be perfect either, but the point is that this approach was a step ahead as far as the mission is concerned. How to have a positive approach towards local cultures is one of the key components for a successful mission.

In effect, the new methodology is a gradual process which includes all the three steps together so as one cannot exclude one from the whole. The experience of the past made the new generation of missionaries to change the way of approaching missionary realities. They came to the conclusion of including Africans in the

⁸⁷ J. COMBY, *How to Understand the History of Christian Mission*, 123.

⁸⁸ J. COMBY, *How to Understand the History of Christian Mission*, 123.

⁸⁹ W. SHENK, *Changing Frontiers of Mission*, 145.

process so as to make the Gospel inculturated⁹⁰ by preparing the ministers and taking seriously their cultures. This can be termed as a step ahead in the African mission of the 19th century. This very contention now raises the question to know what really made these missionaries to change their method as well as their views about African.

2.4. Mission and Slavery

In the modern world, slavery of all kinds is universally condemned as unnatural and immoral. It is difficult for us to understand, therefore, that slavery in various forms has been a common feature of almost all societies throughout history down to quite recent times⁹¹. No wonder, Vatican Council II still felt it necessary to recommend that we must continue to combat all forms of social and political slavery⁹² and it even warned that new forms of social and psychological slavery have emerged in our time⁹³. Slavery not only has been a widely accepted social institution throughout the world, but it also gives rise to little moral protest or religious condemnation, except regarding its abuses, until the past few centuries⁹⁴. Christianity has had a role in the decrease and finally eliminating slavery, primarily by emphasizing the eternal dignity and destiny of all souls⁹⁵. It has to be noted that

⁹⁰ Though inculturation as a concept will emerge much later, what they did was inculturation.

⁹¹ J. PANZER, *The Popes and Slavery*, 3.

⁹² Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World, *Gaudium et Spes*, 30.

⁹³ GS 4.

⁹⁴ Allard, P. (1912). Slavery and Christianity. In *The Catholic Encyclopedia*. New York: Robert Appleton Company. Retrieved April 26, 2010

⁹⁵ Saint Paul to Galatians eliminated the social class by saying that in Christ there are no Jews or Gentiles. Pius III put this same idea in his *Summus Deus* (1537) "...The exalted God loved the human race so much that He created man in such a condition that he was not only a sharer in good as are other creatures, but also that he would be able to reach and see face to face the inaccessible and invisible Supreme Good... Seeing this and envying it, the enemy of the human race, who always opposes all good men so that the race may perish, has thought up a way, unheard of before now, by which he might impede the saving word of God from being preached to the nations. He (Satan) has stirred up some of his allies who, desiring to satisfy their own avarice, are presuming to assert far and

two important phases in the Church's confrontation with slavery, particularly stand out: the struggle with slavery in the ancient world and the struggle over slavery as it began with the European expansion into the Americas⁹⁶. This topic will deal with the second aspect more deeply by presenting the contribution of missionaries who gave a new understanding to what was inhuman. It is necessary to tackle the issue from the root. Before treating mission and slavery, let us have an idea about the continent of Africa as viewed by Europe at that time.

2.5. Africa as Viewed by Europe

At the beginning of the nineteenth century, Europeans were largely ignorant of Africa, although Portugal had been engaged since the mid-fifteenth century in the trade of African slaves. This topic is a preparation to the understanding and appreciation of the missionary paradigm shift as far as the Western concept of Africa is concerned. In order to appreciate the work of the missionaries of the 19th century, we have to comprehend them in the framework of their time. What was the idea about Africa in this period? How did they go for or against that prejudice? How did they share the worldviews of their time? How did they differ with the negative views of Africa?

2.6. Dark Continent

In the 18th century, racist remarks on Africa were most famously expressed by the Scottish philosopher David Hume: "I am apt to suspect the Negroes to be

wide that the Indians...be reduced to our service like brute animals, under the pretext that they are lacking the Catholic faith. And they reduce them to slavery, treating them with afflictions they would scarcely use with brute animals... by our Apostolic Authority decree and declare by these present letters that the same Indians and all other peoples - even though they are outside the faith - ...should not be deprived of their liberty... Rather they are to be able to use and enjoy this liberty and this ownership of property freely and licitly, and are not to be reduced to slavery."

⁹⁶ J. PANZER, *The Popes and Slavery*, 5.

naturally inferior to the Whites. There scarcely ever were civilised nations of that complexion, nor even any individual, eminent either in action or in speculation. No ingenious manufacture among them, no arts, no sciences.”⁹⁷ Although some changed slightly over time, there were still some who continued to hold these derogatory views.

In the 19th century, the German philosopher Hegel simply declared: “Africa is no historical part of the world.”⁹⁸ Later, Hugh Trevor-Roper, Regius Professor of History at Oxford University, expressed openly the racist view that Africa has no history, as recently as 1963. The dominant image of Africa projected by European writers in the nineteenth century was that of a place of savagery and chaos. Africa was known as the “Dark Continent,” a land deprived of the light of Western civilisation, education, culture, religion, industry, and progress.

The people of Africa were characterized by Westerners as lacking in morality and intelligence, being perpetually childlike, demonic, and practicing outlandish, barbaric customs. Because of the overwhelmingly negative reports and portrayals of Africa and Africans, by late in the century, most Westerners regarded colonization of the African land their moral duty; it was the “White Man's burden,” in Rudyard Kipling's phrase, to dominate Africans until they could be sufficiently civilised to take their place in the world⁹⁹. These views affected the missionaries who came to Africa and their methodology as well. However, many of them went against these negative views and excelled in revalorizing Africans by regenerating them.

⁹⁷ T. FALAGUASTA, *Sauver l’Afrique par l’Afrique*, 22.

⁹⁸ T. FALAGUASTA, *Sauver l’Afrique par l’Afrique* 24.

⁹⁹ Cf. T. FALAGUASTA, *Sauver l’Afrique par l’Afrique*, 26.

2.7. Mission and Slavery, Reaction From the Missionaries

When speaking of the fight against slavery in the 19th century, it has to be born in mind that missionaries were sons and daughters of their time. Their contribution has to be seen in the framework of their time. John Francis Maxwell points out that slavery was seen in many facets.¹⁰⁰ He even goes on to enumerate the aspect that shaped the missionary activity and the understanding of slavery as “consequence of original sin”¹⁰¹. Gregory Nazianzen wrote that “Mankind was created by God to be free and wealthy in paradise, but that original sin led to such evils as slavery and destitution”¹⁰². In addition, Saint Augustine wrote: “the state of slavery is justly imposed on sinners as a penalty for their own benefit”¹⁰³. This idea is shared by many Church fathers. No wonder Saint Theodoret of Cyrus said in fact: “It is not blasphemous to ascribe the slavery of those born from a slave-mother to divine providence.”¹⁰⁴ It is in this context that takes place within the reaction of missionary against slavery.

2.8. The Second Revival

There have been many phases in the history of slavery in the world. Because of the topic chosen, an attempt here is to deal with the second revival of slavery. In fact, it took place after the discovery of the new world by the Spaniards in 1492¹⁰⁵. To give the history of it would be to exceed the limits of the topic. It will be sufficient to recall the efforts of Las Casas¹⁰⁶ on behalf of the aborigines and the

¹⁰⁰ J. MAXWELL, *Slavery and the Catholic Church*, 30.

¹⁰¹ J. MAXWELL, *Slavery and the Catholic Church*, 35.

¹⁰² J. MAXWELL, *Slavery and the Catholic Church*, 34.

¹⁰³ J. MAXWELL, *Slavery and the Catholic Church*, 35.

¹⁰⁴ J. MAXWELL, *Slavery and the Catholic Church*, 36.

¹⁰⁵ T. HUGH, *The Slave Trade*, 88-89.

¹⁰⁶ T. HUGH, *The Slave Trade*, 450.

protestations of Popes against the enslavement of those aborigines and the traffic in Negro slaves. Below is a brief reflection on the Popes and slavery.

2.9. The Popes and Slavery

In 1871 Ernest Havet wrote that “the Papacy had not its mind to condemn slavery.”¹⁰⁷ He forgot that, in January 13. 1435, Pope Eugene IV then in exile in Florence issued *Sicut Dudum* to the bishop Ferdinand, located at Rubicon on the island of Lanzarote. The bull which condemned the enslavement of the Guaches and other peoples of the newly colonized Canary Islands¹⁰⁸. Yet Alexander VI issued three important documents which are not directly concerned with slavery, but which in themselves contain the foundation of an essential teaching concerning the welfare of the native peoples¹⁰⁹. In 1462, Pius II declared slavery to be “a great crime”¹¹⁰; yet again in 1537, Paul III forbade the enslavement of the Indians in *Sublimis Deus*¹¹¹. He took up the same fight. In 1639 Urban VIII forbade slavery in his bull *commisum Nobis*, and Benedict XIV continued the tradition of his predecessors issued in 1741 *Immensa Pastorum* to the Bishops of Brazil. Mention can also be given that the effort of Pius VII, who appealed to the Congress of Vienna, in 1815, the suppression of the slave trade.

Another aspect worth of mention is the condemnation of Gregory XVI in the constitution *In Supremo* in 1839. The other area in which the commitment of the Popes against slavery clearly emerges is in the Bull of Canonization of the Jesuit Peter Claver, one of the most illustrious adversaries of slavery. Pius IX branded the “supreme villainy” (*summum nefas*) of the slave traders. Probably many people are

¹⁰⁷ E. HAVET, *Le Christianisme et ses Origines*, I, XXI.

¹⁰⁸ J. PANZER, *The Popes and Slavery*, 7.

¹⁰⁹ These documents are: *Eximiae Devotionis*

¹¹⁰ *In Magnum Scelus* 1462.

¹¹¹ J. PANZER, *The Popes and Slavery*, 16-17.

aware of the beautiful letter¹¹² which Leo XIII, in May 5, 1888, addressed to the Brazilian bishops, exhorting them to banish from their country the remnants of slavery, a letter to which the bishops responded with their most energetic efforts and some generous slave-owners even freed their slaves in a Body, as in the first ages of the Church.

The Popes and slavery is a very controversial topic that needs a very careful attention when one has to draw a conclusion of the attitude of the Church's attitude towards slavery. The books used to deal with the issue somehow contradict when it comes to the responsibility of the Church's Magisterium on the condemnation of slavery. John Maxwell and Joel Panzer have quite different understandings of the Latin terms: *Servitus* which can be translated into Servitude and slavery. Thus, there is need for making the difference between *servitus* which rests on just titles and *servitus* which does not rest on just titles called slavery¹¹³. In any case this is not our problem, but from them it becomes clear that as far as Popes are concerned, it is claimed that some were either indifferent to the situation of the slaves or did approve the practice of slavery. But we have evidence of many Popes who reacted strongly against the practice¹¹⁴.

¹¹² The Letter's Title is *In Plurimis*

¹¹³ J. PANZER, *The Popes and Slavery*, 5.

¹¹⁴ The Popes and slavery could be a very interesting topic for research. Here are the names of some Popes who positively reacted to the practice: Pope Pius II in his letter of October 7, 1462 to the Bishop of Rubio; Pope Pius III in his address to the Archbishop of Toledo on June 29, 1537. It is important to study his Bull *Sublimis Deus*. He disagrees completely with the teaching of Aristotle, St Thomas Aquinas and Pope Nicholas V. Pope Urban VIII with the Bull *Commissum Nobis* of April 22, 1639; The letter *Immensa Pastorum* December 20, 1741; of Benedict XIV to the Bishops in Brasil. Pope Pius VII's address to Europeans princes and their allies during a Congress in Vienne asking them to end the slavery of the Negros. Pope Gregory XVI in his letter *In Supremo* of December 3, 1839; Pope Leo XIII and his letter *In Plurimis* of May 15, 1888; Pius X in *Lacrimabili Statu* of December 7, 1912 and ; Pope Benedict XV in *Maximum Illud* in 1919.

2.10. Protestant Side¹¹⁵

Protestant missionaries went to Africa representing a variety of denominations. Most of them were evangelical and fearlessly opposed to the slave trade. Thus was born the doctrine: "Christianity, commerce, and civilisation,"¹¹⁶ which became a missionary strategy that meant simply that commerce would replace the slave trade. The missionaries believed that by promoting commerce, and the technology which it required, "civilisation" would come to Africa. The great champion of this missionary method was Dr. David Livingstone (1813-1873), who founded missions and explored great parts of the interior of Africa. During 1853-1856 he walked across Africa from west to east, exploring the Zambezi River, and he became the first European to view the Victoria Falls. He also walked across what is now South Africa, Botswana, Zambia, Mozambique, Malawi, Tanzania and Eastern Congo (Kinshasa) and recorded data about these journeys. At one time he disappeared for some time and was eventually found by the American journalist Henry Morton Stanley, who uttered the famous understatement: "Dr Livingstone, I presume," when they met. The great explorer's heart was buried in Africa, while his Body lies in Westminster Abbey.

2.11. Catholic Side

The most important missionary on the Catholic side was Charles Lavigerie (1825-1892), former bishop of Nancy and was also archbishop of Algiers. He hoped to make Algeria the base for the conversion of the whole continent. With this grandiose scheme in mind, he founded the *Society of Missionaries of Africa* in 1868.

¹¹⁵ The idea is taken from DE JONG, A., Church history, Modern Period, Class notes 2012-2013.

¹¹⁶ W. SHENK, *Changing Frontiers of Mission*, 147.

Unable to make much headway in the face of Muslim fanaticism, he turned instead to the new areas opened up by Livingstone and in 1879 sent his missionaries in Uganda where Protestant missionaries had already begun work. Along with the White Fathers, an Institute of secular priests living in community, Lavigerie founded the Missionary Sisters of Our Lady of Africa (1869), a religious congregation of women with the same missionary objective and sharing the same spirit of accommodation, adapting themselves in every aspect compatible with Christian Faith and morals, to the life and mentality of the African people among whom they worked.

Leo XIII made him a cardinal in 1882 and two years later gave him the title of Archbishop of Carthage and primate of Africa. From Leo, he received a mission to stir up world opinion on the subject of African slavery. In compliance with the Pope's wish Lavigerie began a resounding campaign, the echoes of which reached Europe and America. The conference of the great powers in Brussels in 1890 adopted proposals with regard to the best method of achieving the abolition of slavery that were in large part in conformity with suggestions Lavigerie had made. Apostolic zeal, a sense of contemporary realities, and a constant concern for the reform and unity of the Church, were the distinctive traits of the personality of Lavigerie.

These people were considered as inferior to the Europeans. There was even a long debate as to whether these people had a soul or not. Slavery was first introduced by Spain and Portugal the two powerful kingdoms of the time. Others followed later on. The ruling by which the Kings of Portugal and Spain were made Patrons of missionary expansion in their colonies was not without its difficulties. These Kings were more interested in gold, spices and human power. Voices of men such as the

Dominican Antonio de Montesinos and Bartholomeo de Las Casas, were very instrumental in raising awareness against the humane treatment given to the slaves.

Conclusion

The second chapter has been divided into two parts: *New Methodology* and *mission and slavery*. The first part, gave the answer to the methodological problem as had been presented in the first chapter. The new generation of missionaries of the 19th century realized that it was difficult to ignore the role of the local people in the evangelization of Africa. That is why in their methodology they successfully incorporated the Africans by preparing them through an adequate formation and taking seriously their cultures. These methods contributed to the achievement of their work of evangelization. The second part takes into consideration the relation between evangelization and exploration by pointing out the heroism of the missionaries in the fight against prejudices and slavery. This fight was the continuation of a long journey which had been started by the Church through the papal Magisterium. However, it has to be noted that missionaries were sons and daughters of their time and their particular theology. Nevertheless, they tried their best to go beyond the mere prejudices of their time. They fought against slavery and social discrimination. Yet this was not fully perfect, they still deserve to be applauded for the work they did. The missionaries followed the footsteps of the great explorers and will be very much linked with the colonial powers, so much that the evangelization of Africa was linked to the colonization of Africa.

Chapter III

Mission as Regeneration: Comboni's Contribution

Introduction

The Regeneration of Africa was at the heart of both religious and civil authorities in the 19th century. Yet the way of achieving that goal differed from one group to another. Comboni had seen hundreds of Europeans leave the continent of Europe for Africa: merchants, explorers, soldiers, diplomats and so forth. He had travelled and made friends with them. However, Comboni never identified them with the missionaries because they were motivated by their own interest, whereas the missionaries were urged on by the love of the pierced Heart of Christ, which for him is the source of strength for every missionary and the ultimate reason for all apostolic enterprises. In this section, the main attempt will be to situate the Plan of the Regeneration in its genesis, theological and missionary context. The exegesis of certain passages of the Plan will be deeply analyzed in order to grasp the understanding of its context.

3.0. The Genesis of the Plan: Pastoral Circle Pattern

The purpose of the mission is, as Comboni said “the Regeneration of Africa”. This is a holistic event which implies not only Faith in Christ, by the

reception of baptism, but also the liberation from social evils such as slavery, hunger, disease and social marginalization. This aim of the mission made Comboni to think of a Plan in order to concretize his dream in the African mission. Thus, from his personal experience, he realized the limits of the methodology used so far in the work of communicating the Gospel in Central Africa. Thus he started the Plan by presenting his own analysis:

Experience thus clearly shows that the system followed until now, while most useful for the conversion of unbelievers in other parts of the world, is no less than plainly inadvisable for the Regeneration of the African interior. This is because, in the first place, European missionaries are not able to live in the torrid heat of those regions and thus do not succeed in establishing and giving continuity to the Faith there and, in the second place, because Africans educated in Europe, for the reasons set out above, become unsuitable for the exercise of the apostolic ministry in their own countries.¹¹⁷

This statement is considered as a starting point of the Copernican revolution in the mind of Comboni and his understanding of contextual mission. It is clearly shown that there is methodological problem which needs to be looked upon and if possible to contextualize it in the African setting.

The origin of the Plan can be seen in a twofold reality of mission in the 19th century: on one hand the failures of past methodological approaches and on the other hand, the failures of the three attempts of regenerating Africa by the civil governments, private institutions and the *Opera Del Riscatto*. These factors raised an alarm in Comboni's mind. Still, it has to be constantly borne in mind that the many different manuscripts and printed versions of the Plan, with the variations which characterize them, do not affect the core message of the original idea of Comboni. Without any doubt, one single and fundamental idea, which is the common

¹¹⁷ D. COMBONI, *Writings*, 808.

denominator of all the editions, is: “could the conversion of Africa not be promoted by Africa?”¹¹⁸ Below is an examination of the background of the Plan.

3.1. The Background of the Plan

There are many elements which are to be considered when we talk about the background of the Plan of Regeneration of Africa. Two of them are somehow more important. The first is the failure of the civil government and the second idea of the Plan is the personal experience of Comboni as vice rector of the African colleges in Verona from March 1861. Moreover, the vision of the world which he drew from the theology of his time can be also considered crucial

3.3.1. The Failure of the Civil Government

The historical section of the Plan begins by referring to the initiatives of the religious and secular world on behalf of Africa. This initiative did not bear good fruit. That is why Comboni states: “Down through the centuries both civil governments and private companies have labored energetically to organize research into that limitless territory and have sent out well-equipped expeditions to further that purpose.”¹¹⁹ For him, this failure was an eye-opener to find a new way of bettering the commitment in Africa. Furthermore, he recognized and mentioned the merit of intrepid explorers who came for their proper agenda. Comboni concluded that all these enterprises were a failure in a way that the result was not proportionate to the expectation. So there is need to question the methodology and the approach.

¹¹⁸ P. CHIOCCETTA, *Daniel Comboni: Papers for the Evangelization of Africa*, 71.

¹¹⁹ D. COMBONI, *Writings*, 800.

3.3.2. The Failure of *Opera Del Riscatto*: Charismatic Section

The second chapter outlined the new method which consisted of incorporating the Africans in the evangelization of Africa by European missionaries. One of the ways of concretizing this method was the creation of *Opera Del Riscatto* by Father Olivieri of Voltaggio. This is an important element as far as the new Plan is concerned. In fact, it draws its inspiration in the failure of *Opera Del Riscatto*. The following is a brief explanation of *Opera Del Riscatto*. In effect, when the slavery was abolished Father Nicholas Olivieri of Voltaggio (Genoa), founded *Opera Del Riscatto* to ransom the African Boys and Girls bringing them to Europe and distributing them in various monasteries and institutions in Italy, France and Germany¹²⁰. After completing their formation, they were sent back to their countries to work with the missionaries.

Father Nicholas Olivieri asked Father Nicholas Mazza in 1846 to accept some boys in his Institute, after a long discernment in 1854; the Institute of Mazza accepted the ransomed slaves to their institutions of Verona and in Palma. According to the analysis of Comboni, this method made the Africans unsuitable “because Africans educated in Europe, for the reasons set out above, become unsuitable for the exercise of the apostolic ministry in their own countries.”¹²¹

This negative result clicked in Comboni’s mind and made him think of a new Plan for a stability of implanting Faith in Africa. The Plan then is an outcome of a missionary maturity as was said above and a fruit of experience and intimacy with God. For this simple reason we dare to draw a link between Comboni’s method and today’s well known method of pastoral circle.

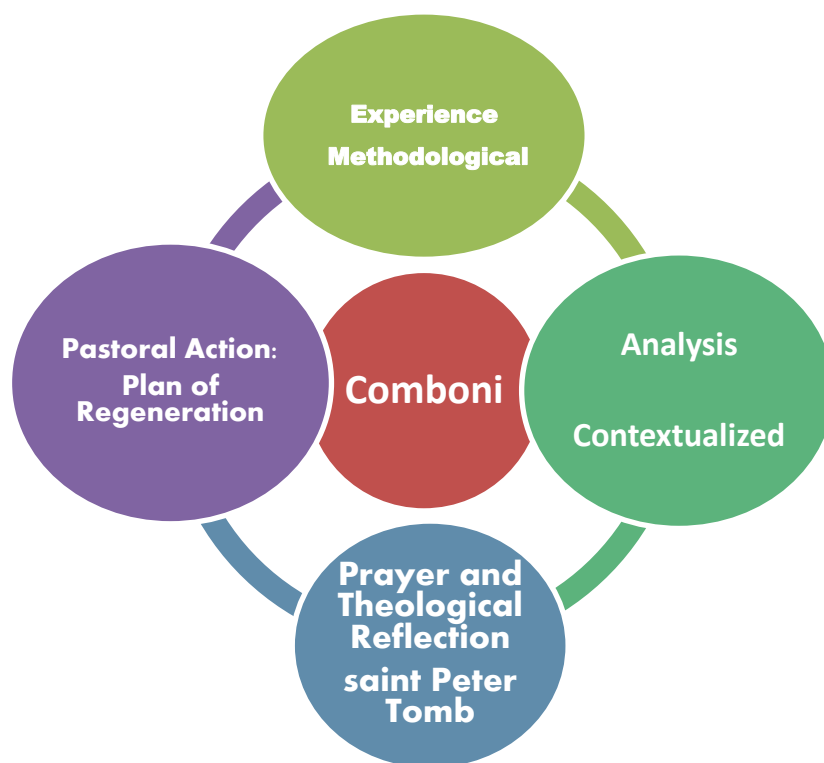
¹²⁰ P. CHIOCCETTA, *Daniel Comboni: Papers for the Evangelization of Africa*, 75.

¹²¹ D. COMBONI, *Writings*, 808.

3.3.3. The Pastoral Circle Model

In drawing the historical origins of the pastoral circle we can discern three historical levels of the informants for the method: Latin American liberation theology. The second level is the tradition of modern Lay Catholic Action movements: see, judge, and act. And the third level is the praxis model *Phronesis* of Aristotelian thought brought into Catholic tradition by the medieval scholastics. In the 19th century the theological reflection known as the pastoral cycle method was not taught in the seminaries as it is the case today. Yet, we find the praxis in the missionary method of this time though unnamed.

Comboni used the same procedure while reflecting on his new project of the Regeneration of Africa. The pastoral circle approach is seen right from the starting point of Comboni's argument. Comboni in fact started by his own experience, then analyzed the situation, prayed over it and found the way forward by presenting his contribution which is known as *the Plan for the Regeneration of Africa*. In this way of proceeding, it can be analogically seen as a prototype of what is called today pastoral circle. The term as such was not used by Comboni. It is the present world that is applying this term to his pastoral method. The diagram below shows how Comboni reached the conclusion of the Plan as a solution to the pastoral and missionary problem of his time.



3.2. Experience

The personal experience of Comboni is that “Even today a mysterious darkness still covers those distant expanses which go to make up the immensity of black Africa”¹²². He does not use Tabula rasa method; on the contrary Comboni recognizes the effort of civil governments in bringing civilisation to Africa. That is why the opening statement of the new project of Comboni was: “Down through the centuries both civil governments and private companies have labored energetically to organize research into that limitless territory and have sent out well-equipped expeditions to further that purpose. Despite countless such efforts carried out at very great human cost, the impenetrable veil, drawn for so many centuries across the face of Africa, has never been torn aside.”¹²³

¹²² D. COMBONI, *Writings*, 800.

¹²³ D. COMBONI, *Writings*, 800.

The analysis of Comboni goes on in recognizing the Church's commitment through the missionary effort in bringing the Good News to Africa. As he postulates: "We cannot here refer to the numerous different missionary expeditions which various religious orders and ecclesiastical societies have organized in past centuries, with the authority of the Sacred Congregation of Propaganda Fide and the purpose of raising the standard of the Cross in the arid sandy wastes inhabited by the Africans"¹²⁴.

It can be clearly seen that the personal experience of Comboni is of great value. He realized that the methodology followed was not a good one. As he himself said "So the path so far followed must be abandoned, the old system must be changed and a *project* must be drawn up which will lead more effectively to the desired end."¹²⁵ It was then that Comboni started thinking of how the new project could be relevant. The analysis of the situation averred very crucial for the efficacy of the new project. Thus Comboni started a careful analysis of the methodology followed by missionaries of the past as well as those of his time.

3.3. Analysis

Gaudium et Spes calls theologians to be careful while researching as it states that "Theological research while it deepens knowledge of revealed truth, should not lose contact with its own time" (GS. 62). It is likely important to link this idea with Comboni's methodology that led to the authorship of the Plan of Regeneration of Africa.

While showing the genesis of the program, there were pointed out two main causes among many others which can be regarded as the pillars of Comboni as far as

¹²⁴ D. COMBONI, *Writings*, 800.

¹²⁵ D. COMBONI, *Writings*, 809.

his Plan is concerned. The failure of the early missionaries was for Comboni a lesson which, even though painful in it, it nevertheless stimulated him to look for new methods to secure a solid basis for the African mission, and provide renewed hope for the Regeneration of Africa.¹²⁶ These were the starting points of Comboni's reflection on new missionary methodology. After a careful analysis of past and his own experience, Comboni reached the conclusion that "the Regeneration of Africa by Africa seems to us the only program to be followed in bringing about so dazzling a conquest."¹²⁷

The second chapter outlined an overview of the methodological shift that took place in the 19th century. One of them was to incorporate the local people in the process of evangelization in Africa. This idea was shared by many Catholic missionaries as well as Protestants, as mentioned in the first chapter. Blessed Anne-Marie Javouhay¹²⁸ can be mentioned here as the one who launched the idea of taking seriously the indigenous people.

Comboni's analysis aimed at contextualizing the methodological approach of mission in Africa. He was aware of the inadequacy of using the universal method everywhere. Because "Experience has thus clearly shown that the system followed until now, while most useful for the conversion of unbelievers in other parts of the world, is no less than plainly inadvisable for the Regeneration of the African interior."¹²⁹ The analysis of the situation compelled Comboni to use both his mind and spirit to give his contribution. Thus he prayed over it on the tomb of Saint Peter

¹²⁶ A. GILLI, *Daniel Comboni the Man and his Message*, 136.

¹²⁷ F. PIERLI, ed., *Gateway to the Heart of Africa*, 43.

¹²⁸ Javouhay (1779-1851) foundress of the sisters of Saint Joseph of Cluny. She is the first in the history of catholic church to send a group of sisters to work as missionaries in Africa opening the great era of the commitment of the women as protagonists in the missionary arena. Cf. F. PIERLY, ed., *Gateway to the Heart of Africa*, 43.

¹²⁹ D. COMBONI, *Writings*, 808.

on the eve of the beatification of Mary Alacoque. Below is the analysis of the third step of Comboni's pastoral cycle.

3.3.1. Prayer and Theological Reflection: Saint Peter Tomb's Experience

Comboni stressed the intimate relationship that exists between science and religion. Though he believed in that, experience has shown the limits of this hope. The failure in life has to be seen as the beginning of new possibility. And that was the wisdom of Comboni while reflecting on human failure. He constantly turned to God to seek clarification of what was not clear about the new project.

The theological background of Comboni is of great importance if one has to understand the whole idea of the Plan for the Regeneration of Africa. In fact the experience of the Plan is in a particular context of prayer. It was on September 15th, 1864, during the Triduum to Blessed Margaret Mary Alacoque that the idea of the Plan came into the mind of Comboni. The experience at Saint Peter's tomb was the climax of what was there in the mind of Comboni. It is not that the idea started that very day. From then on Comboni referred to that experience as that which had come from on high.

Analyzing the September experience, the emphasis can be led on the connection of events. First of all, Alacoque was proposing the love of Christ to everybody. As Pope Pius IX put it during her beatification: "Christ has chosen the humble Visitation nun to reveal to us his love and to urge us to respond to that love by honoring him in the symbol of his heart"¹³⁰. This is the first element as far as Comboni's spirituality, in connection with the Plan is concerned. Alacoque saw this devotion as actually the last effort of Jesus to reach out to those who are far from His

¹³⁰ A. GILLI, *Daniel Comboni the Man and his Message*, 94.

kingdom. We may conclude that the zeal of Comboni has its root in the understanding of the love of Christ for humanity and for Africa. This is found throughout in the Plan. While Comboni was misunderstood by Mazza's Institute he brought together the spiritual aspect of the Plan and a strong spirituality of providence.

In fact, while being accused by the superior of being disobedient Comboni answers: "when I came to Rome I would not even have dreamed of the Plan. It is providence that has guided my mind and my heart...so study this well my dear superior and you will see that I was guided by that God¹³¹ who knows how to bring good out of evil¹³² and under the inspiration of the blessed Margaret Mary Alacoque I have acted according to your intentions"¹³³. From this conviction, we come to know the connection between Comboni and the spirituality of the sacred heart of Jesus.

There is another component that has to be clarified as far as the spiritual experience is concerned. In this case an attempt is to look at the theology of grace of the 19th century. We are in the age of the New Thomism and much emphasis is on access to grace by becoming a Christian, through baptism. This idea is well expressed in the understanding of baptism known at this time as the new creation in Christ hence, Regeneration. That is why Comboni will later realize that conversion was not the fitting word to express his entire project. That is the simple reason as to why we have the fourth edition of the Plan bearing the title *Plan for the Regeneration of Africa*.

¹³¹ D. COMBONI, *Writings*, 931.

¹³² D. COMBONI, *Writings*, 1161.

¹³³ D. COMBONI, *Writings*, 926.

3.3.2. Pastoral Action: Plan of Regeneration

Comboni was always consistent in stating that in conceiving the Plan he was enlightened from on high. Yet his statements were characterized by tactics, humility and precision. He is of the opinion that *my Plan will regulate Africa for many centuries, and that only this Plan will enable the Faith to be firmly established in the heart of Africa*. We will encounter a thousand difficulties: but with the help of the Sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary, all will be overcome. Great shrewdness will be called for to escape the vigilance and control of Protestant England: but if God gives us life, all will be overcome, and the devil's horns will be weakened¹³⁴.

The Plan as it can now be seen was a process that involved a long journey. To reach this pastoral action, Comboni worked hard from his own experience to the humble conclusion that a new methodology has to be invented in order to be relevant in Africa. The language of Comboni is gradual in the Plan. He started by recognizing the work done so far in communicating the Gospel in Africa. The failures made him to think of a new methodology which was in essence the fruit of experience and intimacy with God. At the end of his journey towards the new Plan he recognized the divine origin of the Plan in these words: "I believe this Plan is the work of God, because the thought of it burst upon me on 15 September while I was doing the Triduum to Blessed Margaret Mary Alacoque; and on 18 September, the day this Servant of God was beatified, Cardinal Barnabò finished reading *my Plan*."¹³⁵

It has emerged so far that the achievement of Comboni's Plan can be read in the light of the pastoral circle today. Although the term pastoral circle was not yet in

¹³⁴ D. COMBONI, *Writings*, 925.

¹³⁵ D. COMBONI, *Writings*, 926.

Comboni's time, his way of answering the challenges of his time was a similar approach as compared to the present day circles.

3.3.3. Regeneration

Regeneration is generally understood in Christian theology to be the objective work of God in a believer's life. Spiritually, it means that God brings Christians to new life from a previous state of subjection to the decay of death (Ephesians 2:4.) The Greek noun *rebirth* or *Regeneration*, *παλιγγενεσία*, *palingenesia*, appears just twice in the New Testament in (Matthew 19:28 and Titus 3:5.) So Regeneration represents a wider theme of re-creation and spiritual rebirth. Furthermore, there is the sense in which Regeneration includes the concept "being born again" (John 3:3-8 and 1 Peter 1:3.) The understanding of baptism as the Regeneration was one of the major themes in Paul's theology of baptism.

This view shaped the missionary endeavor of the Church from the very beginning. For the missionaries, to incorporate others in the Church was seen as a rebirth which is an equivalence of Regeneration. Comboni was sensitive to the situation of sin present in Africa both on a personal and social level. They shared the belief that Africa needs to be liberated from such a situation. At a personal level, this entails a real understanding of, and liberation from, what they called idolatry and superstition, while on a social level, it implies the establishment of justice through the abolition of slavery.¹³⁶

In short, Comboni understood Regeneration in a holistic way. This entails not only Faith in Christ, by the reception of baptism and the membership in the visible people of God, the Church, but also the liberation from social evils such as

¹³⁶ F. PIERLI, ed., *Gateway TO the Heart of Africa*, 43.

slavery, hungry and so on. Now the question could be how Comboni saw this Regeneration of Africa being realized. Was his Plan utopia? To give the answer to this question the following is a close analysis of the relation between Faith and civilisation from the perspective of Comboni.

3.4.4. Faith and Civilisation

It is not a surprise to see that these two concepts are used so often by Comboni to express his understanding of Regeneration of Africa. His apostolate in Africa is seen as bringing Faith and Civilisation, “The Catholic Faith and Christian civilisation in Central Africa that is our sublime apostolate in the great work of the Redemption of Africa.”¹³⁷ Furthermore, he stated that “Faith and civilisation were never enemies of one another: and whatever earthly philosophy says about this, whatever those who cultivate the senses and materialism may think of it, whatever proud unbelievers may insinuate, it is a fact that Faith and Civilisation go hand in hand and the one will never go without the other.”¹³⁸

These two statements portray the understanding of Regeneration as understood by Comboni. He saw a holistic Regeneration of Africa on the one hand through the preaching of the Gospel and on the other hand through Christian civilisation. If we have to recall to mind the time of Comboni, then we may see this civilisation being realized through colonialism. This is the understanding of the 19th century mission: mission and colonialism have to go together. In other words, Comboni recognized the importance of colonialism which was seen as a way of helping Africans to come out of their ignorance of technology and primitive state to better their life condition. However, Comboni was aware of the primacy of the

¹³⁷ D. COMBONI, *Writings*, 6214.

¹³⁸ D. COMBONI, *Writings*, 6214.

Christian message over all human attempts to bring civilisation. For him the civilisation par excellence is Christ and his message.

Thus at the end of a very long historical presentation of the Central Africa exploration, Comboni contrasted his view by stating that:

However, that prodigious power which will shine the full splendour of the light of true Christian civilisation on all the points of the great African continent, will be the Catholic Church with the preaching of the Gospel, because Jesus Christ alone is the way, the truth, and the life; and the Faith of Jesus Christ, his maxims, his teaching and his divine morality are the beginning of true civilisation, the source of life, the foundation of the greatness and prosperity of all the peoples and all the nations in the world.¹³⁹

This was a true support to evaluate the relationship between civilisation and mission in Comboni's mind. What is important to note here is the attitude of Comboni which is not a naive one. Comboni is not a Man without stand as far as civilisation and Faith are concerned. Comboni spoke against the Eurocentric mentality of his time. We should also add that Comboni identified civilisation with Christianity. The civilisation, he was promoting is that of the divine pastor as he pointed it out:

We hope, too, that her glorious sons will hasten with concern from every corner of the earth to offer their work, to bring Catholicism and civilisation to the wandering African tribes, scorched by the fiery summer's heat, but not yet, after forty years, enlightened by a ray of the true light. The apostles who will march out to the great victory will not carry back to Europe the spoils gathered from the vanquished; but they will rather bring to the vanquished the treasure of the Catholic Faith and of European civilisation.¹⁴⁰

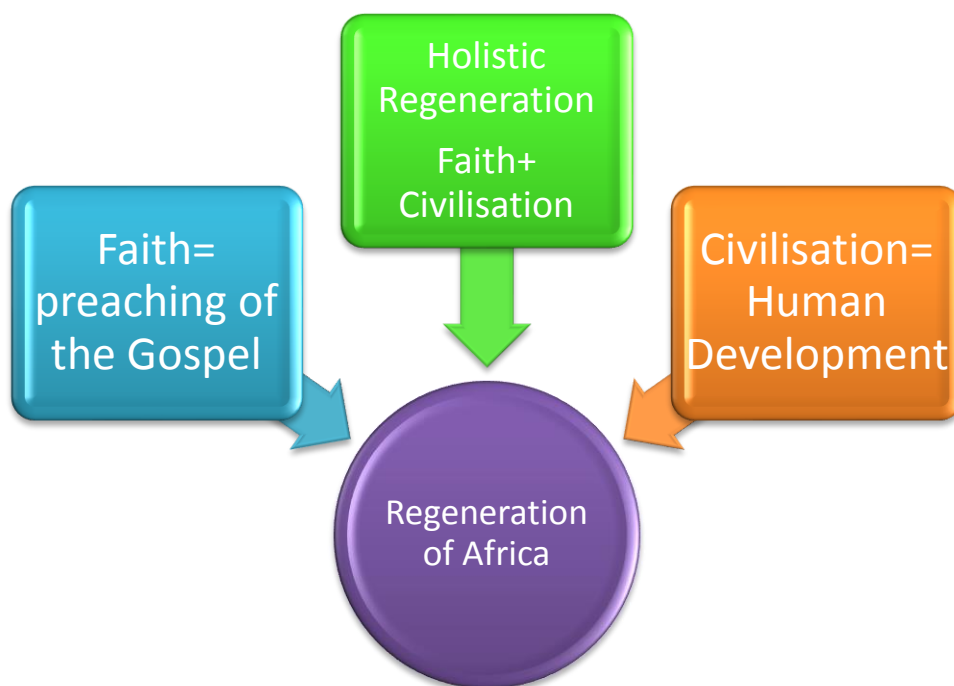
Unlike triumphant soldiers, they will not enslave these peoples as vanquished tribes, but following the example of the Divine Pastor, they will remove the yoke of oppression from their shoulders and bring these wretched creatures into the free and joyful flock of the Church, so that the vanquished, not conquered by force, but rather victorious over themselves and their savage nature, will have won for themselves the true religion and the great benefit of civilised life¹⁴¹.

¹³⁹ D. COMBONI, *Writings*, 6334.

¹⁴⁰ D. COMBONI, *Writings*, 2791.

¹⁴¹ D. COMBONI, *Writings*, 2791.

We can summarize the idea of Comboni about Regeneration in two words: a holistic Regeneration. He succeeded to put together Faith and Civilisation which should be taken today as Faith and social doctrine of the Church. He was convinced that Faith alone would not be enough to better the life of Africans. He proposed that Regeneration should see Faith and Civilisation intertwined together and never one without the other. The chart below is the explanation of the two components as is seen together. The following illustration explains this point.



3.4. Mission as Regeneration; Comboni's Methodology

In Comboni time, regeneration was seen as a pure work of God, who justifies a sinners. Contrary, to this understanding, Comboni wanted a Regeneration which involved both parties, that is, God and human beings. Probably that is why he went ahead of time to make the difference between Regeneration seen as a creative work of God, and which is therefore a work in which Man is purely passive, and in which there is no place for human cooperation. Comboni agreed with the fact that salvation is wholly of God. Yet without human collaboration this salvation is useless. Thus he sought mission as Regeneration of African people by themselves.

His methodology followed greatly his own way of understanding the mission and Regeneration. As it has already been mentioned above, Comboni made missionary methodology one of his major concerns. Fr. Francesco Pierli rightly postulates that "Comboni's principles are to be seen within the historical context of his time. Moreover, his originality lies more in his wholehearted commitment to implement them than in the originality of the principles themselves"¹⁴². This is to say that, Comboni shared with his contemporaries, many ideas as far as the mission is concerned. Here we now grasp deeply his originality in the implementation rather than in the innovation of the ideas themselves. For Comboni mission must become Regeneration this will be possible only when the trust in the local people becomes effective.

¹⁴² F. PIERLI, ed., *Gateway to the Heart of Africa*, 45.

3.4.1. Mission is “Trust in the Local People”

For Comboni mission becomes meaningless when it is not founded on the trust in the local people. Missionary work should consider the local people as capable of becoming protagonists of their own religious and social history. That is why Comboni proposed in the Plan the creation of schools, catechetical centres and technical training centers on the African soil. He gave the example of starting two schools in Cairo, one for boys and girls so that after their formation they could go back to their respective regions and be promoters both of Christian Faith and Civilisation. Mission becomes Regeneration only when missionaries learn how to trust and value the local people.

Another way of valuing the local people is the way of education. Comboni saw the creation of schools as very fundamental in regenerating Africa. As he stated: “The Plan, therefore, which we propose is: the creation of innumerable institutes for both sexes to surround the whole of Africa. These would be carefully situated at the least possible distance from the interior of the continent, in stable and fairly civilised areas, in which both Europeans and Africans could live and work”¹⁴³. Trust in the local people is doubtless in the life and plans of Comboni. He really trusted the local people as to send two boys to study in Rome soon after becoming Apostolic Vicar of Central Africa in July, 1877.

3.4.2. Mission is “Save Africa through Africa”

This was the climax of Comboni’s methodology as far as Africa is concerned. The trust he had in the Africans was materialized by this motto, Save Africa through Africa, which means to incorporate Africans in the process of their

¹⁴³ D. COMBONI, *Writings*, 2764.

evangelization and social promotion. The meaning of “save” in Comboni’s literature is not only religious as mentioned above, but includes the whole range of human life, though certainly the religious dimension was paramount since it was seen as the precondition for a sound behavior for human beings who are corrupted because of original sin.¹⁴⁴

The analysis of the failure of the evangelization made Comboni to rethink the methodology. He asked a very pertinent question: “On this important subject we said to ourselves: “Would the conquest of the tribes of unhappy Africa not be better effected by siting our center of operations in a place where Africans can live without changing and Europeans can live without succumbing?”¹⁴⁵ He found the answer in the idea that the evangelization of Africa should be done by Africans.

3.4.3. Mission is “Common Cause”

According to Comboni, Africa will be regenerated if mission becomes sharing the joys and sorrows of the local people (Cf. GS. 1). The homily delivered in Khartoum in May 11, 1873 by Comboni showed his pastoral vision as Pro-Vicar Apostolic of Central Africa. It made clear his understanding of mission as “common cause”. Mission for everybody without distinction as he stated: “Yes, I am now your Father, and you are my children.”¹⁴⁶ For Comboni common cause is not only a theory but is demanding as far as spiritual needs are concerned. No wonder he made it clear from the beginning that “Come day come night, come sun come rain, I shall always be equally ready to serve your spiritual needs: the rich and the poor, the healthy and the sick, the young and the old, the masters and the servants will always

¹⁴⁴ F. PIERLI, ed., *Gateway to the Heart of Africa*, 44.

¹⁴⁵ D. COMBONI, *Writings*, 2753.

¹⁴⁶ D. COMBONI, *Writings*, 3157.

have equal access to my heart. Your good will be mine and your sorrows will also be mine”¹⁴⁷.

“Common cause” for Comboni is not a mere complaisance. “Common cause” for him meant to use the same methodology of Jesus Christ towards the woman caught in adultery of the Gospel of John 8. The people entrusted to him will be corrected and reproached. That is why he said: “I am not unaware of the weight of the burden I have to carry, since as shepherd, teacher and doctor to your souls I shall have to watch over you, educate you and correct you: defend the oppressed without hurting the oppressors, reproach errors without antagonizing those who err, denounce scandals and sins without ceasing to show compassion to sinners, seek out the corrupt without weakening to vice.”¹⁴⁸ Furthermore, he underlined the fact that he is “a Father and a judge at the same time”¹⁴⁹. This is the meaning of common cause, that is, to share the situation of people and at the same time to improve it if possible.

3.4.4. Mission is “Evangelizing as a Community”

In order to regenerate Africa, the missionary activity should be a community affair. Comboni was marked by two realities as far as evangelization is concerned. He was inspired by the evangelization of Europe done by monks organized in huge apostolic communities, the monasteries. His experience in Sudan confirmed this conviction on the value of evangelization as a community. He came to the conclusion that isolated evangelizers could hardly survive physically and morally to the detriment of the credibility of the Gospel. For this reason many founders of

¹⁴⁷ D. COMBONI, *Writings*, 3157.

¹⁴⁸ D. COMBONI, *Writings*, 3159.

¹⁴⁹ D. COMBONI, *Writings*, 3159.

missionary institutes of the 19th century, such as Cardinal Lavigerie, of the Missionaries of Africa and Comboni himself strongly supported the apostolic team and opposed isolated missionaries.¹⁵⁰

3.4.5. Mission is Collaboration

Comboni stated that “a missionary is not an isolated worker, but must work in collaboration with others in an undertaking that is not his”¹⁵¹. For the Regeneration of Africa, Comboni had a great dream as far as collaboration is concerned. There is no room in Comboni’s methodology for self-ministering, self-supporting, exclusion. For him the local churches are not the sects and they should be in communion with the mother Church. Collaboration for him is the only means through which Regeneration of Africa can be possible. How then did Comboni understand the principle of collaboration?

For him collaboration was not based on personal preferences or capacity to live together. He understood collaboration at the supra natural level by looking at the highest good of the mission. No wonder whenever he had any problem with his missionaries he could always repeat: “it is difficult for us to be together because of our temperaments but for the good of the mission we are called to collaborate.”¹⁵² The good of the mission was for him the aim and the end of collaboration. This is well expressed in his reply to Fr Losi “My son, write whatever you like against me to His Eminence; write to Rome, to Propaganda and the Pope, that I am a scoundrel, deserving the gallows, etc. But I will always forgive you and I will always love you.

¹⁵⁰ Cf. F. PIERLI, ed., *Gateway to the Heart of Africa*, 45.

¹⁵¹ D. COMBONI, *Writings*, 3632.

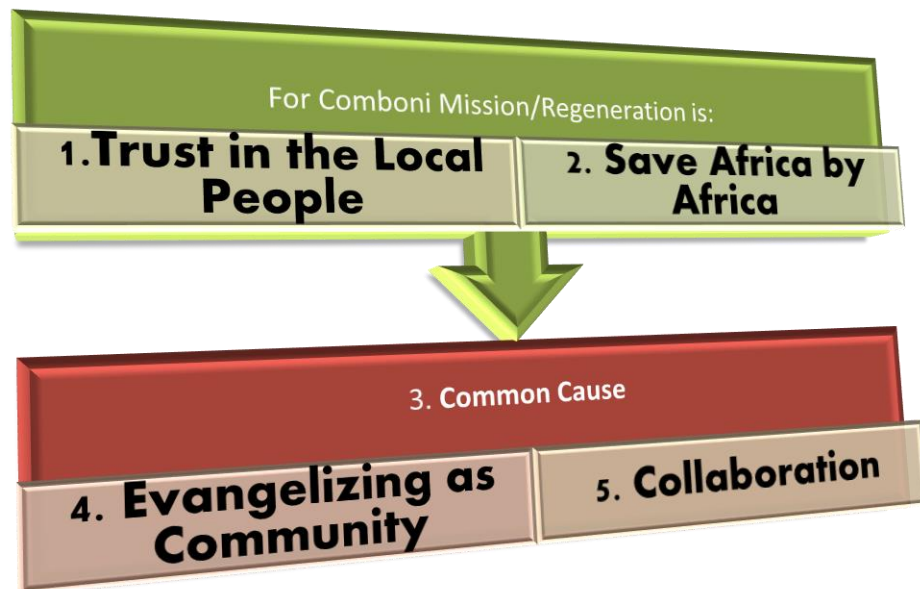
¹⁵² D. COMBONI, *Writings*, 6851.

If you remain at the missions and convert and save my dear Nubas for me, you will always be my dear son, and I will bless you till I die”¹⁵³.

Conclusion

The aim of this third chapter was to see the contribution of Comboni in the methodological shift of the 19th century. The answer of Comboni to the new methodology is of great importance as far as methodology is concerned. He saw the Regeneration of Africa by Africa as the only way to counter the failures of both civil society and religious order to implant the Faith in Africa. For him Regeneration should be understood as holistic. Thus he will advocate the marriage between Faith and Civilisation as a means to bring effective Regeneration. After a careful study of the problem, he thought of mission as Regeneration of Africa by Africa. This motto will remain a word without meaning if Africans are not trusted as protagonists of their own destiny. Exotic Regeneration showed inefficacy in African context. Thus he saw this dream as coming true only if mission was to be entrusted to the local people, hence save Africa by Africa, common cause, mission has to be done as community and mission has to be a collaborative work. Out of this scheme Regeneration of Africa will be a dream which will never become true.

¹⁵³ D. COMBONI, *Writings*, 6851.



Chapter IV

Missionary Heritage of the Plan for the Regeneration of Africa

Introduction

Comboni lived and worked more than a century ago. “His prophetic action and insight is still very much visible in our midst, especially in Sudan, the Church which considers him as Ancestor in Faith.”¹⁵⁴ Moreover, his prophetic action and insight is present in the missionary activities of the great Comboni family¹⁵⁵. This chapter aims at pointing out some significant elements of the Plan of Regeneration which can be considered heritage as far as mission and methodology are concerned. However, for methodological reason, this paper will deal with three major heritages of Comboni’s Plan, namely: Missionary Animation, collaboration and formation of the local leaders. This heritage is seen clearly in the charism and spirituality of the Comboni family as well as in the Church in general. The emphasis will be led to both aspects.

¹⁵⁴ F. PIERLI, ed., *Gateway to the Heart of Africa*, 54.

¹⁵⁵ Comboni family is composed of four different branches. The Comboni missionary is a male institute of Religious Brothers and Priests. We have the second branch of Comboni missionary Sisters; the third is the secular Comboni missionaries and the Lay Comboni missionaries.

4.1. Missionary Animation

Mission animation has been an ever present feature of our apostolic service and an integral part of our life as Comboni missionaries wherever we are¹⁵⁶. At the time of Comboni, mission promotion was part and essential element of missionary methodology. We are all called to be evangelists. The Church (us) exists to bring others to Christ. “Just as the whole economy of salvation has its center in Christ, so too, all missionary activity is directed to the proclamation of his mystery.” (*RM. 44*) the relationship between evangelization and mission promotion is so closed that both go together as far as mission activity is concerned.

In its simplest form evangelization and missionary animation could be seen as sharing our Faith with another person either explicitly or implicitly. That is why the Catechism of the Catholic Church sees missionary animation as “The proclamation of Christ and his Gospel by word and the testimony of life, in fulfillment of Christ’s command.” (*CCC, 905*).

The renewed impulse to the mission *Ad Gentes* demands holy missionaries. It is not enough to update pastoral techniques, organize and coordinate ecclesial resources, or explore more deeply into the biblical and theological foundations of Faith (*EA. 136.*) “What is needed is the encouragement of a new ardor for holiness among missionaries and throughout the Christian community, especially among those who work most closely with missionaries” (Cf. *RM 90.*)

In order that his/her missionary animation activity be effective, the missionary pledges himself/herself to renew and strengthen his/her consecration¹⁵⁷. The reality shows us that the missionary is an expression of the missionary character

¹⁵⁶ RL. 72.

¹⁵⁷ Cf. RL. 74.

of his/her Church of origin. Mission promotion should take into consideration constant and objective information about the religious and social conditions of other peoples. Mission animation should as well allow Christians to recognize, in the light of the Gospel, situations of injustice and exploitation in the socio economic relationships among the different countries, and every kind of oppression also within.¹⁵⁸ Only by fulfilling these exigencies, shall mission animation become relevant and a witness, hence attract many people.

4.1.1. Missionary Animation Means Witness

People today put more trust in witnesses than in teachers in experience than in teaching, and in life and action than in theories. The witness of a Christian life is the first and irreplaceable form of mission: Christ, whose mission we continue, is the "witness" *par excellence* (Rv 1:5; 3:14) and the model of all Christian witness. The Holy Spirit accompanies the Church along her way and associates her with the witness he gives to Christ (cf. Jn 15:26-27). (RM 42.)

More than ever, the dimension of witness in missionary activity becomes a very important dimension that cannot be overlooked. Personal witness speaks louder than a mere proclamation. The witness of a Christian life is the first and irreplaceable form of mission. The example of Jesus and the apostles should be enough to explain that before being a proclamation mission should be a personal relation with God and thereafter the message can be relevant. The witness of missionaries retains its appeal even for the non-practicing and non-believers and it communicates Christian values. Particular churches should therefore make the promotion of the missions a key element in the normal pastoral activity of parishes, associations and groups, especially youth groups (RM. 83.).

This emphasis on mission promotion led later on most of the Magisterium concerning the awareness of missionary animation was present in the Plan and

¹⁵⁸ Cf. RL. 73.3.

missionary methodology of Saint Daniel Comboni. The main strategy of Comboni was to make the people aware of the urgency of the mission. There might be some differences in the way of fulfilling mission animation at the time of Comboni and today. Indeed, there is a difference of setting, reality and methodology nevertheless the main idea remains the same: making people aware of their missionary duty.

In Comboni's time, the aim of mission animation was to make known in Europe that the time of the central African mission had indeed come. And everybody had to give his/ her collaboration as much as they could. Whereas today the emphasis on mission is led to the very nature of the Church as underlined by the decree on the mission activity of the Church "The pilgrim Church is missionary by her very nature..." (AG.2). Both in Comboni time and today, missionary animation still a very important component in evangelization. What is the criterion of such great activity?

4.1.2. Criterion for Missionary Promotion: Holiness

Since the time of Comboni up to today, mission promotion has one criterion: Mission agents must be "holy and capable" as Comboni pointed it out. "Saintliness without capability or capability without saintliness is of very little value to a person who wants to undertake a missionary career. The missionary Man or woman cannot *go to heaven alone*. They must go to heaven in the company of the souls they have helped to save."¹⁵⁹

What Redemptoris Missio is underlying boldly in number 83 is the practice that Comboni used in order to make the local churches aware of the missionary

¹⁵⁹D. COMBONI, *Writings*, 6655.

dimension of every baptized¹⁶⁰. In fact, John Paul II speaking of holiness and mission emphasizes what Comboni saw as the criteria of mission and of a missionary such as “holy and capable”¹⁶¹. John Paul pointed it out in these terms: “A missionary is really such only if he commits himself to the way of holiness”... (EA.136). The only and essential criterion for the effectiveness of mission animation is the holiness of the missionary¹⁶².

However, we have to keep in mind that holiness alone is not enough; holiness should work side by side with competence. That is why Comboni saw the two qualities as one as far as the criteria for admitting the candidate in Comboni’s Institute is concerned. What are the tasks of mission animation according to Comboni’s understanding?

4.1.3. The Tasks of Mission Animation

These tasks are related to Comboni missionaries’ way of understanding and continuing the original idea of their Founder Saint Daniel Comboni. The first task for in mission promotion according to Comboni understanding is “to open up all local churches, even the youngest, to their missionary duty both close to home and further away”¹⁶³. This animation is not limited only to the young churches; it extends to the older Christian communities as a “call to conversion and invitations to participate in the needs of the poor, and to open them to fuller communion within the universal Church.”¹⁶⁴ This is the second task of mission promotion. Finally the third task of mission animation is the perpetual presence in every moment of their

¹⁶⁰ D. COMBONI, *Writings*, 4799-4800.

¹⁶¹ D. COMBONI, *Writings*, 6655.

¹⁶² XV General Chapter Acts, 102.

¹⁶³ XV General Chapter Acts, 99.

¹⁶⁴ XV General Chapter Acts, 100.

life. In other words, mission animation which is linked with personal witness should be kept in mind even when one is elderly or sickly.

4.1.4. Mission Animation: Indispensable Component of Comboni Charism

Comboni considered mission promotion as an essential aspect of his vocation in order to arouse the missionary conscience of the whole Church. “He divided his time between the work of evangelization in Africa and the work of animating the Church in Europe. In the work of mission promotion the Comboni missionaries intend to remain faithful to the Founder’s spirit of initiative and courage”¹⁶⁵. It seems tremendously important to see how this heritage is understood and lived by the members of the Institute. Let us see how it is continuing and promoting by the Comboni family.

In their constitutions section two we find the title mission promotion in the Founder’s footsteps. This is a clear indication of the place occupied by this activity in the life of their congregation and evangelizing mission. “The Comboni missionaries of the Heart of Jesus, by vocation and after the example of their Founder, are called to stimulate the missionary conscience of the people of God so that they recognize their missionary responsibility and commit themselves to proclaiming the Gospel to the whole world.”¹⁶⁶ In order to make emphasis on this dimension of their charism the Institute plans and organizes mission promotion in a systematic manner which involves provinces and the General Administration as well. Let us have a look at this organization.

¹⁶⁵ RL. 72.1.

¹⁶⁶ RL. 72.

4.1.5. Organization of Mission Animation

Mission animation as essential component of Comboni charism is perpetuated and organized as follow: first of all “The provinces in dialogue with the General Administration encourage the development of a spirituality based on the experience of the Founder as a mission promoter and continue to organize courses for promoters”¹⁶⁷. Secondly the provinces together with the General Administration encourage greater co-ordination between mission and vocational promoters and to have at least one confrere appointed for full time as mission animator. Thirdly the congregation uses the development of technology on the side of media as a means to fulfill their mission animation activity. The congregation encourages the provinces to be involved “in the sector of communication, consolidates regional centers for mass media, extend the horizon to radio and television”¹⁶⁸

So far the analysis of the Plan has allowed us to understand that mission animation or, in Comboni setting, mission promotion was the center of Comboni’s methodology and should be looked at as a heritage of the congregation he founded as well as for the whole Church. Mission animation cannot be done in isolation. It needs a well-defined relationship with other people and this brings the concept of collaboration. That is why the second step as far as heritage is concerned leads to collaboration as the second heritage in doing missionary work today.

¹⁶⁷ XV General Chapter Acts, 105.1.

¹⁶⁸ XV General Chapter Acts, 105.6.

4.2. Collaboration

Analyzing the topic “*mission is collaboration*”, the XV General Chapter of the Comboni missionaries pointed out that “Our society is characterized by individualism and fragmentation. This tends to enhance the importance given to the person, but it also leads to a feeling of discouragement and frustration. In this situation our clear option for collaboration...is a witness.”¹⁶⁹ Mission implies a complex set of relationships between the sender, the one sent, the audience to whom one is sent and the task to be accomplished. Collaborative relation is the key element in mission.

Comboni left us a great example of selflessness as far as the good of the mission and the souls are concerned. For him “A mission as arduous and difficult as ours cannot survive with just a *patina*, with people putting on airs of holiness, but full of egoism and self-centeredness, caring very little about the salvation and conversion of souls.”¹⁷⁰ Collaboration is the identification, release and union of all gifts in ministry for the sake of mission. No wonder when *Ad Gentes* and *Lumen Gentium* urge every member of the Church “to collaborate in the work of the Gospel, each according to his opportunity, ability, charism and ministry”¹⁷¹

4.2.1. Biblical Foundation of Collaboration

Collaborative Ministry is simply a way of relating and working together in the life of the Church. It demands conscious commitment to values and convictions. This includes the recognition that Christian Initiation (baptism) gives us a shared but differentiated responsibility for the life and mission of the Church. It begins from a

¹⁶⁹ XV General Chapter Acts, 71.

¹⁷⁰ D. COMBONI, *Writings*, 6656.

¹⁷¹ D. BOSCH, *Transforming Mission*, 471.

fundamental desire to work together as a company of disciples. When we are baptized in the Catholic Church, we are also anointed with Chrism oil, and so we become priests, Prophets, and Kings, why? Because, in baptism, we become adopted sons and daughters of God (Romans 8:14-17); and, in this way, we share in the very same Son-ship, which Christ himself enjoys with the Father.

By becoming members of Christ's Body, we must act as Christ to the world. We are anointed as a King because we share in Christ's royalty; we are anointed as a Prophet because we are to speak Christ's words and carry his Gospel to all; and we are anointed as a priest because we are to share in Christ's own High Priesthood. In this, we are to intercede (as mediators) for the world. The mediator's task is to interpose between parties as equal friend of each, especially to effect reconciliation. Since Jesus, the Messiah is simultaneously true God and true Man; he can be the only mediator, the unique bridge, between God and mankind.

Aware of this baptismal foundation, Comboni centered his pastoral approach on the spirit of collaboration. Following the example of Jesus, he made his own motto the "Catholicity" of his work. Comboni believed that: "Missionary cooperation is rooted and lived, above all, in personal union with Christ. Only if we are united to him as the branches to the vine (cf. Jn 15:5) can we produce good fruit. Through holiness of life every Christian can become a fruitful part of the Church's mission. The Second Vatican Council invited all "to a profound interior renewal, so that having a lively awareness of their personal responsibility for the spreading of the Gospel, they may play their part in missionary work among the nations" (*RM.* 77)

Comboni's collaborative spirit is seen throughout his writings¹⁷² and missionary methodology. He is convinced that the effectiveness of the mission and its success does not depend on personal capacity rather on the level of collaboration the missionaries have among themselves and with the local people. That is why at the end of the Plan for the Regeneration of Africa by Africa Comboni did not hesitate to put his wish in these terms: "It is our firm hope that this project of the Association of the Sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary for the Conversion of Africa, once it has received the gracious approval of the Apostolic See, will receive the cooperation of all those holy institutes which have until now concerned themselves with, or sought to further, the spiritual advantage of the African race."¹⁷³ Comboni went far in his conviction in collaboration as a tool for the success of mission in Africa. He urged the involvement of the episcopate for the African missions.¹⁷⁴

4.2.2. Forms of Collaboration

You young priests, whose sublime vocation, zeal for souls and spirit of sacrifice decide to make you with Christ the regenerators of your unfortunate brothers and sisters, here you have *one hundred million* Africans, abandoned Africans, who are clamouring for your work. May the Religious Orders and Congregations which are the Church's chosen militia also hasten to gain laurels on this vast field where Satan has ranked all his powers? And you, the obligations of whose state keep you in your homeland, do not deny us your daily prayers, or the offering of your charity.¹⁷⁵

According to Comboni, among the forms of sharing, the first place goes to spiritual cooperation through prayer, sacrifice and the witness of Christian life. "Prayer should accompany the journey of missionaries so that the proclamation of the word will be effective through God's grace. (RM 78.)

¹⁷² Comboni collaborated with more than seventeen institutes.

¹⁷³ D. COMBONI, *Writings*, 842.

¹⁷⁴ D. COMBONI, *Writings*, 2184.

¹⁷⁵ D. COMBONI, *Writings*, 2181.

4.2.3. Collaboration with the Local Church

According to *Mutuae Relationis* the first context for carrying the evangelizing activity is the local Church. Therefore, collaboration requires that the missionary is not a passive member, but contributes to the vitality of the local Church, by becoming involved in the planning and carrying out of pastoral activities. (MR. 18-20.) Without renouncing the specific Comboni charism, the Comboni missionaries accept the pastoral priorities of the local Church and are ready to implement them. As a sign of their collaboration with the local Church, “they avoid creating parallel structures or taking important initiative on their own, especially when it is clear that local agents will not be able to carry them forward alone.”¹⁷⁶

Furthermore, in the context of the local Church, the Comboni missionaries bear the ultimate responsibility for her pastoral action, and commit themselves in line with the motto of Comboni, “save Africa with Africa”, to collaborate in a special way with the local pastoral agents: clergy, catechists, community leaders...they accept as a priority to help in their promotion, formation and further growth. The missionaries should “let them have adequate space and responsibility because of their competence and knowledge of the local culture.”¹⁷⁷ The danger of overpowering the local leaders still there, and the missionaries should really be attentive not to overshadow local people in the name of money or means. This risk can be avoided only if the missionaries develop a collaborative ministry. Which is a ministry committed to life and mission, showing the possibility of transformation and of community within diversity.

¹⁷⁶ XV General Chapter Acts, 76.

¹⁷⁷ XV General Chapter Acts, 77.

4.2.4. Collaborative Ministry as Means for Deeper Evangelization

Deeper evangelization is not a “new program”. “The program already exists: it is the Plan found in the Gospel and in the living Tradition, it is the same as ever” (NM. 29) John Paul II, “At the Beginning of the New Millennium”. Deeper evangelization is a new stage and a new method in the ongoing mission of announcing the Kingdom of God and making it penetrate in a deeper way both in the individual person and the human society. Pope Paul IV described it in his Apostolic Exhortation evangelization in the Modern World: “The Church evangelizes when she seeks to convert, solely through the divine power of the Message she proclaims, the personal and collective consciences of people, the activities in which they engage, their lives and concrete milieus which are theirs”. (EN 18) A deeper evangelization can be achieved only when everybody collaborates in such activity.

Collaboration is the only remedy to a deeper evangelization which does not mean only to preach the Gospel in wider geographic areas or to increase the number of members of the Church. “What matters is to evangelize people’s culture and cultures (not in a purely decorative way as it were, by applying a thin veneer but in a vital way, in depth and right to their roots)...always taking the person as one’s starting point and always coming back to the relationships of people among themselves and with God.” (EN 19).

As a heritage from their Founder, the Comboni missionaries believe that a deeper evangelization involves: Personal conversion of individuals, manifested not just in emotional feelings nor in the practice of devotional habits alone, but in deeper convictions leading to attitudes that govern the integral person, Body, soul and mind

(1 Thessalonians. 5:23), in all circumstances of life and work. This is achieved by an intense spirit of collaboration which is based on the value of appreciation of the gifts of others.

As mentioned above, mission and evangelization aim at the interior transformation of the world and its social, cultural, political and economic structures. In order to inspire people with the values of the Kingdom of God, even in social contexts in which no adherence to the Catholic Church is likely to be expected from them. Therefore, the methods of catechesis should go beyond the mere memorization of ready-made responses and penetrate the heart and options of the individual leading to a personal, free and uncompromising commitment to Christ according to the exhortation of Paul: “Do not model your behavior in the contemporary world, but let the renewing of your minds transform you, so that you may discern for yourselves what is the will of God – what is good and acceptable and mature” (Romans 12:2).

In the example of Christ, who clearly manifested his preferential love for the poor and the oppressed, a deeper evangelization should lead the Christian to the same attitude of heart not only through the material relief of the victims but through the courageous denunciation of the structures of sin and the clear proclamation of justice and peace.

4.2.5. The Place and Area of Collaboration

According to Thomas Franklin O’Meara, “Ministry is grace in structure and charism in ecclesial service”¹⁷⁸. The call to ministry acts as a means of refining us and leading us into maturity because it is a call to *service*. “Christianity is not a

¹⁷⁸ T. O’MEARA, *The Theology of Ministry*, 167.

monism or a single cell, not a dictatorship, or a monarchy; and it is not a uniform society. In its origins were distinctions: between Jesus Christ, the Head, and the Body; between the spirit and the baptized; and between different kinds of ministers called, inspired, commissioned, and sent.”¹⁷⁹ When the disciples of Jesus grew indignant at the pride of James and John, Jesus summoned them all to the call to *serve* rather than to *be served*, even at the cost of one’s life (Mark 10:42-45). It was in taking the role of a servant that Jesus showed his disciples the kind of love they were to display towards one another (John 13:12-17).

The servant does not have an agenda of his or her own. He or she obeys the master. He does not expect recognition, other than that of a job well done; or reward, other than his/her master’s pleasure. The call to ministry thus ‘crucifies’ the ‘fleshly’ part of us by demanding a self-forgetfulness and self-giving love, the attitude that Jesus himself displayed (Philippians 2:5-8). The issue of collaboration and diversity in ministry is at the heart of the Church today. One aspect of ministry as a loving servant-hood is *collaboration*.

This implies cooperation with the minister in promoting within the parish community (Church), the whole mission of the Church, pastoral, evangelization, social and ecumenical. The mission of the Church is not the business of the clergy alone. It is a cooperative venture requiring collaboration between clergy and laity. A more recent development is the creation of leadership teams of various types, including both the clergy and laity. The emphasis on collaboration provokes two important questions. First, what is genuine collaboration? And second, why is collaboration now held to be fundamental to Christian ministry?

¹⁷⁹ T. O’MEARA, *The Theology of Ministry*, 167.

As little as two generations ago, the ministry was still largely perceived to be the work of the professional clergy (ordained minister). Can it be said that the current emphasis on the involvement of the laity in ministry is merely a response to the declining numbers of the clergy? Or does it have a coherent theological justification?

4.2.6. Unity and Diversity in Collaborative Ministry: Danger for a Missionary Priest

The functions of the Ordained Minister, taken as a whole, constitute a single indivisible unity in virtue of their singular foundation in Christ as we have seen in the previous topic. However, as with Christ, salvific activity is one and unique. It is signified and realized by the minister through the functions of teaching, sanctifying and governing the faithful. This unity essentially defines the exercise of the sacred minister's functions, which are always an exercise, in different ways, of the role of Christ as Head of the Church.

Since the exercise of teaching and sanctifying by the sacred minister constitutes the essence of pastoral ministry, the diverse functions proper to ordained minister and to the laity form an indivisible unity and cannot be understood if separated, one from the other. The functions of the laity and of the ordained minister must rather be viewed in terms of their mutual correspondence and complementarities¹⁸⁰. Jesus Christ continually provides in his Body, that is, in the Church, the gifts of ministries through which, by his power, we serve each other unto salvation. But still the interdependence and collaboration between the missionary priest and laity, call for careful reflection so as to arrive at a well-considered conclusions in their respective regard. After a look on mission animation

¹⁸⁰ T. O'MEARA, *The Theology of Ministry*, 168-172.

and collaboration, it seems important to complete the three pillars of Comboni's methodology by pointing out the formation of local leaders.

4.3. The Apostolate of the Laity: The Formation of Local Leaders

It has been mentioned above that collaboration is an important feature in the success of communicating the Gospel today in our society. It should be also noted that in order to expect someone to collaborate efficaciously, one has to be formed in the matter as far as Church activity is concerned. That is why the collaboration between the clergy and the laity is a key aspect in the life of the Church today. Much Church's documents call for the effectiveness of this collaboration by promoting a good formation for the local leaders. This is clearly stated in the decree on the mission activity of the Church *Ad Gentes* that reminds us of the central place of the laity in the Church mission.

4.3.1. No True Church Established Without a Genuine Laity

The council fathers shared a conviction that "the Church is not truly established and does not fully live, nor is it a perfect sign of Christ unless there is a genuine laity existing and working alongside the hierarchy." (AG. 21). *Lumen Gentium* establishes the relation between the laity and the clergy in these terms "the apostolate of the laity is a sharing in the salvific mission of the Church. Through baptism and confirmation all are appointed to this apostolate by the Lord himself" (LG. 33). It adds that the laity has "the exalted duty of working for the ever greater

spread of the divine Plan of salvation to all people of every epoch and all over the earth.”¹⁸¹

The two dimensions of collaboration are very important for the success of Regeneration of the people. Comboni saw the usefulness of collaborating and forming the local people in order to be the future missionaries. As Comboni expressed in the report to the society of cologne “The institutes should have been established on the African coasts where both Europeans and Africans could live and work and where indigenous people of both sexes could have been taught, so that they themselves might become apostles of the Faith and Civilisation among their compatriots.”¹⁸² This is considered as a great heritage for the Comboni family’s evangelizing methodology.

4.3.2. Comboni Family and Lay Apostolate

The Lay people need to wake up from their sleep and occupy their right place in the Church. Vatican II and the new code of Canon Law¹⁸³ provide for their adequate involvement in the work of evangelization and in Church governance, through participation in the Church Council, the Parish Pastoral Council¹⁸⁴, the Diocesan Pastoral Council and the Diocesan Synod, and also through their involvement in the work of Justice and Peace Commission and the Catechetical Commission. That is why the missionaries have to be aware of the fact that in this new century, ministry in the Catholic Church should be structured in such a way as to leave enough room for the adequate and fruitful involvement of such Lay Apostolate Organizations.

¹⁸¹ D. BOSCH, *Transforming Mission*, 471.

¹⁸² D. COMBONI, *Writings*, 2472.

¹⁸³ Can. 536-548

¹⁸⁴ Can 512.

There is no reason why we cannot have Teachers and Preachers, Evangelizers, Healers, and Visitation Ministers in addition to Eucharistic Ministers and Lectors functioning as distinct Lay ministers in the Church. Comboni in his time found it an important aspect of his mission, the formation of local people. No wonder in his Plan, there is a great emphasis on the creation of schools for the training of future ministers. The same emphasis is clearly seen on the African Synod and the Post-Synodal document of Pope John Paul II encouraging the African Church to evolve its own local ministries.

4.3.3. Mission Must always be geared to Informing and Forming God's People

As far as Lay faithfuls are concerned, the missionary has to be aware of the fact that all “Activities aimed at promoting interest in the missions must always be geared to these specific goals; namely, informing and forming the people of God to share in the Church's universal mission, promoting vocations *Ad Gentes* and encouraging cooperation in the work of evangelization”. (RM 83) In order to avoid misunderstandings, Pope John Paul II warned missionaries on the danger of incomplete picture of missionary activities by pointing out that:

It is not right to give an incomplete picture of missionary activity, as if it consisted principally in helping the poor, contributing to the liberation of the oppressed, promoting development or defending human rights. The missionary Church is certainly involved on these fronts, but her primary task lies elsewhere: the poor are hungry for God, not just for bread and freedom. Missionary activity must first of all bear witness to and proclaim salvation in Christ, and establish local churches which then become means of liberation in every sense. RM 83

In addition to appreciation and recognition, the missionaries have to dedicate enough time and energy in forming the Lay ministers and the local leaders. That is why the Comboni missionaries in the footsteps of their Founder have a particular attention on

the formation of local leaders. This has been proved right by the commitment of the Comboni Lay Missionary (CLM). This group of Lay missionary, shares with them the charism of Saint Daniel Comboni and is committed in the pastoral activities. Their missionary service is seen as a community project and not as a personal one. The Lay Comboni missionaries' vocation is fulfilled through respect and openness to other cultures, personal witness and a life of Faith and through professional work at the service of human promotion.¹⁸⁵ However, the evaluation shows that up to this, more needs to be done in this regard. A lot of our Lay people have the required charisms to undertake these various ministries. For example the catechists have always been the grassroots minister of the Catholic Church in Africa. The role of the Catechist needs to be better recognized and appreciated. And the missionary has to provide adequate formation of the catechists, appreciate their work and encourage them to be committed and also develop good examples in their daily life.

Conclusion

Mission animation, collaboration and Lay apostolate have been selected among many others as the missionary heritage drawn from Comboni's methodology present in the Plan for the Regeneration of Africa. These heritages were seen as the three pillars on which Daniel Comboni built his missionary approach and evangelizing process. They are not realities of the past, so that today they have to be looked at in the museum of missiology. On the contrary, they are still challenging us and giving us new ways of adapting them to the context of mission today. That is why the method used in this paper was basically the enumerating approach with the link to the Magisterium in the modern understanding of these heritages. These three

¹⁸⁵ XV General Chapter Acts, 91.

heritages are important features for the success of the process of communicating the Gospel today.

Missionary Heritage of the Plan for the Regeneration of Africa



GENERAL CONCLUSION

Before being Regeneration, proclamation, teaching, healing, inculturation, collaboration and the likes, “mission is a personal experience and transformation”. Mission is born as automatic radiation from the energy that one has drawn from communion with Christ.¹⁸⁶ The Plan of Comboni has been a perfect model of missionary activity resulting entirely from his personal experience with Christ. In fact, his inspiration in the process of making the Plan is directly connected to his experience of prayer and meditation at the tomb of St. Peter in Rome.

The study has so far focused on mission as Regeneration. Among the principle objectives was to bring awareness and Enlightenment regarding the African missionary movement of the 19th century, with particular focus on the central African mission. This is essentially why the research started by situating the overview of the three phases of mission in Africa. This aimed at pointing out the origin and challenges of mission in the early 19th century. Methodological challenges encountered by the first missionaries were taken up by the new generation who tried to improve as much as they can. The improvement was done by changing the approach. Thus the second chapter dealt with the methodological shift. In particular the question was: how did they change the approach and why?

¹⁸⁶ A. MAGNANTE, *Mission as Witness Part I*, 30.

Comboni was seen emerging on stage with a statement which can equally be compared to the Copernican revolution. “So the path so far followed must be abandoned, the old system must be changed and a *project* must be drawn up which will lead more effectively to the desired end.”¹⁸⁷ The answer of Comboni to the new methodology is of great importance as far as methodology is concerned. He understood from his personal experience that the Regeneration of Africa by Africa could be the only way to counter the failures of both civil societies and religious orders in implanting Faith in Africa. But then, what did he mean by Regeneration?

Comboni understood Regeneration in a holistic way, no wonder his advocacy on the marriage between Faith and Civilisation even means to bring effective Regeneration. In this era, it is worthy reflecting on the question; what could be the heritages of Comboni’s Plan for the Regeneration today?

From many other elements which are present in the Church and Comboni family, this study has selected three major heritages. From Comboni’s methodology and missionary experience, it is worth to note that mission animation, collaboration and formation of the local leaders are the key points which were stressed and seen as heritages for the Church and her institutions today. He believed that a true Regeneration should be fostered by a personal witness, collaboration with others and paying attention on people where one works. Thus his motto was *Regeneration of Africa by Africa*.

This motto, Regeneration of Africa by Africa, will remain a mere slogan without any concrete meaning if Africans are not trusted as protagonists of their own destiny. Exotic Regeneration showed inefficacy in African context. The dream of saving Africa by Africa will become true only if there is personal transformation and

¹⁸⁷ D. COMBONI, *Writings*, 2791.

of the mentality of the missionaries. After this process of personal transformation the missionaries have to keep in mind that the mission has to involve the local people, the mission has become common cause, mission has to be done as community and mission has to be a collaborative work. Out of this scheme, Regeneration of Africa will be a dream, which will never become true.

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